

**WCCC 2015**

**Serving God's Purpose in the Corinthians letter**

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Time really flies. Quickly, we are at the last evening of the conference and we will conclude our conference tomorrow. Our deepest desire is that the Lord will return soon. We also hope that if this conference is the last one, then we shall be gathered together with our Lord next year. I think that will be a very wonderful thing. I believe that this is the deepest belonging of all the brothers and sisters here. I often have a desire for the Lord to return soon, for I have a very selfish reason. If the Lord returns, I don't need to preach anymore. Preaching is really a heavy burden to me. Of course, if the Lord delays, we will continue to preach. Tonight, we will continue to fellowship with brothers and sisters. My burden is to fellowship with brothers and sisters from the Corinthians letters. I would like to ask brothers and sisters to read the Word of God with me.

We will first turn to I Corinthians 4:1-2.

*But concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know, (for we all have knowledge: knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. If anyone think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it.*

Then II Corinthians 3:1-11.

*Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some, commendatory letters to you, or commendatory from you? Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God: not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God; who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens. (But if the ministry of death, in letters, graven in stones, began with glory, so that the children of Israel could not fix their eyes on the face of Moses, on account of the glory of his face, a glory which is annulled; how shall not rather the ministry of the Spirit subsist in glory? For if the ministry of condemnation be glory, much rather the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory. For also that which was glorified is not glorified in this respect, on account of the surpassing glory. For if that annulled was introduced with glory, much rather that which abides subsists in glory.*

Then II Corinthians 4:1.

*Therefore, having this ministry, as we have had mercy shewn us, we faint not.*

Verses 5-7:

*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us:*

Verses 10-12:

*Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body; for we who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; so that death works in us, but life in you.*

Verse 18:

*While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal.*

Then II Corinthians 6:1-4.

*But as fellow-workmen, we also beseech that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: (for he says, I have listened to thee in an accepted time, and I have helped thee in a day of salvation: behold, now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation:) giving no manner of offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves as God's ministers, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in straits,*

Then II Corinthians 10:3-5.

*For walking in flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds; overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ;*

Then II Corinthians 12:1-5.

*Well, it is not of profit to me to boast, for I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knows;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body I know not, God knows;) that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter. Of such a one I will boast, but of myself I will not boast, unless in my weaknesses.*

Verse 11:

*I have become a fool; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended by you; for I have been nothing behind those who were in surpassing degree apostles, if also I am nothing.*

We have mentioned to brothers and sisters that not only does our God have His glorious purpose, He also has His works. In the Old Testament, every time the word “work” is mentioned, the word “wonderful” is put right before it. This can also be translated as “His works” and “His actions.” We also mention that God’s works is His revelation and His government, which are two very important things. These two things are carried out in parallel. We can see that the Apostle Paul not only received the revelation from the Lord, but He also knew how to govern God’s church.

Therefore, through revelations, God allows us to understand His glorious purpose, which is a great matter. That is also a glorious matter to us which we need to see. But brothers and sisters, God does not only want us to see, He also wants us to know how to govern His church. In the Corinthian church we see this. All the issues that Paul dealt with were in a local sense. For example, someone committed fornication and married his stepmother. There were lawsuits in court. There were issues dealing with their daily living and conduct, issues concerning marriage and how they ate meat. Not only that, there were also many issues involving their local assemblies such as head coverings, breaking of bread, and exercising of gifts. We can see in the Corinthian church that there were many local issues. Paul was trying to explain and solve their problems. We know that Paul in other letters also mentioned the issues concerning Christian’s walk. Those teachings were more in the general sense. They were applicable at any time and in any generation. For the Corinthian church, those issues were specified for the locality there. That has to deal with the government in the local assembly.

Thank the Lord that Paul had this great revelation and that he also dealt with the local issues in the local assembly. We have already mentioned, concerning the government in the church, we need to use God’s way to govern so that we can serve God’s purpose in the local assembly. God’s glory is not only in heaven, but we can also usher it onto the earth. Therefore, we say that we need to use God’s way to govern His church.

We know that God’s purpose is Christ, and yet the way to fulfill His purpose was “Christ crucified”. Through “Christ crucified”, we can gain power, love, and hope of resurrection. All these were ushered in by “Christ crucified.”

