

**Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:  
"Its Major Themes Reviewed, Part 4, Section 3"  
Final**

- **Introduction:**
  - ***The Greatest Enemy of Pure Grace Is Legalism!***
    - ***In many letters of the apostle Paul this fundamental distinction between the principle of Law and the principle of Grace is taught. And yet so few will receive it.***
  - ***This administration of God is the one by faith alone while others add works of law to faith, for faith is always a requirement for salvation. We have seen so well, haven't we, that there is indeed a difference between grace and law and we must never equate the totally different concepts of mercy and grace:***
    - ***The essence of grace - riches freely given (not as if without value though) — "God's riches at Christ's expense" = "GRACE"***
    - ***The essence of law - Earned blessings for obedience, punishment otherwise. But God was so often merciful under that law, wasn't he? He often did not bring the full judgment deserved but was merciful.***
  - ***Therefore, he concludes, legalism which is any teaching promoting law as the standard of how God is working today becomes the enemy of how God is in fact working today and therefore the enemy of God's Dispensation of Grace.***
  - ***So how God is working today is critical knowledge indeed, and that his working not by Law but by Grace, as taught here in the third chapter of Second Corinthians, is so very much a blessing to our hearts. We have seen how the language Paul uses in chapter 3 differed from what is found in Romans (or Galatians) but it is doctrinal teaching nevertheless and in fact is a necessary part of that teaching that all believers need so much to know. We saw how that teaching here in 2 Corinthians gives further doctrinal teaching that is essential for our understanding of what the apostle has taught in other places, for example in Romans and in Galatians.***

- *The contrasts Paul presents are so bold, between the words of God written on stone tablets or with ink on papyrus on the one hand, or in the hearts of sinners, between the merely external or rather the internal working of Almighty God, between death and life, between condemnation or justification.*

## **2 Cor. 3:1-6**

**1** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

**2** Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

**3** *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

**4** And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

**5** Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

**6** Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

- *Most of Paul's teaching on law vs grace is elsewhere in his letters, as for example, in Romans or Galatians. But here it is dominant as well as we have seen and the dynamic of that working is predominantly in 2 Corinthians. For it is a foundational teaching of this letter as we see found here in this chapter.*
- *And what a difference there is between that and how God was working under the Law and how in Corinth he was working by abundant grace in the hearts of sinners. Here in Corinthians he contrasts the working under grace with the giving of the Law of Moses from Mount Sinai and the religious system defined in words written on stone and on words written by ink on paper scrolls! How wonderful indeed is that difference.*

*But we must go on now to the final teaching today of the doctrines Paul emphasized in Corinthians and how those are so fundamental to the teaching given so well in Romans, Galatians, and elsewhere.*

### **Our Outline Today:**

- *By Grace the Free Blessing of God Is Promised to All Believers*
- *By Grace Our Pilgrimage Is Foreordained by God for Our Good*
- *By Grace Our Heavenly Inheritance is Guaranteed*

***I. By Grace the Free Blessing of God Is Promised to All Believers:***

- ***Last time we closed with Paul's own words in Romans how that teaching in 2 Corinthians is also foundational to his teaching on law versus grace in Romans. What does he say in Romans, what words does he use there? Well, this is a good introduction to our lesson for today, our closing one on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians.***

***Rom. 7:22-25***

**22** For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

**23** But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

**24** O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

**25** I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- ***And then in the following verses introducing chapter 8. And never forget that the chapter divisions found in our Bibles are the inventions of man. Many are well placed, some are not. In this case it seems like the right division but the teaching in chapter 7 and the teaching in chapter 8 are intimately connected and no division is needed:***

***Rom. 8:1-4***

**1** There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

**2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

**3** For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

**4** That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- ***Grace reigns independently of all works as we read here of paul's testimony. The righteousness of the law is the declaration of righteousness by Almighty God and what verse 3 says so clearly is that Christ's perfect sacrifice for us, on our behalf, in our place even as that was the only way it could be effective, fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law for each of us. Therefore our lives, our walk, in this new realm of the spirit, and not the flesh is enough to please God. If we do walk in the old realm, that of sin and death, as if we***

*could live there, we will be miserable indeed, but we are still righteous in God's sight because he sees us through Christ's completed work and therefore sees us as righteous in him. You see how much meaning there is then in these words "in Christ" and "in Christ Jesus". Praise the Lord for such grace indeed.*

*May we always bring forth the fruit appropriate for such a life. By his resurrection power we shall. Amen?*

- *So legalism, attempting to place ourselves under a law, whether the Law of Moses or any other, even the Law of the Kingdom, is for us a hopeless cause. We have no empowering from God to keep the tenets of such a law. We do have the Spirit of God but what he is doing today under grace is convicting us of our increasingly great and unavoidable failure to keep the law perfectly as Paul wrote in Rom. 7:23: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." **There is no victory possible in the realm of the flesh as we see here. But praise God the victory is ours according to the principle of grace as we have just seen.***

*Now in the Second letter to the Corinthians, at the beginning, Paul's introduction to this letter conveys that doctrine so well:*

