

TO SERVE IN HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TEN: THE APOSTLE PAUL'S UPLIFTED HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY IN SECOND CORINTHIANS: TO LABOR WITH THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY AS A NEW COVENANT MINISTER (1)

**BEING ONE WITH CHRIST IN STAND,
IN EXPERIENCE, AND IN LABOR**

Introduction

Many Jesus-lovers and Bible-readers are struck by the book of Second Corinthians. There is no book among Paul's epistles that expresses the apostle's person as clearly as this one does. This book is actually his autobiography. It is not an autobiography of Paul's deeds, yet it fully denotes his stand, his experiences, and his labor. A Jesus-lover who desires to be mature must love and know this book. A dear one who desires to serve properly must fully enter into this book. Second Corinthians does not deal with a lot of practical matters, nor does it render rich heavenly revelations. Yet in this book we see a great servant of the Lord who is not only constituted with the divine life, with all of its divine attributes, but who is also a person living and serving according to visions and revelations. We see a man rich in experience. We also see a man of flesh and blood, yet one who is not common. His living and his operation all manifest the high humanity of Jesus Christ.

Many might wonder how there could ever be such a person as Paul. He was a man with emotions and with considerations, with love and also with righteousness. To a degree we can all identify ourselves with him, yet he was such a different man, a real and spiritual MAN. He became so attractive, so lovely, and so charismatic. We know that such a person is far ahead of us. Yet

when we read this book, we realize that we can be one with him and partake of the same experiences. His testimony causes us to sigh, to weep, to be stirred up, and to be encouraged. In reading this book we can be so attracted by his fragrance, and thus desire to share the same kind of sweet savor.

All Christians must be thankful that in the epistles there is such a book as Second Corinthians. This book can save us from merely being a visionary, merely being a truth pursuer, not to mention merely being a good administrator. This book brings us out of knowledge and truth, out of teachings and doctrines, and out of religious zealousness and affectionate labor. Even though all of these items may be very positive, they all can be attained and performed by our natural life and thus may be void of Christ. In the book of Second Corinthians we see the apostle Paul, with his psychology, his person, his experiences, his riches, his exercise, and his labor. While we all must admit that these belong to a man, yet we realize that these are not of a natural man, a capable man, a zealous man, a religious man, nor an indoctrinated man. Paul was a transformed man: in him there was the divine constitution, with him there were the divine riches, on him there was the divine commitment, by him there was the divine expression, and through him there was the divine manifestation - the manifestation of the humanity of Jesus according to the divine attributes. When we see Paul, we see Christ, yet we also see human limitations. Paul would never become the Savior, the Lord, or the One we must follow. Yet he was such a pattern for us to imitate, and for us to desire to become. In reading this book, the pure Jesus-lovers will cry out, "Oh, may I have a stand as Paul had, may I have experiences as Paul experienced, and may I labor as Paul labored!"

Paul's Convictions

Paul was an apostle through the will of God. We can even consider him as the greatest apostle in church history. Yet in his labor he never departed from his fellow workers. Therefore the book of Second Corinthians was written by Paul and a young

brother, Timothy. Paul wrote to a group of problematic saints in a very degraded city - Corinth. Yet he still addressed them as “the church of God which is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.” He began his epistle with grace and peace. Grace implies the inadequacy of man and the bountiful supply and protection of the Savior God. Paul realized that it was necessary for every dear one to be in grace that they may have a life in peace, both inwardly and outwardly.

Paul blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and considered Him as the Father of compassions and God of all comfort. What a striking beginning! Here the apostle was very burdened concerning the well-being of a local church which he raised up and loved. Yet he did not begin this epistle with revelations and high truths, as he did in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. He realized that the overly indoctrinated Corinthians already knew too much. On the positive side, they had help from servants of the Lord such as Apollos and Barnabas, and they had teachers among themselves. Yet they were so short of the experiences of Christ, especially the sufferings of the Christ. While they were rich in gifts and in knowledge, they were short of a spirit of endeavoring to partake, to pursue, to gain, and to live this living Christ. They were so puffed up that they did not realize they needed the living God, neither did they desire the living God. Therefore, when Paul began his epistle by blessing the Father of compassions and God of all comfort, he didn't mention their need. Rather, in order to draw a sharp contrast he testified of his own need. Paul needed the compassions of the Father. He needed the Father's love, the Father's mercy, the Father's sympathy, the Father's understanding, and the Father's tender care. Though he was a great apostle, yet he was still merely a man. Furthermore, these compassions of the Father led him to the experience of the God of all comfort. What a surprising beginning of a book! Here Paul blessed God not for His eternal plan, great glorious economy, or high divine truth, but for His sweet comforting Person. The very Savior God, full of compassion and full of comfort, was so close to him. It seems that this was the base of all his labor and operations.

Paul was very clear that every experience he had was for the sake of the saints he served. He was comforted in all his affliction that he would be able to comfort those who were in every affliction. He testified, "For even as the sufferings of the Christ abound unto us, so through the Christ our comfort also abounds." Paul's declaration was so bold and so heavenly - he declared that his afflictions were for the Corinthians' comforting, and even for their salvation. His suffering experiences would generate an operation in endurance in the saints, while they were passing through the same sufferings. He could testify that his hope for the Corinthians was firm, that as they were partakers of the sufferings so also they were of the comfort. He even used his experience of extreme affliction in Asia - where he despaired even of living - as an example, and testified that he in himself had the response of death. His confidence could only be on God. What God? The God who raises the dead. Here Paul did not merely say, "the God of resurrection," which could be doctrinal. Rather he stated, "God, who raises the dead," which is totally experiential. His experience of this God brought in the glorious declaration: "Who has delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver us; in whom we have hoped that He will also yet deliver us." Paul was burdened from the very beginning to help the indoctrinated, knowledge-filled, gift-oriented, and proud but blind Corinthians. Paul wanted them to realize that everything they had would not count, and the only thing which had real value was the experience of Christ. The teachings they had, the truth they knew, and the gifts they enjoyed all must lead them to the death of their self and to the rich experience in the experience of Christ.