Now in the local assemblies, we are governing God’s church. These are very important factors. If we do not have this, it will be difficult for us to govern the local assemblies. Therefore, in I Corinthians, the main point is concerning the government in the church. Paul allows us to see how to use God’s way to govern in the Corinthian church. We thank God that He was pleased to entrust the government of the local church to man. Therefore, we all need to know what God’s way is. Only through God’s way, we can govern His church. God has entrusted this burden of serving to us.

In the morning, our elder brother mentioned to us that our service to God is a very noble thing. Not only that, the church that we serve is very noble and that is a very precious thing in the heart of God. Therefore we know that God wants to gain a group of people who can govern His church.

### **Christ Jesus is the example**

In Paul's letters, he refers to these people as servants and ministers. To these people, God has high and detailed requirements. That was true in the ancient times and is just as true nowadays. If you are in a big household, and the owner of the household is in a high position, then the household servants cannot be just casual servants. The owner will carefully select his servants. Isn't that true? So brothers and sisters, we are in the household of God, and we are serving in the house of God. Therefore, God has very detailed requirements for His servants. God won't just arbitrarily place His house in anyone's hands. If you are a casual servant, you will destroy the house of God. In church history until today, many churches would not be recognized as the house of God. This is because those who serve in the house of God are too casual. Therefore, He requires those who serve to be according to His heart and purpose. We thank our Lord that He came to the earth to be the servant of God. He is the best standard for the servants of God. This morning, our elderly brother has made a very clear depiction of how our Lord behaved as a servant.

In Hebrews 3, it talks about Jesus Christ as the Son of God who is over the house of God. In the beginning of that verse, it says that Jesus was faithful just like how Moses was faithful in the house of God, but He was worthy of more honor than Moses. This is because Moses was a part of the house of God, whereas the Lord Jesus was the true builder of the house. Jesus Christ is thus the highest standard for the image of a servant of God. Therefore, for our service, we need to look to our Lord as the model. If we cannot reach that requirement, we can only cause trouble in the church. Often times, I encourage the serving brothers that service is to resolve issues, not to cause more problems. Sadly, many servants of the Lord are troublemakers. So if today, our service cannot be in accordance with the heart and will of the Lord, then we become troublemakers. This is the general condition today. Therefore, our Lord came and set Himself as the example and so we will use our Lord as the model for service. If we can be in accordance with Him, then we can bring blessing to the house of God.

### **The Lord is the trainer**

Our Lord was not only the perfect model, but He Himself was also trainer of the servants of God. We really thank the Lord we were sinners who were saved by grace and now we are able to serve our Lord. He has made each one of us priests.

God does not allow us to serve Him according to our own will. Often times, we ask someone to serve. That person may then be filled with zeal, and will start to use his wisdom and experience to serve. Indeed, God wants us to serve Him, but He wants us to serve Him in His way. We need to serve according to His ways. If we don't serve according to His ways, then you will not add profit to the work of the Lord but rather damage the work. Therefore, God trains man to become His servants.

There are many great examples in the Bible of how God trained man to be His servants. I think the brothers and sisters are very familiar with the story of Moses. How did God train him to become His servant? God put Moses, who was highly educated, very eloquent in speech, and mighty in power, in the desert for 40 years. This was the way in the Old Testament times. Without that training, Moses was useless in the hands of the Lord. However, he was very useful in Egypt. This is the same today with many brothers and sisters. We are very useful in the world, but we are not necessarily useful in the work of God. We need to go through the training of God.

### **The Holy Spirit is the best teacher**

We thank the Lord that in the New Testament times, training became easier and more practical. You don't need to be saved and put in the desert for 40 years. I think that not too many of us can live as long as Moses go through those 40 years. Therefore, the way of training in the New Testament times was a bit different as it was under the leading of the Holy Spirit. When we are saved, we start to learn and serve. God has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us to train us to be a servant of God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the best way of teaching. Many of us who have children understand that some households are better off. They can hire tutors to their house to teach. Then, to select the tutors one has to be very careful, because it will a big impact on the future of the children. When the tutors are done teaching, they leave. Even if your household is very well off and can keep the tutor in the house, he cannot teach the kid every matter. But our God is different. His teaching is very detailed and practical. And He uses every matter to teach us because we are like a treasure in His eye. And He has great emphasis placed on us. He sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.

Therefore, when John was in his later years, he said that Christians just need to follow the teaching of anointing. We don't need to be taught by man. This means that we don't need external teachers. Brothers and sisters, we already have the best teacher within.

