

## 2 Corinthians 1. Bethesda Bible Teaching. 1 April 2015.

As you know, our reading for this evening consists of the first chapter of 2 Corinthians ...

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed<sup>1</sup> be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all encouragement,<sup>2</sup> who encourages us in all our affliction, that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.

For just as *the sufferings* of Christ abound towards us, so<sup>3</sup> also *our encouragement* abounds through Christ.<sup>4</sup> If we are afflicted, it is for<sup>5</sup> *your* encouragement and salvation. If we are encouraged, it is for *your* encouragement, which enables you to endure the same sufferings which we suffer. And our hope for you is firmly grounded, for we know that, as you share the sufferings, you also share the encouragement.<sup>6</sup>

For we do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, about the affliction which happened to us in Asia. For we were exceedingly burdened,<sup>7</sup> beyond our strength,<sup>8</sup> so that we despaired even of life itself.

But we *ourselves* had the sentence of death in *ourselves*, that we should not rely on *ourselves*, but on God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great<sup>9</sup> a death, and who will deliver us; in whom we trust<sup>10</sup> that He will continue to deliver us, you also helping together by prayer for us, that thanks may be given on our behalf by many<sup>11</sup> for the gift bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

For our glorying is this,<sup>12</sup> namely, the testimony of our conscience, that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, and especially so towards you. For we do not write anything to you that you cannot read and understand;<sup>13</sup> and I hope that, as you have already understood us in part, so you will come to understand fully that we are your glorying, just as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

And with this confidence<sup>14</sup> I had planned<sup>15</sup> to come to you first, that you might have a double benefit,<sup>16</sup> and to pass through you into Macedonia, and from Macedonia to come to you again, that you might help me on my way to Judea.

When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or the plans which I make, do I make according to the flesh, that with me there should be 'Yes, Yes',<sup>17</sup> and at the same time 'No, No'?

But as God is faithful, our word to you is *not* 'Yes' and 'No'.

For *the Son of God*, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us (by me and Silvanus and Timothy)<sup>18</sup> was *not* 'Yes' and 'No', but in Him is 'Yes'!

For however many the promises of God, in Him is the 'Yes', and through Him the 'Amen', to the glory of God through us.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ, and who has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and has given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.

But I call God to witness against my soul, that it was to spare you that I have not yet come to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy; for you stand by faith.

As we might expect, Paul opens his letter with a conventional form of salutation, comprising the three elements common to all of his epistles and to other correspondence of his day; namely, the names of the writer and of the intended recipients, and a greeting – although we note that he is careful, at the outset of his letter, to assert his divinely-appointed apostleship, which he knew was being seriously challenged by some at Corinth.<sup>19</sup>

Following his salutation, Paul begins his letter proper with an outburst of praise and thanksgiving. But before we look at this, I want to draw attention to one particular word which occurs in one form or another no less than ten times between verse 3 and verse 7. It is the word which our translation renders 'encouragement'<sup>20</sup> or, as a verb,<sup>21</sup> 'encourage', 'encourages' or 'encouraged'. This is certainly one of the key words of the letter, appearing 29 times in all,<sup>22</sup> and flies like a banner over the entire epistle, from this opening paragraph<sup>23</sup> right across to the closing paragraph.<sup>24</sup>

The word Paul uses covers a wide range and wealth of meanings,<sup>25</sup> and I am aware that many translations render the word as 'comfort' or 'consolation' in our section ... and yes, undoubtedly that is

the right translation in some contexts elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> But I am satisfied that here – as in other sections in this epistle – the primary reference is to encouragement<sup>27</sup> ... and in part at least to the encouragement which God provided to the apostle both by his long-awaited meeting with Titus, and by the good news which Titus brought him about the response of the Corinthian saints to his (Paul's) earlier letter.<sup>28</sup>

I am in full agreement, therefore, with Warren Wiersbe, who entitled his short commentary on this letter 'Be Encouraged'. And I note in passing that this particular word is often used outside of scripture of the rallying call to troops about to go into battle, encouraging them to fight.<sup>29</sup>

And so to verse 3. The opening clause of Paul's outburst of praise and thanksgiving here echoes similar benedictions, found both in the Old Testament<sup>30</sup> and in first-century synagogue worship.<sup>31</sup>

As you know, the full opening expression of praise mirrors exactly those in both Ephesians 1 and 1 Peter 1.

But, whereas the expression of praise in Ephesians 1 focuses on the Christian's past blessings,<sup>32</sup> and, whereas the expression of praise in 1 Peter 1 whets our appetite with the vision of the Christian's future blessings,<sup>33</sup> the apostle's outburst of praise here points us rather to the Christian's present blessings.<sup>34</sup> Taken together therefore, these three benedictions highlight what God has already accomplished, will yet accomplish, and is even now accomplishing for us His people.

When Paul wrote this letter, he was facing two distinct forms of 'affliction', and he later speaks twice of being 'afflicted in every way'.<sup>35</sup> As he said, from outside he faced conflicts, strife and opposition, and inside he suffered fears and anxiety. As we will see shortly, he has occasion to cite one instance of his outward affliction in our passage for this evening,<sup>36</sup> and as you will discover next week, God willing, he will soon refer to an occasion of acute inward affliction which he had suffered in the recent past.<sup>37</sup> And in very different ways both these forms of affliction were on account of the Corinthians.<sup>38</sup>

This letter begins on a somewhat different note to that which opened the letter we know as First Corinthians. There he began by thanking God for the grace which He (God) had given them and for the spiritual gifts with which He had enriched them.<sup>39</sup> Here he begins by praising God for the encouragement<sup>40</sup> and the past deliverance<sup>41</sup> which He (God) had granted to him – although he knew that the encouragement which he (Paul) had received would overflow to them.<sup>42</sup>

But first, the apostle introduces his readers to God as both the Source of mercies<sup>43</sup> and the Supplier of encouragement.<sup>44</sup>

And the One of whom Paul wrote in chapter 1 verse 17 of his epistle to the Ephesians as 'the Father of glory',<sup>45</sup> and of whom James wrote in chapter 1 verse 17 of his epistle that He is 'the Father of lights',<sup>46</sup> is here given the title 'the Father of mercies'<sup>47</sup> – 'the Father of' being a common Jewish idiom indicating that He is the source and the originator of these things.<sup>48</sup> And God, Paul is saying, is the source and originator of tender feelings of pity, sympathy and compassion<sup>49</sup> – especially 'for the ills of others'.<sup>50</sup> And, no less than David of old, we certainly needed 'the multitude' of God's 'compassions' (the same word in the Greek Old Testament) to blot out our transgressions!<sup>51</sup>

