



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 12: 11-21

“Confrontation”

TRANSCRIPT

If it's a little warm in the auditorium, it is because the deacons have been having difficulties with the system, and we apologize for those of you that are having to use fans. It's not July and August in Texas, although for some of you it may seem like it. I can only give you this encouragement; it is a whole lot better than it was at 8:30 when it was really warm. It reminded me of the way to preach start low, rise high, strike fire then retire and we didn't have to strike fire because it was already there.

We're turning in the next to the last message on 2 Corinthians, the Lord willing, to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 11 through verse 21. Then next week we hope to finish up with the message on chapter 13, which is a relatively short chapter and I think we can handle it adequately in the one message.

2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 11 through verses 21. Just a word of explanation by way of background. Remember that this is the section in which the apostle has felt it necessary for him to engage in what he calls “a little bit of foolishness.” That is an attempt to justify some of the kinds of ministry that he has been forced to give to the Corinthians because of the ways in which the Corinthians have falsely responded to some charlatans that have come into their midst, have presented themselves as apostles, as

workers for Christ but whose activities and doctrine are contrary to that which the apostle has proclaimed to them.

And so, in chapter 11, verse 1 he had said that, “I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness,” And then now as he comes to the conclusion he states, verse 11,

“I have become foolish you yourselves have compelled me actually I should have been commended by you, for no respect was I inferior to the most imminent apostles even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles.”

It might seem a little strange to you in reading that verse, to notice that he says, “The signs of a true apostle were performed among them,” and then, “by signs and wonders and miracles.” Now the reason for that is that the apostle uses the term “signs” in a generic sense. And as well as in the specific sense of a miraculous work. The first occurrence, “the signs of a true apostle,” is a broader sense of sign including, not simply, the supernatural works but even the natural things that were the product of the work of God in him. We’ll explain a little bit about that when we come to it, but that’s the reason for the double mention of the term “sign” but with a different sense, in the two occurrences.

“For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches except that I myself did not become a burden to you. Forgive me this wrong.” (That, of course, is an ironic statement that the apostle makes.) “Here for this third time I’m ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you, for I do not seek what is yours, but you. For children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.”

The apostle uses that statement incidentally, just as a human life illustration of why he is an individual like a parent and they are like children and, therefore, they shouldn’t feel responsible to supply his needs, he should rather be responsible for their needs. And the background of it of course is that the apostle did not take up any collections when he was in Corinth and furthermore, he doesn’t intend to take up any collections. He feels that as a parent the one that brought them into the knowledge of the Lord as their spiritual father, he is responsible for them, not they for him. Verse 15,

“And I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, will you love me less? Be that as it may, I did not been a burden you myself. Nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit!” (Again, a bit of irony; the apostle explaining how it could be said that he caused them to follow him and his teachings.) “Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have said to you, have I? I urged Titus to go and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not any advantage of you, did he? Did we conduct ourselves in the spirit and walk in the same steps? All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you? Actually, it’s in the sight of God that we’ve been speaking in Christ; and all for your up building, beloved. For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I will find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish. That perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances. I’m afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you.”

Now what Paul means by that, that there may be such a situation in the Corinthian church that it might reflect on the ministry that he has given. And that he would be disappointed and ashamed because of the way in which the Corinthians have responded to the divine revelation and that would be a humiliation of him. “And I may mourn over many who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and

sensuality which they have practiced.” May God bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer]Father we thank Thee for this marvelous epistle that the apostle has written to the Corinthians. And we thank Thee Lord for the way that is ministers to us. And for the way in which it has revealed the apostle as the most genuine of men of God whose concerns are the concerns of the eternal God and not the concerns of himself. We thank Thee and praise Thee that we are able to study and read the words of this man of God, the Apostle Paul.

And Father we thank Thee too for the way in which the words of the apostle have ministered to us personally and then to us as a local assembly such as the Corinthians were. Enable us Lord, to make by thy grace, the proper application of the truths to us. We are grateful that in 1987 thou has placed us in the society in which thy has placed us as a testimony to the grace of God through Jesus Christ. And we pray that as an assembly, we may be faithful and presenting the gospel of the Lord Jesus in our day and among the people to whom thou hast brought us.