When I was young, there was an elderly sister who was very familiar with the Word. She really knew how to teach the way of the cross. Very interestingly, many sisters would bring questions concerning the Bible to her. Every time they asked her, the sister said, "I don't know." They asked "How do you not know? Whenever you share, it is very clear. How can you not know?" Then she would ask them, "Have you been saved?" They would say, "Of course! I've been saved for 20 to 30 years." Then she would say, "Since you have been saved for so long, don't you have

the Holy Spirit in you?” They would say “Of course I do.” Then she say, “Then go back and ask the Holy Spirit!” She really knew how to bring people before the Holy Spirit. So brothers and sisters, we don’t need anyone to be our teachers.

We like to say that as a teacher, the worst case is to misguide others. If you are a teacher in the world and you misguide others, then you are a bad influence. Moreover, if you do so to the children of God, that will be even worse. Every Christian is a child of the Father. They are honorable but it doesn’t mean that we are qualified to be one’s teacher. God did not put us in the hands of man, but rather in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we know how to follow the Spirit, then we will experience the best training.

As we enter into service, the Holy Spirit will teach us. We thank the Lord that the spiritual training does not require a special classroom. The local assembly is the best training ground. I thank the Lord in the many years that I have been saved that I have learned many lessons in the church. Every difficulty arose, the Holy Spirit showed me the way to solve it, more teaching, more understanding the Word of God. This is far better than reading any commentary. Those words are dead and the experience brought by the Holy Spirit is living. I really admire someone who has good memory, for I often forget about God’s Word when I read it. Yet the things I learned in the church, which were taught by Holy Spirit, are the things that I can remember for a lifetime.

Therefore, we can see in the New Testament times that the way of training by God was different than the Old Testament times. Learning can be anywhere and anytime. For a Christian, we just need to read the Bible well. The Bible is like a manual and the Holy Spirit leads us according to the Word of the Lord and He leads us into a condition that is desired by God. So for a Christian, following the leading of the anointing is very important.

### **Paul is an example**

In the first century, Paul was a good example under the new covenant. Paul was a good example because He imitated Christ very much and our Lord is the greatest example. Brothers and sisters, we have to confess that if we want to serve God, serving by ourselves is very hard to do. It’s not just I say this, but Paul also said this. Paul said it wasn’t because of us that we can take up the ministry. He said this in I Corinthians 15:10. He said “What kind of person I have become, it is because of the grace of God.” He said “I am the least of all the apostles.” He said, “I am not worthy to be an apostle, because I was a persecutor of the church.” According to his condition, he was not qualified to serve God, yet he became an apostle who was greatly used by God. He said that the only way he could do was by the grace of God, thank the Lord. Paul wasn’t born as a servant of God. When we look at Paul, we often say, how can we be able to match up with him? But when we hear Paul said “I can be the servant of God” is by the grace of God. So

don't lose heart, the grace of God will lead you to the same condition. Brothers and sisters, we thank the Lord that God will enable us.

Now we see in the First century, he testified for the Lord in a wonderful way. He didn't just receive a ministry from the Lord, but also had to become a good minister to fulfill his ministry from God. So in II Corinthians, there are two words, in English translated as "ministry" and "minister", which is difficult in the Chinese translation. In Chinese the two words sound the same. We know that ministry is concerning matters and the minister is concerning man. There are also sometimes where "minister" is translated as "servant." From a Chinese perspective, being a servant is very lowly. As a matter of fact, being a servant is dependent on whose servant you are. In the ancient times, if you were an emperor's servant, then you had great power; in this case, the word "servant" is a good word to use. Paul was entrusted from God a ministry, and he was a good minister. I hope the Lord can use us and that we are fit for use. It doesn't matter in what capacity, it is good as long as we're being used. So brothers and sisters, may the Lord have grace upon us.

Sometimes, something have been used by some famous person, that thing become valuable. One time, when we were in a school in Texas. I was walking through a hallway, and I saw a frame and there was a pen in it. I was curious why they framed a pen, and it turned out that President Johnson had used that pen, Johnson was an alumni of that university, so they framed that pen. Of course, you could buy that type of pen easily, but that particular pen, which was used by President Johnson, was invaluable. So brothers and sisters, if we can be used by the Lord of all, the Creator, for just one moment, then the value is immeasurable. We should aspire to be a servant in the hands of the Lord.

