

2 CORINTHIANS, PART III

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-THREE – 2 Cor. 12:11-21

TEXT:

- v. 11 I have become foolish; you yourselves forced me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles even though I am nothing.
- v. 12 Indeed the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with every kind of patience, by signs and wonders and miracles.
- v. 13 For what is there in which you were treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong.
- v. 14 Look! This is a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you for I am not seeking what is yours but you; for children are not under moral obligation to be saving up for their parents, but the parents for the children.
- v. 15 And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I am loving you the more, am I to be loved the less?
- v. 16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, being crafty I took you in by deceit.
- v. 17 Certainly of those whom I have sent to you, there was not one through whom I took advantage of you, was there?
- v. 18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?
- v. 19 For a long time you are thinking that it is to you I am presenting my verbal defense. In the sight of God in Christ we are speaking, but all the things, beloved, are for your upbuilding.
- v. 20 For I am fearing that perhaps, having come, I may find you to be not what I am wishing and I may be found by you to be not what you are wishing; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, outburst of anger, outbreaks of selfishness, slanders, gossips, inflated egos, disturbances;
- v. 21 I am afraid that having come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned previously and did not repent of the impurity and immorality and sensuality which they practiced.

INTRODUCTION:

Say a Little Prayer

Squirrels had overrun three churches in town. After much prayer, the elders of the first church determined that the animals were predestined to be there. Who were they to interfere with God's will? They reasoned. Soon, the squirrels multiplied.

The elders of the second church, deciding that they could not harm any of God's creatures, humanely trapped the squirrels and set them free outside of town. Three days later, the squirrels were back. It was only the third church that succeeded in keeping the pests away. The elders baptized the squirrels and registered them as members of the church. Now they only see them on Christmas and Easter.

Mujibar

Mujibar was trying to get into the USA legally through immigration.

The Officer said, "Mujibar, congratulations, you have passed all the tests so far, except there is one more test to take. Unless you pass this one you cannot enter the United States of America."

Mujibar said, "I am ready."

The Officer said, "make a sentence using the words, Yellow, Pink and Green."

Mujibar thought for a few minutes and said, "Mr. Officer I am ready."

The Officer said, "Go ahead."

Mujibar said, The telephone goes green, green, green and I pink it up, and say, Yellow, this is Mujibar."

Mujibar now lives in a neighborhood near you and works at Verizon's help desk. I just talked to him yesterday.

Be Careful Where You Leave Your Cell Phone

Several men are in the locker room of a golf club. A cell phone on a bench rings and a man engages the hands – free speaker function and begins to talk. Everyone else in the room stops to listen.

MAN: "Hello"

WOMAN: "Honey, it's me. Are you at the club?"

MAN: "Yes"

WOMAN: "I am at the mall now and found this beautiful leather coat it's only \$1,000. Is it OK if I buy it?"

MAN: "Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

WOMAN: "I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the new 2006 models. I saw one I really liked."

MAN: "How much?"

WOMAN: "60,000"

MAN: "OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

WOMAN: "Great! Oh, and one more thing, the house we wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking \$1,000,000."

MAN: "Well, then go ahead and give them an offer, but just offer \$900,000"

WOMAN: "OK, I'll see you later! I love you!"

MAN: "Bye, I love you, too."

The man hangs up. The other men in the locker room are looking at him in astonishment. Then he asks: "Anyone know who this phone belongs to?"

The apostle Paul, in the earlier part of this chapter, has talked about VISIONS AND REVELATIONS.

He then shared with his readers that a THORN IN THE FLESH, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him had been given—so that he might not be exalting himself.

He interceded before the Lord on three different occasions to seek deliverance from this thorn, and the answer was always the same—"My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness."

The apostle's response to this NO is: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

2 Cor. 12:10

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and difficulties on behalf of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

In the remainder of this chapter we are going to be looking at the credentials of the apostle.

“His exceptional signs and his exceptional love” is the way Plummer describes it. “That I have become a fool by glorying is your fault; for you have not been loyal to one whom you might know to be an Apostle by the mighty works and the exceeding love which he showed to you.”

