

## **II CORINTHIANS 1**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Corinthians chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that Paul wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus and it was a letter of correction because the church in Corinth was in trouble. They let the world, you might say, come into the church and contaminate the church.

The practices that were going on in Corinth were going on in the church and they even were fighting amongst themselves, putting together little groups and bringing about division in the church!

Corinth was a very busy, a very active metropolis and it stood at the intersection for the major commercial trade routes that ran north to south and east to west! It is where they came together!

So you had this huge influx of sailors, traders, huge caravans that came in and out of Corinth. Because of that it was a very convenient place for all kinds of immoral behavior, lots of drunken entertainment!

And they were so bad that the very name, “Corinthian” became synonymous with drunken, sinful, and immoral living.

But we don’t have that problem today, right? Wrong!

Just for example, when you think of Las Vegas, what does that remind you of?

Gambling, prostitution, drinking, all kinds of immoral behavior!

I am sure you have heard this phrase about Las Vegas before, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!”

In other words, you can do whatever you want in Las Vegas and no one will know! That is never true, and it is not a good thing!

Let me share with you a few quotes from people who speak about Las Vegas and they are proud of what it stands for.

First, Bruce Sterling tells us, “Las Vegas is a major family destination. Nevada casinos have become American family values now. It’s considered just fine to go into one of these windowless scary gambling-malls, drink yourself silly, lose your . . . at roulette, and then google showgirls with breast implants. Republicans do this now. Working-class folks do it in polyester stretch pants. It’s normal.”

And Lewis Black tells us, “The reason you should go to Las Vegas is because, for only the second time, the second time, ever, they have rebuilt Sodom and Gomorrah. It’s back! And you have the opportunity to see it before it turns to salt.”

Here is one I recognize, Drew Carey says this about Las Vegas, “Vegas is everything that’s right with America. You can do whatever you want, 24 hours a day. They’ve effectively legalized everything there.” Again, not a good thing.

And there is Tammy Bloemzaken who said, “For me, Vegas is a vacation from being over inhibited, in the highly over inhabited yet uninhabitable city of complete uninhibition.”

That was Corinth in a nutshell, and it is Las Vegas as well, and not just Las Vegas, it is the morality of our days, immorality!

Make no mistake about it, Corinth turned into the most wicked and degenerate city of the ancient world!

Now we come to II Corinthians and Paul wrote this second letter to the church in Corinth probably less than a year after his first letter, putting the date around 57 A. D., on his third missionary journey.

He wrote his first letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus and now this letter he wrote from Macedonia, some early translations speak of it specifically being Philippi.

And this second letter is different than the first. You see, this second letter reveals the heart of Paul, the heart of a shepherd, the heart of a pastor. Of this letter, Sadler said this, “The transparency of the revelation of Paul [in II Corinthians] is to me unequaled in all sacred literature.”

Let me say this, when you expose your heart as Paul did, there is always a chance that it will be broken, it will be stepped upon, but that did not stop Paul and it should not stop us from ministering to people, sharing our heart with them, showing you care.

Now it seems like false teachers confused them, began to sway them and Paul sends Titus to deal with those issues and as Titus reported back to Paul, many had received the words from Titus and rejected the false teachers and Paul rejoiced over that.

But there were still those who refused to listen, and Paul will also address them as he defends his calling as an apostle, his conduct and his character with the end result, they should heed his words, they should not be swayed by these false teachers.

We can break this letter down like this:

***Christian living – II Corinthians 1-7***

***Christian giving – II Corinthians 8-9***

***Christian guarding – II Corinthians 10-13***

So with that said, let's begin reading in II Corinthians chapter 1, starting in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

## II CORINTHIANS 1

### VERSES 1-2

As we saw in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, and something we need to keep in mind as we read this letter, the church in Corinth, for the most part, didn't respect Paul, his authority.

Because of that Paul starts out and says that he is an "apostle." It is a word that means, "*one who has been sent forth with a commission.*" And in the broadest sense of the word, we are all apostles because we have been sent forth with a commission, to bring the Gospel message to a lost and dying world!

Today we have many people who are calling themselves apostles, especially in the New Apostolic Reformation, or NAR. But they appoint themselves as apostles and that is basically meaningless.