But not only that. For the One of whom Paul spoke elsewhere as 'the God of endurance',<sup>52</sup> 'the God of hope',<sup>53</sup> 'the God of peace',<sup>54</sup> and 'the God of love and peace',<sup>55</sup> is here given the title, 'the God (not, I note, simply 'of encouragement', but 'the God of') all encouragement'.<sup>56</sup> And, with my eye on this verse, along with Peter's description of our God as 'the God of all grace',<sup>57</sup> I guess it would be right to say that these are two things on which God has the monopoly – 'encouragement' and 'grace'.<sup>58</sup>

But if verse 3 tells us what God is, verses 4 to 11 tells us what He does; namely, first, that He encourages us in and through our trials,<sup>59</sup> and, second, that He often – though not always<sup>60</sup> – sees fit to deliver us out of our trials.<sup>61</sup>

As Paul dictated his letter, with hindsight he could see two distinct benefits which had resulted from his past 'affliction'. First, he could see that the encouragement which he received personally from God trained, equipped and enabled him to encourage more effectively others who were called on to pass through similar<sup>62</sup> – if not always identical<sup>63</sup> – trials and troubles to those which he suffered himself.<sup>64</sup>

And we can hardly miss the word 'that' in verse 4. 'The God of all encouragement', Paul says, 'encourages us in all our affliction, that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God'.<sup>65</sup>

Yes, we know the Lord can encourage His people directly by His Spirit.<sup>66</sup> And yes, we know the Lord can encourage His people through His word.<sup>67</sup>

But not infrequently, He chooses to use other believers to do this.<sup>68</sup> And no one knew that better than the apostle. We have only to think of the glowing testimony which he gave in Colossians 4 to three men, who were not only his fellow-countrymen, but, as he says, were his 'fellow-workers for the kingdom of God', and who, and I quote, 'have been an encouragement to me'<sup>69</sup> ... or that which Paul said about Titus in chapters 2 and 7 of this very epistle, where the apostle looked back on a period in his life of bitter disappointment and discouragement.

First, in chapter 2 ... 'When I came to Troas ... I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find Titus my brother'.<sup>70</sup> But then contrast what the apostle has to say in chapter 7 ... 'I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in spite of all our affliction. For indeed, when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way; outside were fightings, inside were fears. But God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us by the coming of Titus ...'.<sup>71</sup>

What a tremendous blessing men like Aristarchus, John Mark, Jesus Justus, and Titus must have been to Paul in the midst of his many trials.<sup>72</sup> And yet, as you will have noted, he speaks here of something rather different. For now he speaks of one believer's personal experience of God-sent encouragement as that which prepares him or her to come alongside another believer who is passing through the same kind of experience, and to provide that second believer with such sympathy and encouragement as can come only from someone who has passed that same way.<sup>73</sup>

Let me cite just one more recent example. It is well known that there were times when C. H. Spurgeon suffered from acute attacks of despondency and depression. I will let the great man tell in his own words of one incident relevant to our passage for this evening...

One Sabbath morning, I preached from the text, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?" and though I did not say so, yet I preached my own experience.

I heard my own chains clank while I tried to preach to my fellow-prisoners in the dark; but I could not tell why I was brought into such an awful horror of darkness ...

On the following Monday evening, a man came to see me who bore all the marks of despair upon his countenance. His hair seemed to stand upright, and his eyes were ready to start from their sockets. He said to me, after a little parleying, "I never before, in my life, heard any man speak who seemed to know my heart. Mine is a terrible case; but on Sunday morning you painted me to the life, and preached as if you had been inside my soul".

By God's grace I saved that man from suicide, and led him into gospel light and liberty; but I know *I could not have done it if I had not myself been confined in the dungeon in which he lay*.<sup>74</sup>

But I said earlier that, with hindsight, Paul could see two distinct benefits which had resulted from his past 'affliction'. The first was the way in which this prepared him to minister encouragement to others who faced the same or similar trials and affliction, and, in so doing, to bring them that which served their best interests.<sup>75</sup>

But there was a second benefit. For the effect of his most severe affliction ... when he felt so utterly weighed down, beyond human powers of endurance – when he was brought so low that, as he said, he 'despaired even of life itself'<sup>76</sup> ... the effect, I say, of this horrendous experience was to totally shatter every last vestige of self-confidence, and to cast him without reserve on God. For Paul felt himself to be so overwhelmed and hemmed in by his circumstances that the only direction he could look was up!

Indeed, so keenly did he feel himself to be under 'the sentence of death' that, as he saw it, his only possible resource at the time was, in his own words, 'God, who raises the dead'.<sup>77</sup> Talk about being brought to the end of oneself!

I suspect that, at that point, the apostle would have had no problem relating to Annie Johnson Flint's memorable expression, 'When we reach the end of our hoarded resources'.<sup>78</sup> And I suggest that these words, coming from someone who was herself no stranger to great suffering and loss,<sup>79</sup> captured Paul's sentiments 'to a T'.<sup>80</sup> God had kicked away Paul's last prop!

I know that Mr Farr isn't here, but I can't resist passing on to you something I read recently about chrysanthemum plants. Apparently, and I quote, 'Chrysanthemums need a lot of darkness to produce a good flower ... In fact, the darker the night, the brighter the bloom'.<sup>81</sup> I cannot comment on this botanically,<sup>82</sup> but many of us know cases of godly believers who, as Paul, have proved the truth of those last words spiritually: 'the darker the night, the brighter the bloom'.

'Exceedingly burdened, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life itself', Paul wrote. And reverting to a more familiar patch for Malcolm than growing show chrysanthemums, let me quote again from Mr Spurgeon – this time from one of his sermons:

'In heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere ... "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library";<sup>83</sup> and let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us ...'.<sup>84</sup>

Paul had concluded the section down to verse 7 by assuring the church that he had every confidence in the majority of them<sup>85</sup> – a point to which he will return several times later in the letter<sup>86</sup> – and that he knew that just as they shared in the same sufferings for Christ<sup>87</sup> as he did (although not so 'abundantly' as he<sup>88</sup>), so they would enjoy the same encouragement as he did.