We thank Thee Lord for the whole church of Jesus Christ and we again Thy blessing upon the whole body, wherever the word goes forth today in the city of Dallas and the United States and the four corners of the Earth, may, oh Lord, Thy hand of blessing be upon it. We ask Thy blessing on this assembly, especially its leadership, its members and friends and visitors that are with us today. May this be a spiritual experience for all of us as we listen to the word of God and by thy grace, seek to apply the truth to our lives.

We pray Lord for those who requested our prayers particularly as well and ask that thy would give healing and encouragement and blessing and supply of the needs spiritual, material, whatever they may be. And Lord may Thy name be honored and glorified. We commit this ministry to Thee. In this hour the singing of hymn, the

reading and pondering of the word of God and particularly this evening as we remember the Lord may it be a time of spiritual blessing for all of us.

We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

[Message] The subject for today, as we come to our next to the last message, the Lord-willing, in 2 Corinthians, is “Confrontation.” Paul’s boasting in support of his apostleship draws to an end on the note of God’s sufficient grace in his divinely imposed thorn in the flesh. Paul had been forced to reveal the fact that at one point in his ministry, he as a man in Christ had been caught up in the paradise and had heard unspeakable things, which it was not permitted, a man to speak.

And furthermore, as a result of that very unusual experience forced from him by the false teachers, in their midst of the Corinthians, the Lord had given him a thorn in the flesh, a message of Satan, to torment him, to keep him from exalting himself. In other words, this magnificent spiritual experience that he had, so significant, so great, so unusual, was just the kind of thing to lead a man to become a conceited boar, an arrogant servant of the Lord. And so to prevent that, God had given him the thorn in the flesh.

Last week we pointed out that no one knows really what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was. We know that it tormented him. We know that it was the kind of things that disturbed him so much that he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from him. The answer that he received from God was, “My grace is sufficient for thee, power is perfected in weakness.” And then Paul, adjusting to the will of God, had said, “Most gladly therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am will content with weaknesses with tumults, with distresses, with persecutions, will difficulties, for Christ’s sake for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Now having unfolded this and having revealed this in which he didn’t want to reveal, brought about by the fact that into the midst of the Corinthian church had come the false apostles, the charlatans, the preachers who really were interested in building

themselves up and not building up the church. Paul had felt that it was essential for him to unfold that experience and he regarded the whole endeavor as being “a foolish thing” that he had to do. And so, in the eleventh verse of chapter 12, he says, “I have become foolish. ”

So you can see what Paul is attempting to say is simply this, that God’s sufficient grace was sufficient for him in the experiences of life and that we, as individuals that face similar problems in our lives, could count on the sufficient grace of God, as well. No one needed sufficient grace, as a servant of the Lord, more than the Apostle Paul because he was a man, that chapter 11 makes very plain, who gave himself totally to the ministry of the word of God and the service of the Lord Jesus. And the most difficult of circumstances we all read that long list of things that he underwent again by just remembering he found the Lord sufficient in all of his spiritual weariness.

One of the commentators has written a simple little book on 2 Corinthians, has pointed out that John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons, the average traveling, forty-five hundred miles a year. Now that’s not much for those of you who get on a jet plane and travel to various places. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, I traveled forty-five hundred miles in one week. But he rode sixty to seventy miles a day, on his horse. He preached an average of three sermons a day and when he was eighty-three, he wrote in his diary, “I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired. Even with preaching, writing or traveling.” That was surely the work of God’s sufficient grace for that unusual servant of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul was a similar kind of example, except that in Paul’s case he experienced the greatest of physical weariness and difficulties. This is the sufficient grace that the apostle needs amidst the slanderous opposition he had to face; wherever he went the apostle met opposition. Individuals who did not like the gospel that he proclaimed. Whenever the apostle said “sufficient grace,” then individuals objected. And since he preached not simply sufficient grace but sovereign grace, they objected to that too. I’m sure that the kinds of objections that individuals today find to sovereign grace, divine

electing grace that saves men apart from human works, there will always be that kind of reaction to it that is negative and if the situation is suitable and if the situation is such that one can do this, there will be physical opposition, as well. Wherever Paul went, riots occurred. But the Lord enabled him, in the midst of it all, to continue his apostolic ministry fruitfully.