Paul's Boasting

With such a conviction Paul testified of the life relationship he had with the church he had given birth to. He realized that the apostles could be the boast of the Corinthians just as the church in Corinth would also be his boast "in the day of our Lord Jesus." He stressed a healthy, uplifted, high humanity - the humanity of Jesus - by speaking of the testimony of his conscience, that he had conducted himself in the singleness and

sincerity of God and in the grace of God. What a humanity! Such a humanity can only come out of the divine attributes. The Corinthians considered Paul as crafty, but he was single. They considered him as full of guile, but he was sincere. As a man constituted with the divine attributes, he was by no means naïve. Rather he was full of wisdom, yet not a fleshly wisdom. His wisdom was exercised in the grace of God. In sincerity he was willing to dispense who he was and what he had to the church in Corinth. He dared not depart from the present Christ in His grace. He realized that the need of the church in Corinth, which is the need of every local church at certain times, could never be met by a talented wisdom, no matter how talented that wisdom might be. It could only be met by the Christ, in the grace of God. He stated that the Corinthians knew everything already, but he hoped that their knowledge would become their reality unto the end.

Paul's Inward Afflictions

Paul lived for the church. Paul's stand was that his life was for Christ. However, in practicality his life was for the saints. His existence was for the well-being of the saints he was burdened for. His rich loving care generated a great inward affliction, which seems to have frustrated Paul very much. Paul did not ask the question of whether or not he should help the Corinthians, but rather how he should help them. He desired that the Corinthians would have "double grace," a double visitation from him. However, because they were not yet ready for his visit, he went to Macedonia and wrote them this epistle instead of coming to them. Paul had authority, yet he had no desire to come to them using severity. The Corinthians had misinterpreted his deep love for them, and considered him a coward who dared not to pay them a visit. What a sorrowful experience this was! They forced Paul to testify, "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?" This love was a deep love, a love of value, a love according to God. Paul loved them just as Christ loved the church. This deep love put Paul into a dilemma. It seemed that whatever he did gave some Corinthians an opportunity to attack him. His loving

heart was even interpreted by some of them as being crafty so that he could take them by guile. Some had previously criticized him by saying “his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.” If he were to visit them they might again question his authority. Many of the servants of Christ, when confronted with such a situation, would abandon the saints. Yet Paul labored according to the faithfulness of God and declared that his word toward them was not yes and no, for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among them through the apostles was firm, and all the promises of God were also firm. However, Paul reminded them again that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was not a doctrine, neither were God’s promises knowledge. All the spiritual things must be experienced in Him, a living person, as the “Yes,” and must be enjoyed through Him, a living person, as the “Amen” to God. Christ and only the person of Christ is the incarnate answer. Yet Paul testified in such a marvelous way, that the experiences and the enjoyment of the living person of Christ would lead to glory to God through all the partakers including the apostle and the saints.

Paul not only testified about God and Christ, he further wrote concerning the organic union between the apostles, the church, and the processed Triune God. Paul was possessed by this marvelous divine work, which uplifted him above the frustrations he encountered in handling the problems with the Corinthians. He was so bold to testify to those divisive, dissenting, criticizing, captious, and even somewhat rebellious ones in Corinth that “the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God, He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” Paul never questioned the fact that they were attached, anointed, and sealed by God. What a marvelous organic experience! The apostle and the saints are being attached unto Christ in the organic union and anointed with the divine commitment through the dispensing of the divine life and sealed with God’s satisfaction in life. However, for them to enjoy this organic union they needed to live in their spirit. Therefore, he reminded them that they were given the Spirit in their hearts as a pledge for their enjoyment of the foretaste of the living Christ as their portion. How marvelous

that the Spirit was in their hearts, their heart was a loving organ and their spirit was a working organ. The pledge was the working Spirit enjoyed subjectively in their loving heart. Paul's humanity was so high that the frustrations in Corinth only caused him to be more burdened for them to have such a spiritual reality.

Furthermore, Paul called on God as a witness against his soul, saying, "To spare you I have not yet come to Corinth." What an uplifted humanity! What an incarnation in practice! The heavenly apostle had to lower himself, descending to the Corinthian's low estate to confront their challenge to him. In dealing with such a matter he called on God as his witness against his soul. Yet such a declaration was not made to defend himself, but rather to defend his loving care for the church that had rejected him. To spare the Corinthians Paul did not yet visit them, knowing that they might not be ready. Instead, he had such a trust in the Lord toward the church, knowing that every divine operation had its timing. Paul did not want to lord over the Corinthian's faith. He had no intention of being the controlling element over the subjective experience of their faith, because he realized that the church was Christ's and so were the saints. Thus, Paul sought to provide every opportunity for the saints to live in Christ and with Christ, and be fully responsible to Christ. He knew that without the operation of the living person of Christ, any outward conformity or practice would have little or no value. In Christ, Paul exercised as a fellow worker with the saints for their joy (their experience of faith). Eventually he testified his conviction, "For by faith you stand." It was by the subjective experience of the faith that they stood in this objective faith.

This article is available online at
MinistryMessages.org.

© 2001 Titus Chu

The date and location of this
message is not known.