But in verse 8, Paul switches from that which he knew about them, to that which he wanted them to know about him.

But to exactly which of his experiences Paul refers in verses 8 to 11 I really do not know, and I feel that little, if anything, is to be gained by guesswork.<sup>89</sup> What I do know is that for the greater part of his Christian life this remarkable man not only faced adversity and adversaries, but that he could see death constantly staring him in the face.

The story is the same (i) whether we listen in to his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus (the capital city of the Roman province of Asia<sup>90</sup>) and to his comments then about the trials through which he passed as a result of the plotting of the Jews;<sup>91</sup> (ii) whether we recall his words in his earlier epistle to the effect that he was constantly exposed to danger and to death, and had already had occasion to fight with wild beasts (which I take to be a figurative reference to his conflict with extremely hostile and vicious human adversaries) at Ephesus, where, as he said later, he did face 'many adversaries';<sup>92</sup> (iii) whether we note some of his expressions later in this very letter about 'always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake',<sup>93</sup> and about the deadly perils to which he was frequently exposed;<sup>94</sup> or (iv) whether we read the application he made to himself a short time later of the Old Testament text, 'For your sake we are put to death all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for slaughter'.<sup>95</sup>

Who knows, perhaps that 'dynamic duo', Priscilla and Aquila, who on one occasion hazarded their lives ('risked their very necks') for Paul,<sup>96</sup> did so during the dire but undefined episode referred to in verse 8, when the apostle was at death's door.

As a generalisation, the apostle's motto could be said to be, 'never distressed, never despairing, never deserted and never destroyed'.<sup>97</sup> 'Never despairing', did we say? And yet here was at least one exception. The apostle's affliction in Asia (whenever and whatever it was) caused him, he says himself, to despair 'even of life itself'.<sup>98</sup> Such an experience must have been grim in the extreme!<sup>99</sup>

And I note that, among others,<sup>100</sup> the Jewish historian Josephus uses the very word we here translate 'sentence' to indicate a decision – a verdict – of the Roman senate.<sup>101</sup> And indeed, there is an inscription dated<sup>102</sup> just a few years before Paul wrote this letter which reports a 'decision' reached by the then Emperor, Claudius.<sup>103</sup> Some have suggested therefore that the apostle is here saying that he had seen himself as a man condemned to die, and who had lodged an appeal, only to receive 'the answer – the decision' that his petition had been rejected, and that he must die. And I note that the English Revised Version, following this suggestion, rendered verse 9, 'we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves'. And I take this to mean that, when asking himself what were his prospects, the only answer he could give was 'death'.

But, in whichever way we interpret the word Paul used, it is clear that, humanly speaking, he saw no hope of acquittal or further appeal – he was doomed to die. But, looking back on that time, the apostle now realised that it was God who had brought him down to rock bottom, and this that He might wean Paul away from confidence in himself to confidence in Him (God) alone.<sup>104</sup> And one likely evidence of the success of the Lord's procedure is the apostle's acknowledgement a little later, 'Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God'.<sup>105</sup>

And it is the God, Paul was confident, 'who delivered us from so great a death ... who will deliver us'.<sup>106</sup> And the apostle's confidence held out to the end of his days. In what was possibly his last letter, he wrote, 'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work'.<sup>107</sup> This, surely, is the reasoning of faith – that the God who has proved Himself to us in the past can surely be trusted with our future. For what God has done for us before, He is able to do for us again.<sup>108</sup>

It was the very same 'reasoning of faith' which inspired young David to engage the formidable Philistine champion in battle. Keeping your eye on Paul's words here, listen to David's words to Saul when Saul attempted to talk him out of fighting Goliath by arguing that the son of Jesse was too

young and inexperienced; 'and David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand (same word) of this Philistine".<sup>109</sup> David was convinced that what God had done in the wilderness of Judah, He could do in the valley of Elah! That, I say again, is the reasoning of faith. And many of us have much to learn from both David and Paul. There can be no doubt that our own past experiences of God's proven goodness, faithfulness and provision should inform and sustain our faith both in the present and for the future. Yes, but, alas, often they don't! Do we not each need to pray with Louisa Stead:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust Him more!<sup>110</sup>

But I cannot help contrasting Paul's past experience which he reports here (of being delivered from what he describes as 'so great a death') and his past experience which he reports in chapter 12 – the painful experience of his 'thorn in the flesh', from which, in spite of repeated prayer, he was most certainly not delivered.<sup>111</sup> And this contrast pinpoints another lesson in spiritual life which I have to learn; namely, that, however much I may pray about some issue or problem, in the final analysis I must leave it to the Lord to decide when to bring me out of the trial and when to sustain me through it. Because, like it or not Malcolm, the Lord knows best – and He reserves the right to make that decision.

In theory at least, I know that the all-wise Lord has my best interests at heart, and that He knows how much I can bear – how much I can cope with.<sup>112</sup> I am aware I have quoted them before, but I make no apology for quoting again the insightful words of Mr Wiersbe, 'When God puts His children into the furnace, He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer'.<sup>113</sup> Surely then I should trust Him to decide what is best in any given circumstance.

At the close of verse 10, the apostle expresses his confidence that God would continue to deliver him,<sup>114</sup> but in the same breath he encourages the Corinthians to work together both with him and with God in making intercession for him, and this to the end that, in due time, they will be able to offer their thanksgiving to God for his deliverance.<sup>115</sup>

So, if Paul is able to minister to their needs, by way of words of personal encouragement,<sup>116</sup> they are able to minister to his needs by way of words of prayerful intercession.<sup>117</sup>

'You also helping together by prayer for us', are his words, where the expression, 'helping together', translates a word which carries the idea of 'working under and alongside'.<sup>118</sup> Later in the chapter, he uses a similar word when he speaks of himself as 'working with them'. But the word here adds the idea of some burden or pressure 'under' which the work is being done. The vivid picture here is therefore probably that of someone labouring under a great burden, when others come alongside to share the toil and the load with him. What a thought then we have here. That, when some believer somewhere is labouring under some great pressure, others come underneath alongside to share his burden – and they achieve this, Paul insists, by prayer!