Of course, Paul was a good servant. We can see in such a difficult church in Corinth, he was able to fully express the function of a servant of God. II Corinthians talks about being a servant of God. In such a difficult condition, he was able to express the glory of the Lord. This reminds me of one thing when I was a student in school. One time we were testing a metal. How did we test it? We took a piece of metal which was dark and opaque. We put it in the furnace and we heated it up. When the temperature was raised to white-hot, we found that this opaque, unattractive metal would suddenly emanate a brilliant light, so bright that it could hurt our eyes.

So brothers and sisters, this reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that our Lord eventually went to the cross. The condition prior to His crucifixion was a difficult experience. He was betrayed by Judas. His disciples were dispersed. He was judged in the high priest's court. He was slapped, spit on, wore a crown of thorns, whipped, and then He was given to the hands of the Romans. Then He was crucified on the cross. We can see that the power of darkness surrounded our Lord. At the end, He was even forsaken by God. Our Lord suffered to the limit. It was as if the fire in the furnace had reached white-hot. At that moment, we can see that His spirit emanated a brilliant light. It shook the heaven and the earth. The heaven was darkened and there was a great shaking on Earth. Suffering will enable the spiritual life to have more light.

Paul was in the Corinthian church like he was in a great furnace. We thank the Lord that our brother allowed the spiritual life to emanate a brilliant and beautiful life. If you read II Corinthians, you can see that this servant of God allowed the light of the life to emanate through him in his ministry. So brothers and sisters, God wants to use proper people to govern in His church. We can see how Paul can serve God's purpose in this situation.

### **A steward of the mysteries of God**

I and II Corinthians are very rich in content. We cannot fully explain both. We can only roughly look at some key points and hope they will bring us some encouragement.

In I Corinthians, Paul tells us that a servant of God should be a steward of the mystery of God. We thank God that He is pleased to entrust His mysteries to man. But what are the mysteries? We know that God Himself is the greatest mystery. God's purpose is a great mystery in the universe. That cannot be fully comprehended by man. We thank our God that it pleases Him for us to understand His mysteries. Therefore, in Galatians, Paul says that the mystery of God is Christ. Christ is the concrete expression of the mystery of God. So today, we can understand the mystery of God through Jesus Christ. We can then understand what the mystery of God is. God doesn't only reveal to us how to understand His mysteries, He also makes us a steward of His mysteries.

The steward should understand every detail of the household. In the old times, households all had stewards who had great power. They were supposed to know everything about the master. They would also manage everything on behalf of the owner. God has given us such great grace, which He didn't even entrust into the hands of angels. God wants us to be the stewards of His house which is such a glory. We need to receive the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit inside of us in order to understand the abundance in this household.

One time, I shared with a group of young brothers and sisters. "Do you not know what kind of precious condition you are in?" This assembly is like a household. This household has received a lot of abundance through church history. Allow me to say this: if you step outside the boundary of our assemblies, a lot of Christian are fellowshiping based on earthly matters. And we have received such a great inheritance. Every time I think about that, I give thanks to the Lord with all of my heart. Sadly, many young brothers and sisters don't understand this.

Of course, considering God's mystery, what we have received today is still only a portion of it. And we are serving our Lord. But if you don't have any understanding concerning the mystery, it will be very hard for us to serve. God wants us to be the steward of His mysteries, and the steward is not the owner but a servant. Therefore, the Bible tells us that a steward is required to be faithful. So, in the church of God, you cannot turn the things of God into your own, and you

shouldn't steal things, steal the glory of God. Everything should be done according to the ways of God. Therefore Paul tells us to serve God well and govern in the house of God.

### **The ministers of the new covenant**

In II Corinthians, he refers to these servants as the ministers of the new covenant. So brothers and sisters, we know this is a bit different than the Old Testament because the Old Testament was under laws and regulations. However, the new covenant is in life. Because of time limit, we can only briefly fellowship about a few key points on II Corinthians. He says that the new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Spirit. In II Corinthians 3, he says that the ministry is of the Spirit not of the letter. That is to say if you want to serve as a spiritual servant, you have to serve under the guardian of the Holy Spirit and not following regulations. He also said that this ministry is the Holy Spirit working in human hearts. It is really a wonderful ministry. In the past, I've seen the Holy Spirit truly able to write in many brothers' and sisters' heart. We know that the heart is the most sensitive part of the body. If you can write letters on the human heart, you are touching that heart. Sometimes, a simple word can be remembered throughout a lifetime. Brothers and sisters, we aren't just transferring knowledge to others, but by the Holy Spirit, write words in man's heart. The Holy Spirit has a piercing power. That is very precious, and Paul was a minister of such.