Notice what Paul is saying here, that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, not because he says so, but because it was the will of God for his life! That is key.

Now I don't believe we have the position of apostles today, I believe they have passed off the scene as they have laid the foundation of the church, and once the foundation is laid, you don't keep putting down the foundation! And I am speaking of the office of an apostle, like the 12 apostles, that has passed off the scene. We are still called by God to go forth with a commission, the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

We also have ministry roles that we are involved in. And the problem is that too often today people get into the ministry because they want to or their family wants them to, and that is wrong. You are in the ministry because it is the will of God for your life and if it is not, then don't get into the ministry. It is a calling of God upon our lives.

And if people get in for the wrong reasons, then they tend to drop out, they don't continue on because, let's face it, ministry is tough. I know what the Lord has called me to do and thus, none of those things that have come against me and the work that I am doing move me from the course that God has for me! That is how it should be!

Also, Paul speaks of the church of God that is in Corinth and then he says, “**with all the saints who are in all Achaia.**”

What I want you to see here is that yes, Paul wrote this letter to the church that was in Corinth, but it was not just for them. It was to be shared among the churches there in Achaia, which was located in southern Greece or northwest of Corinth. And that tells me that this letter is for us as well, to read and learn from, apply to our lives!

Also, it is “the church of God” that is in Corinth, not Pastor Joe's church or this person's church. It is God's church, He is the head and the under-shepherd is there to oversee things, to feed the flock that God has entrusted to them, to watch over them!

And in verse 2 we see Paul's opening greetings in his letters. We call these words, ***GRACE*** and ***PEACE*** the Siamese twins of the New Testament!

In fact, Paul, in all 13 of his epistles, if you exclude Hebrews, speaks of grace and peace and always in that order.

Why is that?

Because you can never experience the peace of God until you first make peace with God through Jesus Christ and that is done by grace through faith. It is a free gift that we receive by faith.

It is then that you can experience the peace of God through the storms of life!

Let me show you what I mean. Paul said in Romans 5:1, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

You see, we have peace with God through Jesus. He is the One who has bridged the gap between man and God, and it is through Him we can have fellowship with God, peace with God!

And it is after we have peace with God, we can experience the peace of God in our lives. Paul put it like this in Philippians 4:6-7, “**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**”

What I love here is that no matter what we are going through, no matter how difficult things may be, we can have the peace of God, the peace that surpasses all understanding guard our hearts or emotions and our mind or our thoughts. These are the places that Satan loves to attack us and mess with us. But if we give it to God, lay these things at His feet, we can experience His peace because we have made peace with God through Jesus Christ!

#### VERSES 3-4

Paul is going to speak of praising and thanking God for the comfort that God has given to him in the midst of all these distresses and afflictions that he has gone through and is going through!

Remember, that is what Paul spoke of in Philippians. He wrote, “**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.**”

And that is why Paul can speak of God being “**the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort.**” Paul experienced the mercy and comfort of God in his own life and thus was able to speak from personal experience to people going through similar situations. You see, like it or not, you are not going to be able to give to others what you have not received yourself from the Lord.

And if we are honest with ourselves, we all have experiences in our lives that God has comforted us and seen us through. I am not saying it was easy, but He has seen us through and given us comfort through them.

J. Vernon McGee put it like this. He wrote, “People turn to all sorts of things for comfort. There is a whiskey called ‘Southern Comfort.’ Well, I’m a Southerner, but that is not a comfort, my friend. That will ruin a home. Others turn to drugs for comfort, but there is no comfort there. . . . When the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, He said, *‘I will not leave you comfortless . . . I will send the Comforter to you’* The Greek word for ‘comfort’ is *parakaleo*, which means ‘to call alongside of [to help].’”

For me, just a few, I know what it is like to lose a dear friend, to lose a father, to have rebellious sons, thus, I can bring comfort to others who are going through similar situations. I can encourage them to keep praying for that wayward child because I have seen what God can do to restore that child, to bring them back and it is awesome.

It is as Peter said in I Peter 4:10, “**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God's many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely Diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor].”**

May we do that, may we give to others for God has freely given to us!