I think it's correct to say that, in no less than seven of his letters which we possess, the apostle confesses his need for personal prayer support. He clearly set great store by the power of intercessory prayer.<sup>119</sup> For he knew that God acts and works<sup>120</sup> through the prayers of His people<sup>121</sup> ... that their prayers are God's way of getting His work done. For this reason, Paul valued the prayer fellowship of other saints very highly.

And the projected outcome? The result? That many would have occasion to thank the Lord with upturned faces (as the Greek word suggests) on account of the favour – the deliverance, that is – granted to Paul in response to their prayers. And we can hardly miss that 'many' give thanks because 'many' prayed. I can hardly imagine a greater stimulus to pray for others (whether those we label 'God's servants', or not – and whether overseas, or not) than the knowledge that we can help share their load at the time, and that we may well be able to share their rejoicing when our prayers for them are answered.

But clearly, at this point I need to change gear.

It has been well said, 'Blessed is the man who has nothing to hide'.<sup>122</sup> And, faced with the situation where some at Corinth questioned his sincerity and truthfulness, the apostle is at pains to make it clear in verse 12 that there were (i) no hidden actions in his life ('we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity), and (ii) no hidden motives in his heart ('not in fleshly wisdom' – 'not by calculating shrewdness' – not with any mixed motives – 'but by the grace of God') ... and in verse 13 that there were (iii) no hidden meanings in his words ('we do not write anything to you that you cannot read and understand'). He did not write, he insisted, to deceive, saying one thing but meaning something else. There was never anything hidden between the lines of his letters.

As often, Paul appeals to his own conscience as his witness.<sup>123</sup> And, given that he is defending himself against a charge of duplicity, he appeals first to his 'simplicity'; that is, to his singleness of mind.<sup>124</sup> His second appeal is to his 'godly sincerity', which latter word describes that which is transparent, that which can bear the test of being scrutinised with the sun shining through it. Happy indeed is the person who is genuine, whose every action will bear the light of day.

In spite of accusations levelled against him by some, Paul could point to at least a partial recognition on the part of many Corinthians of what he really was, and he expressed the hope that their confidence in him would both increase and continue to the end, and that on the great day of review the majority at Corinth would hold him in high esteem, even as he did them.

In verses 15 to 17, Paul refers to his recently revised travel plans, to defend himself against the charges directed against him by some that he was fickle and untrustworthy.

Frankly I have to confess that with so little data to hand, I am unable to be dogmatic about exactly what Paul planned to do (and when), what he failed to do, and what he did in the end.

But, as I see it, we do know three things for sure. First, that, when he had dictated his earlier letter, he had then expressed the hope that, the Lord permitting,<sup>125</sup> he would spend no little time with the Corinthians after he had left Ephesus and had visited Macedonia to their north.<sup>126</sup> We know, second, that, at some time (either before or after he sent his earlier letter), he had planned and made known a different itinerary, then intending to visit the Corinthians, not once but twice – once on the way to Macedonia and then again on his return journey when heading for Judea<sup>127</sup> – thereby given the Corinthian church the 'double benefit' of two visits.<sup>128</sup> And we know, thirdly, that, in the event, for reasons you will discover next week, he appears not to have executed either of these plans.<sup>129</sup>

It is easy to see why to some it appeared that, at best, Paul wasn't particularly concerned about his relationship to them, and, at worst, that he was a fickle kind of person who made plans and promises 'lightly' ('frivolously'), and who then thought nothing of going back on his word.

And we should bear in mind two factors pertaining to the world of Paul's day. First, that 'ancient literature regularly condemns fickleness and unreliability while praising those who keep their word',<sup>130</sup> and, second, that hospitality was extremely important in the ancient world, and that for Paul to fail to visit them – after promising to do so – was a slight on their hospitality.<sup>131</sup>

But, for whatever reason, some at least at Corinth were not amused, and took the opportunity of casting serious doubt on the man's integrity. And so, in response, Paul insists that he did not formulate his plans according to the unprincipled motives of worldly men.<sup>132</sup>

But matters were more serious than might have seemed. For it's clear that the vocal minority accused Paul of being untrustworthy, not only in his travel plans, but in his gospel. Evidently they reasoned, 'If we cannot trust Paul's everyday promises, how can we possibly trust the message he brought?'<sup>133</sup>

In brief, Paul's answer is that we can rely on God, and that there is no wavering in Jesus between 'yes' and 'no'. Given the gravity of the challenge, first he calls, not now his conscience,<sup>134</sup> but God Himself to the witness stand ... calls, that is, the God who is faithful in every way,<sup>135</sup> and whose word is ever trustworthy.<sup>136</sup> For God's promises are neither changeable nor ambiguous. What He promises He performs.

And I suggest that Paul's expression 'our word to you' in verse 18 carries a double meaning – that it covers both all Paul had said to them about his proposed visit, and whatever he had said to them in his gospel preaching at Corinth. And it is on this latter sense that the apostle builds in verses 19 and 20. For, since God Himself is trustworthy, and since the Lord Jesus is the subject and theme of God's gospel, this quality of trustworthiness is equally true of Him – and, indeed, in Him the final 'Yes' and through Him the 'Amen' have been sounded to every last one of God's promises.

Verses 21 and 22 establish that the God who is faithful to His promises is faithful also to His people – both to Paul and his associates,<sup>137</sup> and to the Corinthians.<sup>138</sup> And in these verses Paul brings together four great blessings, all brought to us by the Triune God.<sup>139</sup>

First, in Christ God has 'established' us, the word being a technical term for a legal guarantee.<sup>140</sup> That is, our security 'in Christ' is, as it were, legally safe-guarded by God Himself.<sup>141</sup>

Second, the God who in Old Testament days authorised the anointing of nobody other than prophets,<sup>142</sup> priests<sup>143</sup> and kings,<sup>144</sup> has 'anointed us' – thereby setting us apart and equipping us to serve Him.<sup>145</sup>

Thirdly, God has marked us out as His own possession by stamping us with the seal<sup>146</sup> of the indwelling Holy Spirit.<sup>147</sup>

And, fourthly and finally, God has given us that same indwelling Holy Spirit as the pledge (the 'first instalment', as the word indicates, 'of a payment made as a guarantee that the rest is sure to follow') ... has given us the indwelling Spirit as the pledge of our future glorious – not to say, eternally secure – inheritance.<sup>148</sup>

And I propose to stop there, leaving verses 23 and 24 where they properly belong – attached to next week's passage, to chapter 2, and forming an integral part of the section which extends down to the end of verse 4.