Paul finds it very foolish to have to defend himself before the Corinthians. It seems so foolish. After all, if you know anything about spiritual truth, is it not true that all blessing in grace comes from God? Is it not true; is that not one of the first things you learn, that everything that comes to us spiritually, comes from God? Surely the Corinthians learned that. Were they not the products of divine grace? Why does the apostle have to defend himself in that way?

He might well of asked, “Don’t you remember what I said in the fifth chapter, when I said, “Now all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself.” Or the thing that he wrote in his first letter to them, in the tenth verse of the fifteenth chapter of that first epistle, “But by the grace of God,” he said, “ I am what I am and his grace toward me did not prove vain but I labored even more than all of them.” That’s an astonishing thing that Paul should claim to have labored more than the apostles before him. But then, in order to prevent any false ideas, “Yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”

So why is it necessary for me to defend myself with you Corinthians, of all people? Because you know surely, if you think about yourself, that the gospel that you know and understand and the blessings that you’ve received, they are the products of my ministry to you when I was in your midst preaching the word of God. So he engages in what he calls “a little bit of foolishness” and when he concludes he says, “I have become foolish.”

In fact, there’s a great deal of stressing the original text on the word “become.” “I’ve become foolish.” As if this is the last thing in the world that he wanted to do but he found it necessary in the light of the situation.

So now we are going to look at these verses and there are three movements of thought in them. In verse 11 through verse 13 he writes about the authenticity of his apostleship, in verse 14 through verse 18 he expatiates a bit over the forthrightness of his apostleship and finally in the last three verses, verse 19 through verse 21 speaks about the intentions of his apostleship.

Now there’s a kind of pause in the flow of the impassioned language, of the preceding verses, when we reach verse 11 of chapter 12, “I have become foolish, you yourselves compelled me. Actually, I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to even the most imminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.”

Isn’t that interesting that the apostle should say that? “Even though I am a nobody, I’ve become a fool.” But it’s the Corinthians fault. It’s the Corinthians fault because they forced him to say things that he did not want to have to say at all. Of all, even if he’s a cipher; a zero, if he’s just nothing, they should have preferred him to the charlatans that have come into their midst. Those, who after Paul had left Corinth and entered in and talked about the mighty works that they preformed, about the relationship that they had with spiritual authority and then about the negative things that they had said about the apostle, of all people the Corinthians should have understood that the apostle is the individual that has brought them to the knowledge of the Lord, and even though he calls himself a nobody, he’s very significant to them.

I wonder why they even allowed themselves to be duped by these individuals that had come into their midst and talked about the great things that they had done and about the great things that they could do and also had taken up such great collections, evidently, among the Corinthians. Where the Corinthians ashamed of their apostle? Well, there may be some support for that because in chapter 11, verse 7 through verse 11 Paul says, “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages *from them* to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was not

a burden to anyone, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need. And in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. As the truth is in me, this boasting will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.”

Were they ashamed of this apostle who came in so obviously in need and yet at the same time, proclaiming the gospel? Were they ashamed of his cheapness; what appeared to them to be cheapness? The men, who came in and pronounced themselves to be great apostles and great servants of God, evidently expected the individuals in Corinth to support them. In fact, they even exploited them, if they possibly could.

How is it; how blind can a person come that he prefers the exploiters of themselves rather than the apostle that has given them the pure word of God? Is that the reason they were ashamed of Paul? Or is it perhaps because the apostle was not all that great as an expounder of truth. that is. in the rhetorical sense? That he was not as eloquent as some of them. He states, “Now I, Paul,” in chapter 10, verse 1, “myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who am meek when face to face with you but, bold toward you when absent.” Is it because he put on that kind of an appearance before them, that was the real appearance with him, maybe they didn’t, particularly, like that. Verse 10 of chapter 10, he says, “For they say, ‘*his* letters, *are* weighty and strong’ but *his* personal presence *is* unimpressive and *his* speech contemptible.” Is that why they were ashamed of him because he was a tongue-tied preacher of the word of God, who couldn’t speak eloquently, like others?

In chapter 11, verse 6 he writes, “But even if *I am* unskilled in speech, yet *I am* not so in knowledge. In fact, in everything we have made this evident to you in all things.” So for Paul, you may have thought of him of being cheap, as not carrying on ministry in the flamboyant style of the individuals that have come in among them. And he might not have spoken with the eloquence, or power and authority of the individuals that had come in but the apostle was the one that had brought them to the truth. They

should have at least realized that. That he was the one who was the instrumentality of their conversion. What greater thing could Corinthians have possibly said than to say, “This man brought me to the knowledge of the Lord.” In the first apostle he says I beget you that is he is the means by which they were brought into the experience of the spiritual new birth.

He writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 14 and 15 or so, “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” And yet now, these very individuals brought to the knowledge of the Lord, appreciate that so little that they prefer the flamboyant, brag its and Charlatans who have come into their midst, instead of the apostle who has brought them to the knowledge of the Lord. In fact, Paul said in that first epistle, “you are the seal of my apostleship, the proof that I am an apostle rests in the fact that you have been brought out of darkness into light and out of your sin and to the knowledge of justification by faith.” How ungrateful and unthankful can a congregation become?

This past week, there was a note put on my desk in there, in which, one of the church sectaries wrote, “Mr.,” and I won’t mention his name, “from Birmingham will be here Sunday. He called and your teachings in 1977, on the radio in Birmingham, led him to the Lord and he also attended some meetings that you held in Birmingham in 1979.” This morning, in the first service, I made reference to this and I had not met this individual, I had met him many years ago, but I had not met him this morning, and I invited him to come by the office after the 8:30 service, and he did and he introduced himself again to me. A retired businessman with his wife from Birmingham, a former banker there whose son-in-law and daughter have just moved to Dallas, not too far from us, and they were with them in the morning service.

In the final analysis, it’s the responsiveness to the word of God and the things that happen, that justify a ministry. It’s not what we say, it’s not the style in which we come to you, but it’s the results that really count.

Thomas Chalmers was the great Scottish preacher and principal, once said after one of his messages to the general assembly of the Scottish Church, when one person said to him that was a great speech, Mr. Chalmers was reported to have said, “But what did it do?” In the final analysis it’s what does it do that really counts and Paul’s preacher had really done it; had brought the Corinthians to the knowledge of himself. So you can see why Paul considers it senseless to defend himself, they are his defense if they would just look at themselves in the right light. They are his defense.

Now he reminds them, as he continues what he calls his “foolishness.” “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with perseverance.” And I think that is remarkable. He performed his signs as not in the style in which, no doubt, the Charlatans performed their signs. They, no doubt, put in residence at the nicest places in town and ate the finest food and went to the finest restaurants that were available in those days. Which were not much, incidentally, but nevertheless, they put on that kind of air. Paul said the signs that I perform were performed with, as he puts it, “with all perseverance” amid those experiences that he was talking about.

Now when he says the signs of an apostle he means not simply the miracles. That is standard works of power -- I’ll say a word about that in a moment. But he means his life. The fact, of the experience of, with the Lord Jesus on the Emmaus Road that brought him into a point and or into the possession, I should say, of the spiritual gift of apostleship. And all that was involves in the communication of the truth in his commission and calling, from the Lord himself. That was involved in the sign of his apostleship and they were wrought, by the way. He didn’t work them; they were wrought through Paul, by the Lord God. The signs of an apostle, not simply the

miraculous, but the knowledge of the truth and the authority of the truth that lies with an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now when he says, “again,” in verse 12, “by signs,” he refers to events such as miracles that were constructive wonders, things that provoke all and miracles; mighty exhibitions of power. These things also accompanied the apostle’s ministry. So they preformed, by God, in the context of perseverance and suffering.

Now, when we think about that for a moment, I think we will see a characteristic of the apostles, according to this statement, is that when they went to a place, such as Corinth, God frequently worked through them, miraculous things. They were designed to authenticate the message that the apostles were giving. Paul incidentally, puts this in the past tense. He doesn’t say the signs and wonders and miracles that “are being” wrought in your midst. They “were” wrought when he came to introduce them to the Corinthians and one of the means by which God through Paul and the word; founded the Corinthians Church. And so these are the things to which the apostle appeals as being evidence of the authentic apostleship gift which was given to him.

Now if you would just take, for a moment -- if I may make a word of application - if you’ll just take for a moment, Paul’s words and ask yourself this question. How should we evaluate ministry? It may be helpful, I have a friend, a very good friend, with whom I taught on a theological faculty in another city, and he has a book on this section of 2 Corinthians. And he points out that one of the failures of the Corinthians was their failure “to turf out the interlopers that came into Corinth.” And what he means by that is to tell them to get off of his turf, to turf out the interlopers that had come in.