Clarke put it like this, “Even *spiritual* comforts are not given us for our use alone; they, like all the gifts of God, are given that they may be distributed, or become instruments of help to others. A minister’s trials and comforts are permitted and sent for the benefit of the Church. What a miserable preacher must he be who has all his divinity by study and learning, and nothing by experience!”

Let me also say this. The things you go through are not just for others, but God is teaching you lessons, trying to show you something and learn the lesson so you can move on.

As you go through these things may you see the hand of God in them instead of becoming overwhelmed by the situation. God is not going to tempt you beyond what you are able to stand, and the key of course is not to trust in yourself, but in God.

Now let me give you this perspective because it is important if we want to mature in the Lord.

What happens when a child falls and cuts his knee, let’s say? We pick them up, we may even give them a treat to help them through this difficult time.



And we think that is how God works. If some difficulty comes upon us, we are waiting for the candy or whatever. That is what is being taught today, everything is good, there are no difficulties!

Joel Osteen, in his book, *The Power of I Am* seems to be telling us that we don't have to go through any difficulties in life, we just have to use the right words and you will get whatever you want. Here are some quotes regarding the book:

“In his new book Joel Osteen shares the wisdom that has changed many lives. Discover the power that your words have over your future and be empowered to reach your potential and fulfill your dreams.”

“Choose today to rise to a new level and invite God's goodness by focusing on these two words . . . I Am! You can set the course for your future on the right track by speaking the right things. What follows 'I am' will follow you.”

“When you speak the right 'I am's,' you're inviting the goodness of God. I am victorious. I am blessed. I am talented. I am anointed. Your words have creative power. With your words you can bless your future!”

But, as Warren Wiersbe reminds, us, “We must not think of comfort in terms of 'sympathy,' because sympathy can weaken us instead of strengthen us. God does not pat us on the head and give us a piece of candy or a toy to distract our attention from our troubles. No, He puts strength into our hearts so we can face our trials and triumph over them.”

We are going to encounter difficult times in our lives, that is not the issue. It is how we handle those difficult times that will either bring peace through them or anxiety, all kinds of emotional issues! Be careful!

Paul is going to continue speaking on sufferings, the things we face in life and how we are to deal with them. Look at what he says next.

VERSES 5-7

Make no mistake about it, Paul was a man whose life was filled with suffering. You can read of some of these sufferings that Paul endured in II Corinthians 11:23-28. *Paul endured stripes . . . prisons . . . stonings . . . he was shipwrecked . . . perils of waters . . . robbers . . . perils of his own countrymen . . . perils of the Gentiles . . . perils in the city . . . perils in the wilderness . . . perils in the sea . . . perils among false brethren . . . perils in weariness and toil . . . he often went sleepless . . . he was in hunger and thirst . . . fastings, he was cold and naked!*

And through it all he understood that His Lord, Jesus, also suffered! I guess Paul did not read *The Power of I Am!*

A. W. Tozer said, “Before God can use a person greatly, he must allow that person to be hurt deeply.”

Now I don’t know about you, but I don’t like sufferings, and I have a feeling you feel the same! We just want to be used by God!

But in order to help you to minister to others, you have to learn to receive the comfort of God into your own life. And as Paul went through all these things Jesus was with him and He comforted Paul.

One writer rightly said, “As the hotter the day, the greater the dew at night; so the hotter the time of trouble, the greater the dews of refreshing from God.” (Trapp)

And please understand that God does not promise comfort to those who suffer for their unrepentant sin, but to those who suffer for Christ.

Also, if you are doing evil, then there will be consequences to your actions, that is not the tribulation that Paul is speaking of here as Peter tells us, **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”**

Jesus puts this into perspective in regard to suffering as He tells us in Matthew 5:11-12, **“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

Listen to how The Living Bible puts these verses here in II Corinthians 1:3-7, **“What a wonderful God we have-he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us. You can be sure that the more we undergo sufferings for Christ, the more he will shower us with his comfort and encouragement. We are in deep trouble for bringing you God’s comfort and salvation. But in our trouble God has comforted us-and this, too, to help you: to show you from our personal experience how God will tenderly comfort you when you undergo these same sufferings. He will give you the strength to endure.”**

The cost of being a follower of Jesus Christ is this. You will suffer for your faith! One of the most powerful illustrations I have ever heard about the purpose and power of suffering in being a witness, comes from a story that Michael Card tells about a man named Joseph, who had come to Christ out of his Muslim religion. We are told,

One day Joseph who was walking along one of those hot dirty African roads met someone who shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with him. Then and there he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit began transforming his life. He was filled with such excitement and joy that the first thing he wanted to do was go back and return to his own village and share the same good news with the members of his local tribe.