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 1:1-5**

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

**2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; **[The Lord God is to be blessed above all and without limitations! ]**

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

**5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 1:6-9**

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

**7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. [Bold promises — and unconditional too, if we understand them correctly...]**

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: **[For Paul — and us — even death or its sentence is a blessing indeed]**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 1:10-12**

**10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; [Such amazing confidence in the Lord, all three tenses of salvation here...]**

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

**12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. [And so grace works ... does it work today? For you? For me? Verse 12 surely should be, and he opens the letter in this way to set a foundation of doctrine under then entire teaching of the letter...]**

- **The teaching here is surely a fundamental teaching:**
  - **Paul is our example of what living in the realm of God's abundant grace is all about. He is our example because we are enabled to live above the demand of this world as he did. Yes, he was an apostle and had additional abilities we do not have. But it is not in those ways that he is our example. He shows us the way forward in terms that do apply to us all...**
  - **We also are “delivered to death for Jesus sake” that we may learn what Paul was learning as he wrote here. The short but powerful summary in verse 12 is so applicable to us all: “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” Oh, the wonder, the joy, the blessedness of one whose life may be summarized in these few words. Is Paul truly our example or do we rather through religious works seek to please the Lord and gain his**

*acceptance (or forgiveness) that we might somehow gain heaven's reward? Do we?*

***II. By Grace Our Pilgrimage Is Foreordained by God for Our Good:***

***2 Cor. 2:12-17***

**12** Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

**13** I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

**14** Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

**15** For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

**16** To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

**17** For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

- *This powerful teaching by way of Paul's example for us is found throughout this letter and is most characteristic of it. It is the premier teaching here as we have often commented before. Paul shows us all that it is through our many, many infirmities and weaknesses that the strength of the Lord is being manifested to all. For that is the very reason we are so often pressed beyond measure as the apostle was as we read here. Or, looking ahead in the letter, he continues for example in chapter 4:*

***2 Cor. 4:7-18***

**7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

**8** We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

**9** Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

**10** Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

**11** For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

**12** So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

...

**15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.**

**16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.**

**17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;**

**18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

- *Is this the realm we are living in? Can we say boldly what the apostle writes here? Verses 17 and 18 say it so very well: The promise is clear for us all. As with Paul, our afflictions are “light” and “momentary”, but our future glories eternal! And we can have the blessings of that even now IF (verse 18) “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*
- *For our vantage point makes all the difference. If we look down we see all as the Lord sees it, “increasingly dimly” as is right and proper for us heavenly saints.*
- *So a glorious provision has been made for this life, IF we would receive it. Though Rom. 5:17 has the teaching these verses in 2 Corinthians provide the foundational doctrine underlying it all:*

***Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)***

- *There is much complementary teaching in Romans that correlates so perfectly with the Corinthian teaching where we see so often the word “know”, so very often used by Paul to identify the doctrine he is teaching the saints. Without this knowledge, the believer is poor indeed. For example:*

***Rom. 8:22-27***

***22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.***

***23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.***

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

- *This explains the knowledge Paul expresses in the following well known verses:*

**[READ ] Rom. 8:28-34**

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

**[READ ] Rom. 8:35-39**

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



- *So it is clear: the good hand of the Lord of Glory and Grace is upon each of us who have believed! What is our response to such a testimony as that of the apostle here? He is “persuaded”! Are we? I cannot understand it Lord, but amen, so be it! I believe! **THAT BY YOUR MEASURELESS GRACE YOU HAVE SO ORDAINED OUR ASTOUNDING SALVATION WITH ETERNAL GLORY. SO BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING IT IS, BUT IT STANDS REVEALED AND IT IS SO WONDERFUL INDEED.***
- *The circumstances of this life that we endure, whether it be persecution, or perhaps what is common to man, can never separate us or cut us off from the love of God in Christ. Note that on the list are the trials of this life, even hunger or peril, famine, nakedness, or sword. Even these!! Does a knowledge of this doctrine change our perspective on life, even life itself? Shouldn’t it?*

*For the apostle testifies here that it is while “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” and still do. For nothing can separate us from that love that is everlasting. Amen.*

### **III. By Grace Our Heavenly Inheritance is Guaranteed:**

- *Our final specific doctrinal teaching to be considered here today, that of our guaranteed inheritance in heaven’s glory, will establish how many fundamental doctrines are taught in this letter so effectively:*

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 5:1-6**

**1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

**2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:**

**3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.**

**4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.**

**5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**

**6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:**

- *Our Lord know our end from our beginning and has graciously revealed here what it is! Amen. Praise God.*
- *This is critically important doctrine and this letter was used mightily by the Lord God to teach it (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). In addition to these verses here, in Ephesians Paul writes what we will conclude with today:*

***Eph. 1:11-14***

**11** In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

**12** That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

**13** In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

**14** Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

**Conclusion:**

- *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound! Sin reigned to death and that everlasting. But grace reigns unto life eternal and full of glory. Romans does say it so well.*

***Rom. 5:20-21***

**20** Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

**21** That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

- *Amen and amen! Any comments?*