But then Professor Carson goes on to suggest that they used improper criteria in evaluating and assessing ministry. This is what they did. First of all they used the criterion of love of power and supernatural displays, in assessing their leaders. Those who could make a flamboyant outward appearance and could make great claims for themselves. That isn’t the proper way to assess ministry. That’s one thing. To do it in

the context, to minister in the context of enduring suffering, not showmanship, by faithfulness to the Lord and to his word, that’s another matter. Secondly, Professor Carson says, “they prefer exploiting figures.” That is they liked to have people who would take from them like masochists, except evangelistic masochists. “Let the evangelist beat us to death and rob us. They’re the ones that we really like because they speak with authority.”

The apostle says in verse 20 of the preceding chapter, “That you will bear with anyone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you.” If he exalts himself, if he hits you in the face. In other words, this is the kind of person you want. You want someone who will really speak authoritatively beats you and steals from you and do everything else and he will give you the impression that he really is an authoritative character. Then he’ll try to sign you up in his club and get you to send him fifteen dollars a month, or twenty dollars a month as is very common over the TV. And why is it common and why is it successful? Because these parasites feed on genuine conversations, in many cases, and they are the ones that succumb to lavish outward display and find themselves taken in by the charlatans. Listen, if 2 Corinthians is not a book written for our day, there isn’t any book in the New Testament that is written for our day. This surely is.

So that’s the second of the things and third, when they looked at Paul, this inexpensive preacher of the word of God. I have a friend and every time I mention cheap, he says inexpensive. Well this inexpensive minister of the word of God didn’t take up any collection; he didn’t ever pass the hat or anything like that. “Why is he doing that way? Why does he conduct his ministry that way?” They never bothered to really find out. Paul, “Why, since you’re an apostle and you have a right to the support of those that are receiving your spiritual things. You have a right to enjoy carnal blessings from them; the things of this life. Why is it that you’re not taking them?”

And of course, Paul wants it to be fully understood that he’s not there anything of theirs, he’s there for them. And furthermore, in the first letter, he said, “Look, those other apostles, they had the opportunity to respond to the Lord voluntarily. The Lord Jesus met Peter and James and John, in the ordinary experiences of life, and called them to him and they responded voluntarily. In my case, it was not that way. On the Damascus Road, I suddenly was met by the Lord and I was seized and taken by him.” He uses an expression that means, “to be caught and brought down” by the Lord. And therefore, in order to have a reward, I want to support the work of the Lord myself. And so therefore, as a general rule, he made it his particular task to carry out the Lord’s ministry, at his own expense, he worked with his hands. And he would not put the Corinthians into any kind of position that he was indebted to them financially.

You can see -- I think -- that the way in which we evaluate ministry and evaluate ministry in our day, is not really the best way to evaluate ministry. And if you think for one moment that there is not occasion for the same kind of concern in our day, then you don’t understand church history. Another of our finest interpreters of 2 Corinthians, Professor C.K. Barrett, has written “The Theology of Glory.” That’s a term that is used of those who flamboyantly present truth. The “Theology of Glory,” that some represent, is a permanent threat to Christianity, and he goes on to say, “It is written on every page of church history that, that kind of presentation is a threat to Christianity and is, in itself, a sufficient reason for the continued study of 2 Corinthians.” In other words, if you study church history down through the centuries, you will see it repeated over and over and over again individuals who have large mouths that glorify their work and prey upon the church, the true believers, and down to the present day we still have that kind of ministry and that’s why we need to study 2 Corinthians.

So I’m laying down a little rule for you, before you turn on your TV and you look at any preacher on TV or any radio minister, you have to read 2 Corinthians chapter 10

through chapter 14, before you listen. Some of you seem disturbed. I can see what your habits are. But nevertheless, let’s move on.

In verse 13 the apostle states, “For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches except that I myself did not become a burden to you; forgive me this wrong. A lack of appreciation may have been caused by a lack of consecration.” The Corinthians never really realized what they had in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Isn’t that characteristic of us? We hear the ministry of men of God and we hear them over and over again and finally we have to expect that and it’s not long before we forget the privileged position that we have to have been ministered to by men of God.