Joseph began going from door to door telling everyone he met about the cross of Jesus and the salvation that it offered, expecting their faces to light up just as his had. To his amazement the villagers not only didn't care they became violent. The men of the village seized him and held him to the ground while the women beat him with strands of barbed wire. He was dragged from the village and left to die alone in the bush.

Joseph somehow managed to crawl to a water hole and there after days of passing in and out of consciousness found the strength to get up. He couldn't understand the hostile reception he had received from the people he had known all of his life. Finally he decided that he must have left something out or not told the story correctly.

So after rehearsing the message he decided to go back and share his faith again. He limped into the circle of huts and began to proclaim Jesus, "He died for you so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God."

And again he was grabbed by the men of the village and held while the women beat him reopening the wounds that had just begun to heal.

Once more they dragged him unconscious from the village and left him to die. To have survived the first beating was truly remarkable, to live through the second was a miracle.

Again days later Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scared and determined in his heart to go back.

He returned to the small village and this time they attacked him before he had a chance to open his mouth. As they flogged him for the third and probably the last time, he again spoke to them of Jesus Christ the Lord and before he passed out the last thing he saw was that the women who were beating him had begun to weep.

This time he awoke in his own bed, the ones who had so severely beaten him were now trying to save his life and nurse him back to health, and the entire village came to know Jesus Christ.

- Michael Card

Look at all the pain and all the suffering that this man went through, for what?

So that he could be a witness of Jesus Christ to those around him and he was!

I wonder how much pain and suffering we are willing to go through so that others might know Jesus, see Jesus in us?

And I don't think this is a shocking statement for you, but we do need to understand it. We are going to have tribulation in our life, as I have said. We are going to face suffering. But also note that God will comfort us in the midst of these sufferings.

Please don't forget that or lose sight of that. Keep Jesus before you at all times and don't let the situations block out your view of Him!

I like the way that Philip Hughes put it. He wrote, "In the service of Christ . . . there may be disappointments, but there cannot be despair; there may be conflicts, but never doubt; there may be afflictions, but never without comfort."

VERSES 8-11

Here we see Paul speak of the “**trouble**” or “**tribulation**” that he was facing. It could be referring to the riot which took place in Ephesus that you can read about in Acts 19:23-41 or it could even be something else. Whatever it was, it was overwhelming to Paul.

Paul was discouraged, he was depressed, he was down! In fact, the tribulation he faced was so bad that he did not know if he was going to live or die each day according to verse 8.

The New Living Translation puts II Corinthians 1:8 like this, “**We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.**”

Now I don’t think we would picture Paul like this, but he is just like you and me! He went through tough times and it did affect him.

Now you may be thinking, “Why did God allow Paul to be brought to this point?”

One of the reasons is he had to come to the end of himself, trusting in how he was going to get out of these situations and learn to trust in the Lord no matter what. Thus, Paul knew in life and death God was there and even in death, God will resurrect these bodies, life is not over!

I remember when we first moved up here to Manitowoc, I had all these plans for the church and they were good, I felt everyone, especially the leaders were behind me and what I found out is that God had other plans, He needed to do other things.

Again, not my plans but His. And what the Lord did was He removed those that were not behind me.

And I will tell you this, it was like having the rug pulled out from under me. Key people in the church left and, in the end, I had to come to the end of myself and come to the conclusion that this is God's church and He will take care of it and He did, and He does!

Now, when things change, I just rest in the Lord. I have learned that God takes care of His church and He does a much better job than I could ever do. It doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt, it does, but my comfort is not from man but from God and He never fails me!