But, as my parting shot for this evening, linking together the two blessings we find in verse 22 reminds me of something I read in a book which Linda gave me half a century ago. And I quote ... 'The sealing of the Spirit is, I know that *I am* God's property. The earnest of the Spirit is that *I have got* property'.<sup>149</sup>

What an incredibly privileged people we are!

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> We get the English word 'eulogy' from the Greek word.
- <sup>2</sup> 'The God who gives every possible encouragement'. *New Jerusalem Bible*.
- <sup>3</sup> 'To the same extent'.
- <sup>4</sup> Because of the encouragement which God provides, Christians are able not only to endure their troubles, but also to rejoice in them, 2 Cor. 12. 10; James 1. 2-3.
- <sup>5</sup> 'In the interests of'.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Paul sets up a balance sheet. The expression share abundantly renders the term *perisseuō*, part of a family of words that is commonly used in commercial contexts to express profit or surplus. In effect, Paul images two columns. In the one column, headed "Sufferings for Christ," he enters the sufferings that he has experienced on behalf of Christ (cf. v. 6). The addition line shows a surplus. That is, they are almost unbearable. But the other column reads "Consolation" and also shows a surplus. For the same Christ who is ultimately responsible for Paul's sufferings provides generous consolation. And because Paul has more consolation than he needs for himself, he can be a source of consolation to others'.
- <sup>7</sup> 'Weighed down, like an overloaded ship', C. K. Barrett, *Black's NTC: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 64.
- <sup>8</sup> Literally, 'that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power'.
- <sup>9</sup> As Heb. 2. 3.
- <sup>10</sup> 'Hope' – *ηλπικαμεν*.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Many' is literally 'many faces'. This provides us with an attractive picture of many radiant faces turned upward toward heaven offering thanks to God for His answers to the united prayers of Paul and themselves.
- <sup>12</sup> There are 28 references to 'glorying' ('boasting') in this letter, more than in the rest of the New Testament taken together.
- <sup>13</sup> Paul is fond of such a play on words: 'anaginōskete', 'epiginōskete'.
- <sup>14</sup> Because Paul was confident that the majority of the saints would boast of him as their true apostle, he had initially desired to pay them a double visit.
- <sup>15</sup> 'Intended'; see TDNT, volume I, page 632, footnote 53.
- <sup>16</sup> Literally, 'a second grace'.
- <sup>17</sup> The "Yes" has specifically to do with his promise to revisit Corinth.
- <sup>18</sup> Silas and Timothy were involved with Paul in the establishing of the church at Corinth, Acts 18. 5..
- <sup>19</sup> His apostolic authority was under fire at Corinth.
- <sup>20</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 2, 3, 4, 6(2), 7.
- <sup>21</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4 (3), 6.
- <sup>22</sup> The verb (*parakaleō*) 18 times and the corresponding noun 11 times.
- <sup>23</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 3-7.
- <sup>24</sup> 2 Cor. 13. 11.
- <sup>25</sup> Including 'beseech' and 'exhort'.
- <sup>26</sup> For example, 1 Thess. 4. 18.
- <sup>27</sup> See Albert McShane, *What the Bible Teaches: 2 Corinthians*, page 256, footnote 3.



<sup>28</sup> 2 Cor. 2. 12-13; 7. 5-7. ('But He who encourages those that are (brought) low, (even) God, encouraged us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but also through the encouragement with which he was encouraged as to you; relating to us your ardent desire, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I the more rejoiced')

<sup>29</sup> 'Parakaleo' is used of exhorting troops who are about to go into battle. Aeschylus (Persae 380) says of the ships sailing into battle; "The long galleys encouraged each other, line by line". Euripides (Phoenissae 1254) describing the plans for battle says: "So did they hail them, encouraging them to fight". Xenophon uses it of urging the soldiers to embark upon the ships and to set out on an adventurous voyage (Anabasis 5.6. 19). Polybius uses it of Lutatius addressing his troops before a naval battle with the Carthaginians (1.60.5). He also uses it of Demetrius rallying his men and addressing the ranks before they embarked upon battle (3.19.40) ... Again and again we find that 'parakaleo' is the word of the rallying-call; it is the word used of the speeches of leaders and of soldiers who urge each other on. William Barclay, *New Testament Words*, pages 220-221.

For page 221, see ...

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ngnOdquk9DUC&pg=PA221&lpg=PA221&dq=barclay+the+word+used+of+the+speeches+of+leaders+and+of+soldiers&source=bl&ots=ltRaMlleT0&sig=fNCDGijV6TCn0TM0nM6QjmSL3s&hl=en&sa=X&ei=OeEPVdVuKcGE7ga9\\_oCgAg&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=barclay%20the%20word%20used%20of%20the%20speeches%20of%20leaders%20and%20of%20soldiers&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ngnOdquk9DUC&pg=PA221&lpg=PA221&dq=barclay+the+word+used+of+the+speeches+of+leaders+and+of+soldiers&source=bl&ots=ltRaMlleT0&sig=fNCDGijV6TCn0TM0nM6QjmSL3s&hl=en&sa=X&ei=OeEPVdVuKcGE7ga9_oCgAg&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=barclay%20the%20word%20used%20of%20the%20speeches%20of%20leaders%20and%20of%20soldiers&f=false)

<sup>30</sup> 1 Chron. 29. 15; Dan. 4. 34.

<sup>31</sup> '... the first of the nineteen synagogue benedictions, which arose in the New Testament era: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God and God of our fathers ..."', Paul Barnett, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 67.

<sup>32</sup> 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has* blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as He *has* chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world ... *having* predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself', Eph. 1. 3-5.

<sup>33</sup> 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... has begotten us again to a living hope ... to an *incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you*', 1 Pet. 1. 3-4.

<sup>34</sup> 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all encouragement, who *encourages* us in all our affliction'.

<sup>35</sup> 2 Cor. 4. 8-9 ('We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed'); 7. 5 ('For indeed, when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way; outside were fightings, inside were fears').

<sup>36</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 8.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Cor. 2. 4.