I can remember in my own theological training where that frequently became the case. And often we would find ourselves, as theological students, when in many institutions; no young theological man ever had the privilege of hearing what we were hearing. We would begin to murmur and complain as we listened to the pure word of God from men who sought, under God to teach us the truth. It’s true in churches, as well. We forget, as we are exposed to ministry over and over again, what a privileged position we often have.

Now the apostle speaks of the forthrightness of his ministry in verses 14 through 18. I think we can cover this a little more rapidly. The third visit to Corinth is imminent. There are no temper tantrums, as far as he is concerned, no self vindication. What Paul is concerned about is their better assessment of the men that minister to them. And so he writes here, “Now *for* this third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden to you; I’m not going to take up any collections. I’m not going to pass the hat. I do not seek yours, but you.” “I don’t seek what is yours, I seek you.” Is love going to find its gratitude? After all, its’ birth is in love. We loved because he first loved us. So we are told in the word of God. We love because he first loved us. Well if he first loved us and we therefore love God, how grateful we ought to be.

Thomas Erskine, a Scottish Presbyterian once said, “In the New Testament, religion is grace and ethics is gratitude.” That sums it up. Religion is grace, ethics is gratitude. And those who appreciate grace should respond ethically in gratitude. I like what Calvin said. Calvin said, “I am in quest of a larger higher than you think of. I seek larger wages than you think, for I am not content with your riches but I seek the whole of you in order to present you to the Lord as a sacrifice from the fruits of my ministry.”

“I do not seek what is yours; but you.” And then the simple illustration of, “For the children are not responsible to save up for their parents. You’re one of my spiritual children. You are not responsible for your parents. You’re one of my spiritual children. You’re not responsible to save up for me. As in the financial sphere, in the spiritual sphere I am responsible for you, not you for me.” I can see the attitude the apostle had.

And then he talks about deceit and incorruption, in his case, “But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you by deceit. Certainly, I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you, have I? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with *him*.” He’s talking about the collection and Titus was said in order to take up the collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem and Paul sent someone else with him, showing that Paul was a wise man so that there would be a check on Titus. And Titus would check him so there would be no possibility of anyone saying, “These fellows have been skimming off the top of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem.” No fleecing of the saints; not a thing has stuck to their fingers, so he’s saying, “They didn’t advantage of you. Titus didn’t, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?”

And finally in the last few verses, verse 19 through verse 21, he speaks about his intentions. “All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you.” In other words, you’ve been thinking that I have been trying to defend myself before you. No, that’s not it, Paul says -- look what he says -- actually, it’s in the sight of God that we’ve been speaking in Christ and all for you’re up building.”

Look, this is no petty power struggle at stake, those men against me. My aim is to build you up and I’m not here simply to refute slander and to attack these individuals simply as if we both are contending for you. I’m speaking before God and I’m speaking in Christ. Only an apostle, such as Paul, could do that. They’re not as judges; they are his dearly beloved. It’s all for your up building, the loved.

I wouldn’t want to ever say that I am like the Apostle Paul. I guess I am like the Apostle Paul, in one sense, that I read a little of the Bible. And my simple way of understanding it -- very deficient -- I realize that. No one, I think, realizes it anymore except possibly my family and my friends. But in the ministry of the word of God, we minister before the Lord. We minister in Christ, ideally. The reason -- and I think I can honestly say this-- the reason that I say these things that I’ve been saying is because I am very disturbed, over not simply the evangelical Church, with it’s loss of love for the word of God, it’s loss of love of biblical doctrine, it’s conception that the way in which the church is to be built up is by the simple, shallow, superficial kinds of ministries that are carried on in our midst.

Those things area concern to me. They are very much a concern to me. And the reason that I said the things that I’ve said about individuals that obviously, obviously, it’s obvious now, at least, carrying on ministry that is not God glorified, is that you individuals in Believers Chapel and the others who hear the ministry over the radio and those who listen to the tapes, may be delivered from the shallow kinds of approach to spiritual things that we have today. Surprisingly, it’s true.

That individuals that listen to the ministry of the word of God would go home and then turn on the television and listen for hours to ministry that could hardly, at often, at times, even be called ministry. But is of the most shallow kind and is -- matter of fact -- opposed to a solid understanding of apostolic truth. So the apostle -- I think -- I can understand when he says, “Look it’s all for your up building; beloved the things that I am saying. It’s all for edification, that’s why I’m saying the things that I am saying.”