In saying that, think of it like this. ***"Maybe your marriage seems dead. Maybe your joy or love or peace or ministry seems dead. Quit trying to figure it out and fight it in your own energy. Instead, seek the Lord. Trust the God who specializes in raising the dead."***

And here's the thing. When things are going well, we tend to become lax in our relationship with God.

But when the fire is turned up, when we have no control, when we come to the end of ourselves, we come to God who comforts us and lifts us up, something He wants to do in our lives.

In Isaiah 41:10 we are told, **"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."**

And in Isaiah 40:31 we are told, **"But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."**

And please understand that Paul did not have this fatalistic attitude, a kind of whatever will be will be.

He coveted the prayers of the brethren for protection, for the work of God to continue on.

The leaders here at Calvary also covet your prayers in the work of the ministry.

You see, when you are seeing lives changed, people coming to the Lord and growing in the Lord, the enemy will try to stop you, and thus, prayer is needed!

Clarke put it this way, “Even an apostle felt the prayers of the Church necessary for his comfort and support. What innumerable blessings do the prayers of the followers of God draw down on those who are the objects of them!”

And Paul Barnett said, “Paul’s experiences of suffering and comfort in the course of his ministry is replicated in every generation in the lives of godly missionaries and pastors in their interrelationships with their congregations. While both minister and people suffer as they bear witness to Christ in an alien culture, there remains a distinctive role and therefore a distinctive suffering to the Christian leader. As the comfort of God is experienced in the life of the leader, so it will be passed on through ministry to the people.” How true that is!

#### VERSES 12-14

Remember that many in the church in Corinth did not like Paul and they were saying that he was fickle, Paul was unreliable. And we see here that Paul is defending himself against those accusations.

Back in I Corinthians 16:5 Paul spoke of coming to them and when he didn’t, they came to the conclusion that Paul was all talk, he really didn’t care for them, which was not true!

Paul had no hidden agenda, no ulterior motives, he came to preach Christ crucified, to bring them the Gospel message and to build up the believers in the faith, which did and does included correction when needed as we saw in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.



But there are always those who try to figure out what you mean when you say something, like “Hi, how are you doing?” or whatever.

That is a cynical heart and one that is not soft but hard towards others. Instead of looking for evil, look for good, trust that what they are saying has no hidden agenda, there are no ulterior motives.

Will you get taken at times? Of course you will! But don’t harden your hearts to people, keep your heart open and soft towards them.

And look at how Paul and his team conducted themselves.

We first see that they did so in “**simplicity.**” And, as I have said, this word speaks of not having an ulterior motive or double motive! That is important.

Also, Paul speaks of “**godly sincerity**” and the Latin word is *SINE CERA* and it means “*without wax.*”

Back in those days, the potters, those who made sculptures, if the pot cracked as it was heated, they would use wax, the dishonest dealers that is, and cover the cracks up.

If you knocked off an ear or nose when you were making a statue you could put it back on with wax. It would look perfect, no one would see the crack, at least not initially!

But, in the heat of day, the wax would loosen, and the nose would come off, the cracks would show.

Paul is saying that in the light of day, when the heat is on, his life was without wax, it was sincere, it was real and folks, may we be able to say that also, that we have a life that is full of godly sincerity!

We also see Paul use the word, “**conscience**” and he uses this word some twenty-three times in his letters. More than all the other New Testament writers combined.

And when we think of our conscience, we should see it as a warning system that God has placed in our heart and when we do something that is contrary to what God's Word says, the alarm goes off to warn us!

Remember the old Lost in Space television series and the robot. When there was danger, he would warn them, "Danger, Danger!" But the phrase we are probably more familiar with is, "Danger, Will Robinson!" Believe it or not, it was only used three times!

But that is what our conscience should do in our lives, warn us of the danger, it is a built-in alarm system!

And this is not just for believers, God's laws are written in all human hearts to warn them, but we can harden our hearts to the warning and before long, we don't hear the alarm any longer!

What happens many times is that when we don't listen to our conscience, we don't listen to the alarm that is going off, we feel guilty. And we don't like that, it makes us uncomfortable and the only way to get rid of that guilt is by getting right with God. Or, we can switch off our conscience, and, again, that is not a good thing!