The Spiritual ministry is also a ministry of righteousness. It is not a ministry of condemnation. What is a ministry of righteousness? It is one that corrects, restores and builds up. Paul said that this is a glorious ministry.

### **Do not lose heart**

In II Corinthians 4:1, he says "upon this heavenly ministry, we do not lose heart." In chapter 4, he mentions do not lose heart twice. Brothers and sisters, when God gives His entrustment to us, it is very hard to carry out on the churches on earth for a lot of times. When we are faced with our circumstances, we are fearful. When we lose heart, we become hypocrites, we become false, we will be unfaithful, we will lose courage, we will tolerate evil and we may compromise. We see these conditions a lot in the churches on earth. Therefore, Paul says as a minister onto the new covenant, he shall not lose heart. The work he has been doing is a commendation to the conscience of man. This is an interesting thing, because our conscience speaks for God. Our conscience does not speak for you or for me. For example, we don't agree on some people, but, your conscience say he is right. At the same time you agree on someone, but your conscience say they are not right. Therefore, for the servants of God, we don't need to make recommendations for ourselves, the conscience of man will be your recommendation. All we need to do is to serve God faithfully.

Thank the Lord that Paul is such a good example. Paul says do not lose heart because there is treasure in the earthen vessels. We know that Christ is that treasure, and we are that earthen vessels. Thank God. We need to see ourselves as earthen vessels. Brothers and sisters, even from man's perspective, we are nothing. Yet, we have to know that there is such precious treasure in us.

Every time I read the words "earthen vessels," the Lord reminds me of a story of an elderly brother who has already been received by the Lord. He was a very faithful servant of the Lord and was full of experiences. I myself had received much help from him. One time, he mentioned a story that was very interesting. He said that when he was serving in Malaysia, there was an elderly sister who cared for him very much. She wasn't very educated. She knew our brother was not in very good health, so she wanted to make some chicken soup for him. Before she brought the chicken soup to him, there was another sister who went to the brother and told him not to drink the soup that the sister was going to bring to him. It was because after the chicken soup was done, that sister couldn't find any vessel but a urinal to hold the soup. But "don't worry," she said, "it was a new vessel and it hasn't been used before." So the elderly sister brought soup to him in a urinal. Our brother looked at that vessel that was supposed for urinary, he felt very difficult. But he said that chicken soup was really good. He was able to preach two more times after the soup. So he said the vessel is not that good, but the contents are good. Brothers and sisters, that is our condition today.

### **The death of Jesus Christ**

Paul saw himself as an earthen vessel. We see him as a great servant of God who was so honorable and had great power. Paul said, "It was not me." This is because there is great treasure in the vessel, and therefore, we do not lose heart. He continues to say that we are carrying in our body the death of Jesus Christ. That means we have this sentence of death and we have been sentenced to death. We know the death of Jesus Christ is such a meaningful thing to us. Without that death, there would be no way out concerning the difficult things in our life. Because of that death, many things from our defiled nature can be removed. We thank God that we can die to ourselves so that we then can live to God. Now Paul said that we are carrying in our body the death of Jesus. This means that anywhere anytime, we are supposed to carry it. The difference between us and Paul is that we don't carry it around often.

Thank God Paul says that if there is reality of death, then there is effectiveness of life. Of course, as man, we have a concept of morality. Sometimes, because of what we have learned, we try not to let our temper explode. But that is not the right condition. The death of Jesus is not something to be moral merit. It is not a religious practice. Therefore, our death is the death of Jesus. Only when we have the right death can we have the fruit of life. So if you want to die, you need to die

correctly. If you die incorrectly, it won't work. So we need to understand the death of Christ. This death and this life will bring about a fragrance. Man cannot bear with it.

So brothers and sisters, Paul continues to say that we are looking at the things that are not seen. Why do we not lose heart? Because things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal. The phenomenal things that you can see will pass away eventually. Whether we are welcome or not welcome is a small matter, because it will pass away. We need to look at the things which are not seen. Paul tells us if you want to look at the things not seen, your inner man needs to be strengthened. The stronger your inner man is, the better you will be able to see the things that are not seen. Then we can look lightly on the suffering on this earth and pay attention to the glory that is beyond measure.