And finally in verses 20 and 21, as he concludes this section, he gives, what someone has called, the marks of an unchristian church. Would you like to know what they are, according to some individuals? Well, here’s what they are.

First of all, he says, “For I am afraid that perhaps when I come, I may find you to be not what I wish and maybe found by you, not what you wish.” In other words, I may have to exercise discipline. He said to the Corinthians in the first letter, “Shall I come with a rod or in the spirit of meekness? That perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, anger tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.” What upbuilding involves, or everything preventing healthy growth, is set forth here. “Strife,” that’s a word of battles, debates going on within the assembly. “Jealousy,” originally was a term that had a good sense like emulation.

Now [name redacted], in our congregation, grows flowers. She loves flowers and so do I. We talk about it a lot. So this morning, knowing my tender conscience, my tender horticulture conscience, with regard to camellias; having probably been responsible for the death of more camellia bushes [laughter] in my part of Dallas than any other individual. So what does she do this morning? She brings in a plate of camellia blooms, beautiful blooms. You should go by my office and see them. They are magnificent blooms. And then she said afterwards, “I want to make him a little envious.” And I am. What I would really like to do is emulate her success and if I could just get one or two blooms, I’m going to show her some too, and make her realize that she’s not the only one that can produce them. Though I am afraid that all of those that I am going to grow, have already bloomed. And they have not been very many.

But “jealousy.” What Paul is talking about is not the kind of emulation that is good but the mean and the petty kind of the little mind. “Angry tempers,” fits, sudden explosions, disputes, party intrigues. This word was originally a word known only for pigs, self-centered kind of activity. “Slanders,” open load mouth attacks, public vilification; insults of other believers. Think of it. “Gossip,” now here’s a nastier word

than that, “whispering campaigns,” in fact, the word itself in Greek, suggest whispering, sounds like it. “Malicious gossip,” “innuendos.” Things in which you say something and if you just took the words by themselves and exegeted them, they wouldn’t necessarily mean anything bad but there’s innuendos that do have something very bad about them. “Arrogance,” bombastic magnifications of pride and disturbance. Selfishness running amok, a kind of mania.

The last verse, the apostle says, “I’d like to avoid the necessity the God’s humiliation of me when I come. I don’t want to have to mourn” -- that’s a term used for biblical discipline -- “That I may mourn over many of those that have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, the morality and sensuality that they have practiced.” The hand of God upon them, but he felt responsible. Sexual sins especially are in mind, but blatant rebellion in that last word. They are -- it’s the kind of rebellion that knows no restraint -- careless of public opinion of one’s own good name and just plain rebellion.

Well, our time is up. Our age, our society, our church society and Believers Chapel, we need to take notice of the things that the apostle has written. May God help us to do it.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then you don’t belong to the church of Jesus Christ. You may belong to a professing church and have a membership in it and it may even be an evangelical kind of church but so far as you are concerned if you never believed in Jesus Christ, you don’t belong to the church; which is the body of Christ but you may. Our Lord has shed his precious blood that sinners may be converted. He has laid the sufficient foundation in the blood that was shed, and on the basis of what our Lord has accomplished, in his saving work of dying and of being resurrected.

We are, as ambassadors of the Lord, offering a free forgiveness, a justification before God, a righteousness that is satisfactory to him, conveyed by God freely apart from works, through faith. As God the Holy Spirit works in your heart, brings you to the

knowledge of your needs and causes you, in his wonderful grace, to turn to the Lord and acknowledge to him, not to me or anyone else, to him, your need, your lost condition, your perils status for you’re on the way to death and trust, bring you to trust in what Christ has done.

So that for forgiveness of sins you don’t rest in yourself of your good works, in your church or educations or anything else but you rest in Christ and the merits of his finished works. May God and his grace bring you to the place. May we stand for the benediction? There is no better time than to make that decision, than now. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the words of the apostle to the Corinthians because they are not only for them. They are for us. Oh God, help us in Thy grace to respond to them as Thou would hath to respond to them. Deliver us from the kinds of things that happen that having broiled the Corinthians, help us by Thy grace, to rest in the truth of the word of God. For Lord, those who are here may not have made the decision to believe in Christ, may at this very moment may they turn to him.

May the grace, mercy and peace of our sovereign God go with us through Jesus Christ, Amen.