Let me show you what I mean.

In 1984, an Avianca Airlines jet crashed into the mountains in Spain.

One of the first things crash investigators do is try to locate the "black box" cockpit recorder, which, by the way, is not black but usually a bright yellow, which makes it easier to spot.

When the box was found and the recording was played, the investigators made an eerie discovery. The recorder revealed that several minutes before the crash, a computer-synthesized voice from the plane's automatic warning system repeatedly told the flight crew in English, "Pull up, Pull up."

The pilot must have thought the system was malfunctioning.

The black box recorded his voice saying, "Shut up, Gringo," and then he apparently switched the system off.

Minutes later, the plane plowed into the side of a mountain and everyone on board died.

This is a tragic story, yet it's a perfect example of the way many people today are treating the warning messages that God has given to us in His Word.

What they are saying to God is basically, "*Shut up, Gringo!*" But there are consequences when we respond like that as we saw in this story!

And the way you switch off your conscience is to ignore it and justify why what you're doing is not wrong, I mean everybody's doing it and it feels so right so it can't be wrong.

***CRASH!***

#### VERSES 15-17

Again, the Corinthian Christians accused Paul of being untrustworthy, that he was unreliable. Why did they feel this way?

Because Paul said that he would come at a certain time and he did not come.

Paul wanted to but he was unable to come to them as he had planned, so he sent them a letter instead!

And they felt if they could not trust him here, how in the world could they trust anything he said, even that he was an apostle?

Back in I Corinthians 16:5-7 Paul told the Corinthians, **“Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.”**

You see, Paul went from Ephesus to Troas expecting to meet up with Titus, but he wasn't there so he went to Macedonia and didn't go to Corinth.

When Titus arrived, he told Paul what was happening in Corinth, and thus this second letter to the Corinthians.

And, because Paul didn't come to Corinth when he said he would, they were putting him down.

But Paul is saying here that he says what he means and means what he says.

Then why didn't he go to Corinth like he said he was?

Because he said he would go **“if the Lord permits.”**

That is the key in all that we do, if the Lord permits!

And, like Paul, we should be trustworthy, our yes should be yes, and our no should be no! Yes, the Corinthians could have been disappointed that Paul didn't come but to blame him was wrong, to hold it against him was wrong!

VERSE 18

Paul tells them that he didn't say one thing and do another; he was faithful, true to his promises, not like the Corinthian's were saying.

And our words should be true, we should be faithful in what we are saying to people. It is as Poole wrote, "As God is true to his promises, so he hath taught me to be true to mine."

Yes, our plans may change, and they do change, but keep in mind that the Gospel never changes! And we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 19-22

Paul wants them to think about what they are saying about him.

Paul preached of how Jesus is faithful, how He is reliable, how He is trustworthy and then for Paul not to be would fly in the face of what he believed, and it would show that Jesus had not impacted his life!

And how true that is for us. If we say one thing and do another, our witness will be poor. Be careful!

Paul also says that all the promises of the Father are in Jesus, they are seen in Him and given to us through Him! We don't have to worry that they are not for us, they are!

Then Paul tells us that we are anointed by God, by the Holy Spirit.

Now some hear this and they think of televangelists who claim "***I have the anointing of God brothers and sisters, the anointing of God on my life, I feel it, here it comes . . .***"

Folks, we all, as Christians have the anointing of God upon our lives, it speaks of being empowered with the Holy Spirit to move the Gospel message forward, to be a witness of Christ, to edify the body of Christ, to be able to discern between what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil.

We are told in I John 2:20, 27 and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“But you have been anointed by [you hold a sacred appointment from, you have been given an unction from] the Holy one, and you all know [the Truth] or you know all things . . . But as for you, the anointing (the sacred appointment, the unction) which you received from Him abides [permanently] in you; [so] then you have no need that anyone should instruct you. But just as His anointing teaches you concerning everything and is true and is no falsehood, so you must abide in (live in, never depart from) Him [being rooted in Him, knit to Him], just as [His anointing] has taught you [to do].”**

Secondly, the Holy Spirit has sealed us.