<sup>38</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4, 6; 2. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor. 1. 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4.

<sup>41</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 10.

<sup>42</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4-7.

<sup>43</sup> 'God is the "Father of mercies" in two senses. He is their source; all mercies we enjoy come from Him. Moreover He is the Father characterized by mercy, the merciful Father. The Greek construction permits both senses, and Paul probably intended both', Thomas Constable. It may be patterned on the prayer of the synagogue. "O our Father, merciful Father" (אב הרחמים, āb hārāḡāmîm), which introduces the Jewish confession of Israel's faith, the Shema.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Eph. 1. 17.

<sup>46</sup> James 1. 17. Cf. also Heb. 12. 9.

<sup>47</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gen. 4. 21 ('Jubal ... was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe'; and John 8. 44 ('the devil ... is a liar and the father of lies').

<sup>49</sup> This 'designation is a common one in Judaism', TDNT, volume V, page 161.

<sup>50</sup> W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Merciful' C.2.

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 50 (51). 1 LXX. 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, when he had gone to Bathsheba. ... according to the multitude of your compassions blot out my transgression'.

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 15. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Rom. 15. 13.

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 15. 33; 16. 20; Phil. 4. 9; 1 Thess. 5. 23.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Cor. 13. 11.

<sup>56</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 3.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Based on Harry Ironside's comment: "There are two things of which God is said to have the monopoly: He is 'the God of all grace' and He is 'the God of all comfort.' All grace comes from Him, all lasting comfort comes from Him". *Addresses on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 17.

<sup>59</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4-7.

<sup>60</sup> E.g. 2 Cor. 12. 7-10. Compare also Dan 3. 17-18: which can be expanded to, 'We declare that God *can*; we believe that He *will*; we recognise He *might not*, we pray that He *does* ... but, in any case, we're not bowing!'

<sup>61</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 8-11.

<sup>62</sup> 'In *any* affliction', 2 Cor. 1. 4.

<sup>63</sup> 'The *same* sufferings', 2 Cor. 1. 6.

<sup>64</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4, 6.

<sup>65</sup> "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters", John Henry Jowett.

<sup>66</sup> 'The churches throughout the whole of Judaea and Galilee and Samaria ... walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied.' Acts 9. 31.

<sup>67</sup> 'Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope'. Rom. 15. 4.

<sup>68</sup> And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David ... and strengthened his hand in God (which I understand to mean that he 'encouraged him in God'). 1 Sam. 23. 16.  
In effect, Jonathan strengthened David by putting David's weak hand into God's almighty hand!

<sup>69</sup> Col. 4. 10-11. Even the apostle Paul both needed and appreciated encouragement in his service for God. Consider the following anecdote about Abraham Lincoln. "About halfway through a PBS program on the Library of Congress, Dr. Daniel Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, brought out a little blue box from a small closet that once held the library's rarities. The label on the box read: 'Contents of the President's Pockets on the Night of April 14, 1865'. Since that was the fateful night Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, every viewer's attention was seized. Boorstin then proceeded to remove the items in the small container and display them on camera. There were five things in the box: 1) a handkerchief, embroidered 'A. Lincoln', 2) a country boy's pen knife, 3) a spectacles case repaired with string 4) a purse containing a \$5 bill -- Confederate money(!) and 5) some old and worn newspaper clippings. 'The clippings,' said Boorstin, 'were concerned with the great deeds of Abraham Lincoln. And one of them actually reports a speech by John Bright which says that Abraham Lincoln is 'one of the greatest men of all times.' In 1865 that was not a prevalent opinion. The President's critics were fierce and many. There is something touchingly pathetic in the mental picture of this great leader seeking solace and self-assurance from a few old newspaper clippings as he reads them under the flickering flame of a candle all alone in the Oval Office.'" From 'The Quest for Character' by Charles Swindoll, pages 60-61. See also ...

<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0012/bicentennial.html>.

<sup>70</sup> 2 Cor. 2. 13.

<sup>71</sup> ‘... and not only by his coming but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged by you’, 2 Cor. 7.4-7. God encouraged Paul by the coming of Titus to Macedonia, just as Titus had previously been encouraged by the Corinthians. Paul in turn will encourage the Corinthians. Divine encouragement thus comes full circle, from the Corinthians, through Titus to Paul, and back to the Corinthians.

<sup>72</sup> What a tremendous boost they must have given to him and his service!

<sup>73</sup> And who could therefore identify fully with that which the other was passing through. Consider the supreme example; Heb. 2. 18; 4. 15.

Prometheus expresses a common complaint when he says to the chorus (Aeschylus, Prometheus 263–265):

How light for those who feel no pain to give  
advice to those whose life is weal and woe.

With related strains in Sophocles’ Trachiniai (729–730), Deianira chides the chorus:

Such things no partner in grief would say,  
but one who knows at home no bane.

And Shakespeare (Much Ado about Nothing, act V, scene 1) echoed the sentiment:

Men can counsel and speak comfort to that grief which they themselves not feel.

Epictetus (Diss. III. 23.8) and Seneca (Cons. ad Polyb. 15.5) state the principle that in human experience sufferers can aid those in like circumstances to their own.

<sup>74</sup> *Spurgeon: An All Round Ministry*, pages 221–222.

<sup>75</sup> Their ‘salvation’, that is, 2 Cor. 1. 6. Cf. the general and wide sense given to the word ‘salvation’ in Phil. 1. 19. In 2 Cor. 1. 6 ‘salvation’ may refer to deliverance from despair.

<sup>76</sup> He could see no way out – no way of escape; nothing but death awaited him.

<sup>77</sup> In God lay his only true security. The description of God as one ‘who raises the dead’ (see Deut. 32. 39; 1 Sam. 2. 6, LXX) is drawn from a well-attested understanding of God’s power in the Jewish liturgy. The second prayer in the Eighteen Benedictions runs: ‘Thou, O Lord, art mighty forever; thou makest the dead to live’. Cf. Rom. 4. 17.

<sup>78</sup> From the second verse of her poem, ‘He giveth more grace’:

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.

See ... [http://www.preceptaustin.org/annie\\_johnson\\_flint%27s\\_biography.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/annie_johnson_flint%27s_biography.htm)

<sup>79</sup> Orphaned when young, for most of her life she suffered crippling affliction from severe arthritis.