### **Faith is not by sight**

Therefore, in chapter 5, he says that we walk by faith and not by sight. Even though our earthly tents will continue to decay, it doesn't matter. We shall have this best chance to please the Lord. The things that can be seen represent the wisdom and experience of man. We need to believe in our Lord. We won't make a judgment according to the things that can be seen. Paul want to please the Lord. We know that love and pleasure are different. God loves us, but He may not be pleased with us. This pleasure is related to reward. Not only do we know God loves us, we also hope that He is also pleased with us. That means when the Lord looks at us, He has a smiling face. We don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit, and we don't want to allow the Holy Spirit to frown. That is the learning we should have as part of the new covenant ministry. We know one day we will come to judgment seat of Christ where all things will be exposed. Paul continues to say that he was constrained by the love of Christ and that he served the Lord because he was captured by the love of the Lord. He said that we will no longer recognize Christ according to the flesh. We knew Him according to the flesh, but now we need to know Him in the light of revelation. We now need to be a minister of Christ and an ambassador of Christ in order to reconcile man to God.

### **Co-working with God**

Continuing in chapter 6, he says we need to be a good servant of God, in order to be a good servant is to co-work with God. He also says that even we are willing to be slandered by others, but we won't allow the ministry to be discredited. In the entrustment of God, personal loss is the least concern. He also said what made him a servant of God. He used several prepositions to explain it, such as IN, THOROUGH and AS IF. So there are some internal conditions to be "in". There are also some process to go "through". He also had conflicts concerning spiritual matters. He says "as if" to describe several conditions. I'm sorry, my time is up so I can only briefly

mention it. Paul suffered much for the Lord, and he used these sufferings to command to man as a servant of God. We can see that he had a great heart like a father. We can see that the new covenant ministry was fully and beautifully developed in the life of Paul, especially in Corinth, in such a difficult condition.

### **Some opposition**

When Paul sent the letter over, some brothers submitted. And yet, from chapter 10-13, we can still see some opposition. What was Paul's response to this opposition? We know that in service, there is always opposition. No one servant of the Lord will be welcomed by all. We truly hope that there will be no difficulty among all Christians but it is impossible. Even when our Lord was on this earth, He was opposed by many. And there were many opposing the apostles when they were on earth too. But we need to consider this as tests in our circumstances. Therefore, Paul says that we will never make war according to the flesh. He wanted to serve with the gentle meekness and peace of the Lord. He hoped that through this service, he will bring back man's heart.

We can see that there is no negative thought in Paul. He only had negative thought against himself. The authority given to him was to edify him. Therefore, he never boasted about himself. Also, his ministry was to make the people of God pure and to hope that the people of God would be a chaste virgin. We see in the First century that the apostles fought the fight concerning the purity of the church and it was a great warfare. For the churches on earth today, we truly feel that the church has lost its purity. It is also a great warfare and it is a difficult fight.

Even though there are many oppositions, Paul never lost heart. Also, in the Corinthian church, he was pushed to the point where he had to talk about his personal experience. Paul says that it is necessary for him to say because you force me to. He says that he does it as a foolish man. Brothers and sisters, if we had any such an experience, we would say it immediately. Paul talked about his experience in the third heaven fourteen years later after he was forced by the brothers and sisters in Corinth. If I were him, and if I were up in the third heaven last night, everyone would have known about it today. We would be boasting about our own experience. Paul sets a good example for us saying it is foolish to talk about such things. So brothers and sisters, Paul was able to stand firm before this opposition. He was able to bring some positive encouragement to the church. So brothers and sisters, God's household is such a precious thing. God does not easily entrust His household to anybody. God wants man to become a useful vessel. Someone who can govern in the house of God; they have to accept the hand of God. We truly feel that in the current generation, there is such an urgency in the heart of the Lord. May we respond to the calling of the Lord to give ourselves to Him. May the Lord do His work in us. We serve God's purpose not only in heaven but also in our local assemblies. May the Lord be glorified through our service on this earth.

Let us pray:

Lord we want to thank You with all of our hearts. You chose the unworthy man to serve You, because there is nothing good in us and there are lowly desires in us. But You have never forsaken us. You are to do your work in us. Just like Your work in the life of Paul and how You changed him, so that he could become a vessel useful in Your hands to govern Your church. Lord we know there is such urgency in Your heart. You desire to gain more useful vessels. Lord we want to say to You that we are here. Even though we're not worthy, we are willing to give ourselves into Your hands so that every brother and sister would go through Your making to become a useful vessel, so that together we can govern Your house. May our days on this earth, in our assemblies, give You glory. Lord hear our prayers, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

West Coast Christian Community