In ancient times the owner of some item would take his signet ring and place it in the wax on the container and it would signify that this was his, no one else could claim it or tamper with it. God has placed His seal upon us!

In Ephesians 1:13-14 we are told, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

This is so important for us to understand, that the Holy Spirit is working in accordance with the Word of God. Now for most if not all of you, that is not a problem. But for some, it is because they will say things like, ***“God is bigger than His Word and thus, He can do whatever He wants!”***

Is that true? Yes, it is true, but also understand that God does not work outside His Word. Now some may argue and say that I am quenching the work of the Holy Spirit because I am so strict to the Word! I need to be more open, freer to what the Spirit is doing!

Notice what we read here in Ephesians, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.”** Ephesians 1:13.

The Scriptures are clear on that and if we have truly repented of our sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives, then we are saved, not because I said so but because God has told us in His Word. There is no salvation apart from Jesus and thus, in Christ we can be assured of our salvation!

And that is Paul’s point here as he tells us, **“... you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.”** Ephesians 1:13. Who are the ones who are sealed? Those who are in Christ, those who have trusted in Him, those who have believed, those who are saved!

And please do not think this seal can be broken, it can’t! When Paul tells us that we have been **“sealed”** in the Holy Spirit, SPHRAGIZO (sfrag-id’-zo) in the Greek, he is speaking of sealing up, preservation.

You see, the moment we believe in Christ we are sealed instantaneously by the Holy Spirit, we are the property of the King of kings and Lord of lords!

I like the way one writer summed this up for us. He wrote, “The seal is therefore the Holy Spirit Himself, and His presence in the believer denotes ownership and security. The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling or some mysterious inward experience.”

Exactly and think about it. If the Holy Spirit has sealed you and the Holy Spirit is Almighty God, the third person of the Holy Trinity, do you think anyone is going to be able to unseal you? Of course not!

And notice when the sealing takes place. It is after we have trusted in the Lord and not before, which would not make sense to be before.

J. Vernon McGee summed it up like this as he wrote in his commentary on Ephesians, The Holy Spirit is the seal, and that guarantees that God is going to deliver us. We are sealed until the day of redemption. The day will come when the Holy Spirit will deliver us to Christ. It’s nice to be sealed like that – we are just a letter that is insured. In the old days they would put a seal on it. Today they just stamp it with a special stamp, but it still means that the post office guarantees to deliver that letter.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. V, p. 226

So not only have we been sealed with the Holy Spirit, but Paul also tells us that the Holy Spirit is our **“guarantee of our inheritance.”**

Now we all know what the word **“guarantee”** means. It speaks of assurance, a promise, that you will do something and that is what we see here in Ephesians 1:14.

When Paul speaks of our **“guarantee”** he uses the Greek word ARRHABON, (ar-hrab-ohn’) and this word speaks of the “purchase-money or property given in advance as a security for the rest” or what we would call today, earnest money.



This promise is that the Lord is coming back one day and what the Holy Spirit is doing is being a kind of down payment guaranteeing that the Lord will be back for us, His bride. Now that is interesting to me because this can also speak of an engagement ring!

Thus, can you lose your salvation once the Holy Spirit has sealed you?

No way, you can't be stolen away or tampered with, you belong to God and the Holy Spirit has placed His seal upon you!

Listen to how Spurgeon sums up these verses here in II Corinthians for us. He wrote, "We might never have had this precious verse if Paul had not been so ill-treated by these men of Corinth. They did him great wrong, and caused him much sorrow of heart . . . yet you see how the evil was overruled by God for good, and through their unsavory gossip and slander this sweet sentence was pressed out of Paul."

Man can do things for evil, but God has a way of turning it around for good. Never forget that!

#### VERSES 23-24

Paul is telling the Corinthians that it was a good thing for them that God closed the door so that he could not come to Corinth and see them because if he came, he would have probably been too harsh to them! He is honest here.

Even though Paul was an apostle and had authority over them, he did not lord over them but told them he is a fellow worker, part of the body of Christ just as they are.

They did not stand upon Paul's faith but on their own and like Paul, their work should be done to bring joy to the body of Christ as lives are transformed by the power of God's Spirit!