<sup>80</sup> See ... <http://grammarist.com/usage/to-a-t/>

<sup>81</sup> See ... [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=p1DrQulpYFWc&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=chrysanthemums+darkness&source=bl&ots=ccrKmtZS0\\_&sig=0ClpfjHjJFOQXrIxBYqVurkPcM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=rf0VL\\_wLeOR7Ab8qYA4&ved=0CDIQ6AEwA3gU#v=onepage&q=chrysanthemums%20darkness&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=p1DrQulpYFWc&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=chrysanthemums+darkness&source=bl&ots=ccrKmtZS0_&sig=0ClpfjHjJFOQXrIxBYqVurkPcM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=rf0VL_wLeOR7Ab8qYA4&ved=0CDIQ6AEwA3gU#v=onepage&q=chrysanthemums%20darkness&f=false)

<sup>82</sup> But compare ‘Garden mums are photoperiodic, meaning they bloom in response to shorter days and longer nights. A night length of 12 hours tends to trigger bud formation’.

<http://www.chrysanthemumsvancouver.com/photoperiodic.php>

<sup>83</sup> compare, ‘It would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me, that the bitter cup was never filled by his hand, that my trials were never measured out by him, nor sent to me by his arrangement of their weight and quantity ... I am afraid that all the grace that I have got of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable... Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister’s library’, C H Spurgeon, quoted in. Darrel W. Amundsen, ‘The Anguish and Agonies of Charles Spurgeon,’ in: Christian History, Issue 29, Volume X, No. 1, 25.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2922.html?start=4>, and <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2922.html?start=5>

<sup>84</sup> ‘The Christian’s Heaviness and Rejoicing’, preached on 7 November 1858 at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens. See ... <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0222.htm>

<sup>85</sup> The word translated ‘firmly grounded’ is a common commercial term, signifying secure; cf. Rom. 4. 16. See C. K. Barrett, *Black’s NTC: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 63.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 2. 3; 7. 16; 8. 22.

<sup>87</sup> In view of his comments in 2 Cor. 4. 10–12, it is likely that he has in mind the sufferings which befell him because of his proclamation concerning the Lord Jesus. Cf. Col. 1. 24. Sufferings, that is, on account of association with Him.

<sup>88</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Tertullian provides us with the earliest comment that has come down through history; and he claimed that Paul in this passage referred to his fighting wild beasts at Ephesus, stating that Paul ‘enumerated it to induce an unfaltering belief in the resurrection of the flesh’. (‘On the resurrection of the flesh’, 48) Paul had already mentioned that episode (whatever it was) in the first epistle (1 Cor. 15. 32). But would Paul, as a Roman citizen, been thrown to the beasts?

<sup>90</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 8. That which is now western Turkey.

<sup>91</sup> Acts 20. 19.

<sup>92</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 30-32. I suspect that the reference to fighting with wild beasts in verse 32a is figurative – in much the same way as he later wrote to Timothy about being ‘delivered out of the mouth of the lion’, 2 Tim. 4. 17 – which I take to be a veiled reference to Emperor Nero. It is interesting that Heraclitus, an earlier Greek writer from Ephesus, had spoken of his fellow-citizens as ‘wild beasts’. More generally, the Greeks used the term ‘wild beasts’ to describe a violent, fierce mob. And it was probably very shortly after dictating these words that two of his friends, Gaius and Aristarchus, were almost pulled to pieces by the mob, Acts 19. 29. No doubt, Paul could see the storm already gathering – and ranked these ‘wild beasts’ among his many opponents – the ‘adversaries’ – to whom he later refers, 1 Cor. 16. 9.

<sup>93</sup> 2 Cor. 4. 11.

<sup>94</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 23.

<sup>95</sup> Rom. 8. 35-36.

<sup>96</sup> Rom. 16. 4.

<sup>97</sup> ‘We are hemmed in on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed’, 2 Cor. 4. 8-9. As far as the *first* expression is concerned, in Greek there is a beautiful paronomasia, which might, perhaps, be expressed in English by ‘pressed, but not oppressed’. Literally the words mean, ‘being at a loss, but not utterly at a loss’. J. B. Phillips paraphrases the *last* expression, ‘... we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!’

<sup>98</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 8.

<sup>99</sup> But although the Apostle may despair of life, he does not despair of God.

<sup>100</sup> For example, Polybius, Xenophon, and Suidas.

<sup>101</sup> See especially, C. J. Hemer, ‘A Note on 2 Corinthians 1. 9’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972) 103-107 ... [http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull\\_1972\\_23\\_05\\_Hemer\\_2Cor1\\_9.pdf](http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1972_23_05_Hemer_2Cor1_9.pdf). And for general information, B. Palme, *Roman Litigation* ... [http://iowp.univie.ac.at/sites/default/files/IOWP\\_palme\\_litigation02.pdf](http://iowp.univie.ac.at/sites/default/files/IOWP_palme_litigation02.pdf)

Deissmann wrote of a decree of Julius Caesar (full name ‘Caius Julius Caesar’): ‘When they (Hyrchanus and his sons) desire an audience, they shall be introduced into the senate by the Dictator, or by the General of the Horse; and when they have introduced them, their *answers* (ἀποκρίματα) shall be returned them in ten days at the furthest, after the decree of the senate is made about their affairs’, Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 14, Chapter 10, Section 6. ‘For this manifestly very rare word in 2 Cor. 1. 9., Clavis 3.p. 43, gives only the reference Joseph. Antt.14,10,6. Thayer, p. 63, supplements this by Polyb. Excpt. Vat. 12, 26 b, 1; in both passages an official decision is meant. The word occurs in the same sense in the Inscription (particularly worthy of consideration by reason of its proximity in time to the Pauline passage) IMAe. 2 4 (Ehodes, 51 A.D.), in which *ra evfcratorara* (νροκπι^αρα certainly relates to favourable decisions of the Emperor Claudius’, G. A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, page 257.

For the Greek text of Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 14, Chapter 10, Section 6, see ...

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0145%3Abook%3D14%3Awhiston+chapter%3D10%3Awhiston+section%3D6>

<sup>102</sup> AD 51.

<sup>103</sup> More details on page 104 of C. J. Hemer, *ibid*.

<sup>104</sup> See, 'With regard to our cares and trials, Christ does not take us out of them: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world". While He leaves us in the world, He leaves us liable to all that is incident to man; but, in the new nature, teaches us to lean on God', J. N. D., "The Spirit, Not of Power, but of Fear," in *The Christian Friend* (1874).  
<http://www.stempublishing.com/magazines/cf/1874/The-Spirit,-Not-of-Fear,-But-of-Power.html>.

<sup>105</sup> 2 Cor. 3. 5.

<sup>106</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 10.

<sup>107</sup> 2 Tim. 4.17-18.

<sup>108</sup> Compare the last two lines of Joseph Hart's short hymn, 'How good is the God we adore' ('Hymns Composed on Various Subjects', 1759) :

We'll praise Him for *all that is past*,  
And trust Him for *all that's to come*.

<sup>109</sup> 1 Sam. 17. 37.

<sup>110</sup> Louisa M. R. Stead. For the moving story, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm3WTVdFMe4>

<sup>111</sup> 2 Cor. 12. 7-10.

<sup>112</sup> 1 Cor. 10. 13.

<sup>113</sup> 'Be encouraged', page 16.

<sup>114</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 10c,

<sup>115</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 11.

<sup>116</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 4, 6.

<sup>117</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 11.

<sup>118</sup> Or 'an underworker with'. The expression 'is the translation of a Greek word used only here in the New Testament: *synypourgouton*. It consists of three words meaning "with", "under", and "work". It paints a picture of labourers bowed down under some heavy burden that they are working hard together to lift', Thomas Constable.

<sup>119</sup> We sometimes hear it said, 'All I can do is pray for him' – and I know what the speaker means. But in the end we can do nothing better or more effective than to pray.

<sup>120</sup> Phil. 1. 19; Philemon 22.

<sup>121</sup> 'The nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have built the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and *I will do it ... I will yet for this be inquired of* by the house of Israel, *to do it for them*', Ezek. 36. 36-37. Cf. Dan 9. 2, 16, 19.

<sup>122</sup> 'We might well add a new beatitude to the list, "Blessed is the man who has nothing to hide"', William Barclay, 2 Corinthians 1. 12-14.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Acts\_23. 1; 24. 16; Rom. 9. 1; 2 Tim. 1. 3 – and also 1 Cor. 4. 4.

<sup>124</sup> See the other uses of the word in 2 Cor. 8. 2; 9. 11, 13; 11. 3.

<sup>125</sup> He always made clear that his plans were subject to the will of God; 1 Cor. 4. 19; 16. 7; cf. Rom. 1. 10. His planning was contingent on God's will and permission.

<sup>126</sup> 1 Cor. 16. 2-8.

<sup>127</sup> To deliver the offering which had been raised by the Gentile churches for the poor saints there, 1 Cor. 16. 3-4.

<sup>128</sup> One plan had been to sail from Ephesus to Corinth, travel from there to Macedonia, and then return, viâ Corinth, before proceeding to Judea. But what he learned of the deteriorating situation at Corinth compelled him to alter his schedule – and that for their sakes, 2 Cor. 1. 23-24; 2. 1.

<sup>129</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 23; 2. 1. His decision not to spend any lengthy time in Corinth was to 'spare' them; and, instead, he sent Titus. When Titus did not return to the appointed meeting place in Troas, Paul was fearful, and went on into Macedonia. There Paul met up with Titus again, who brought him good news about the Corinthians. See 2 Cor. 2. 12-13; 7. 5-16. If there was, indeed, a 'painful' visit made between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians (as many commentators insist, and as 2 Cor. 13. 1-2 seems to imply – but see A. McShane, *What the Bible Teaches*, page 294), this was certainly not the kind of lengthy winter visit that Paul had envisaged in 1 Cor. 16. 6.

<sup>130</sup> 'Ancient literature regularly condemns fickleness and unreliability while praising those who keep their word even under duress', Craig S. Keener, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1-2 Corinthians*, page 159.

<sup>131</sup> 'Hospitality was important in antiquity, and it was an honour to host a prominent guest. For Paul not to have come could have seemed like both a breach of his word—and thus of his honour and integrity—and an insult to their hospitality'.

The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament (2 Cor. 1. 12–22).

<sup>132</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 17.

<sup>133</sup> 'You can't believe a word he says'.

<sup>134</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 1. 8-9; 10. 13.

<sup>136</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 18; cf. v. 23. God has no hidden agenda in his dealings with people, and neither does Paul. God does not talk out of both sides of the mouth, nor does Paul.

<sup>137</sup> 'Us', 2 Cor. 1. 21.

<sup>138</sup> 'You', 2 Cor. 1. 21.

<sup>139</sup> 'Christ ... God ... Spirit'.

<sup>140</sup> 'βεβαίωσις is a legal and commercial term to designate properly and legally guaranteed security', Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, pages 104 ff; cf. Eldon Woodcock, *The Seal of the Holy Spirit*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:618 (April-June 1998):139-63, and Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, pages 107-108.

<sup>141</sup> It is 'legally indestructible', A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, page 40.

<sup>142</sup> Elisha, 1 Kings 19. 16.

<sup>143</sup> Aaron and his sons, Exod. 28. 41; 29. 7; 30. 30; 40. 11, 13, 15.

<sup>144</sup> David, 1 Sam. 16. 12; Solomon, 1 Kings 1. 34; Hazael, 1 Kings 19. 15; Jehu, 1 Kings 19. 16; 2 Kings 9. 3, 6, 12.

<sup>145</sup> 'This anointing sets apart, commissions, and equips Christians to serve God', Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, page 28. Cf. 'You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me ...', Exod. 30. 30.

<sup>146</sup> 'The seal in antiquity was an impression made on wax by a special instrument (also called a seal) to indicate the ownership of a document. We continue to attach the company seal to important legal documents', P. Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, page 41.

<sup>147</sup> Eph. 1. 13. See Eldon Woodcock, *The Seal of the Holy Spirit*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:618 (April-June 1998):139-63.

<sup>148</sup> 'The promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge (the earnest, the down-payment) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession', Eph. 1. 13-14.

<sup>149</sup> J. B. Stoney, *Ministry*, Volume 8. Part 2 - Notes on Scripture (1895), page 464.  
<http://www.mcclean.me.uk/mse/jbs/jbs8.htm#39>