(Acceptance: Loosing the Webs of Personal Insecurity by Don Baker)

Dr. Paul Tournier, Swiss psychiatrist and author says,

How beautiful, how grand and liberating the experience is when people learn to help each other. It is impossible to overemphasize the need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. No one can develop freely in this world and find a full life without feeling understood by at least one person...He who would see himself clearly must open up to a confidant freely chosen and worthy of such trust.
p. 44

- v. 11 I have become foolish; you yourselves forced me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles even though I am nothing.

Paul starts this study with the statement:

“I HAVE BECOME FOOLISH;”

2 Corinthians 11:1

I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.

2 Corinthians 11:16-17

Again, I am saying, let no one think me to be foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, in order that I also may boast a little. That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

2 Corinthians 12:1

Boasting is necessary though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

“I HAVE BECOME FOOLISH; YOU YOURSELVES FORCED ME.”

The Corinthians are responsible for this happening.

“Your commendation would have kept me from boasting.”

“ACTUALLY I SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMMENDED BY YOU,”

Instead of criticized, he should have been “COMMENDED” for his work and ministry among them.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-18

Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

“FOR IN NO RESPECT WAS I INFERIOR TO THE MOST EMINENT APOSTLE EVEN THOUGH I AM NOTHING.”

2 Corinthians 11:5

For I am considering myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.

Paul says, “I no respect am I inferior to the superfine apostles that are among you,” and he makes this statement and says, “EVEN THOUGH I AM NOTHING.”

1 Timothy 1:15

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

1 Corinthians 9:16

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Ephesians 3:8

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

2 Corinthians 6:10

as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Phillips translates this verse:

I have made a fool of myself in this “boasting” business, but you forced me to do it. If only you had had a better opinion of me it would have been quite unnecessary.

The Living Bible paraphrase it:

You have made me act like a fool—boasting like this—for you people ought to be writing about me and not making me write about myself.

Plummer points out:

I have been making a fool of myself by writing in this glorying fashion; but I am not to blame for it. It was you who drove me to do it; for you gave support to my opponents, when you ought loyally to have commended me. I had a right to expect this from you, for in no single thing was I inferior to those pre-eminent apostles of yours, although as a matter of fact I am nothing.

- v. 12 Indeed the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with every kind of patience, by signs and wonders and miracles.

The word “INDEED” expresses an emotional outburst on the apostle Paul’s part emphasizing what is being said:

“THE SIGNS OF A TRUE APOSTLE”

2 Corinthians 11:13

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

“INDEED THE SIGNS OF A TRUE APOSTLE WERE PERFORMED AMONG YOU”

We ask ourselves the question: “What are these?”

There are probably three observations we need to make:

1. the spirituals gift or gifts that the apostle was endowed with as a believer
2. the preaching and teaching that the apostle was involved in
3. Acts 2:22

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

Hebrews 2:4

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

“INDEED THE SIGNS OF A TRUE APOSTLE WERE PERFORMED AMONG YOU WITH EVERY KIND OF PATIENCE,”

The apostle functioned as he should among them hoping for a desired result. He was wanting and waiting for a proper Corinthians response. Instead, he received a CALLOUSED, COLD< CRITICAL indifference on their part.

He then lists three instruments of verifying his ministry as a true apostle.

1. SIGNS
2. WONDERS
3. MIRACLES

Hebrews 10:35-36

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

- v. 13 For what is there in which you were treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong.

Now the apostle gives the reason for his previous statement, and his reason is in the form of a question. There are five questions in the rest of the passage, and this is the first:

1. “WHAT IS THERE IN WHICH YOU WERE TREATED AS INFERIOR?”

This points back to the fact that the apostle has said in verse 11: “in no respect was he inferior.”

“WHAT IS THERE IN WHICH YOU WERE TREATED AS INFERIOR TO THE REST OF THE CHURCHES,” and then he makes a statement of irony:

“EXCEPT THAT I MYSELF DID NOT BECOME A BURDEN TO YOU?”

2 Corinthians 11:7-9

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself in order that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches, having taken wages from them to serve you; And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and I will continue to do so.

The apostle then says the following question:

“FORGIVE ME THIS WRONG.”

We know this is a statement of sarcasm in a way because of two other passages that talk about the stewardship responsibilities of those who are being ministered unto.

1 Corinthians 9:9-11

For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Plummer puts it this way:

Well, in what respect were you put in a position of inferiority to my other Churches, except it be that I myself did not ‘sponge’ on you? Of your generosity, pray forgive me this dreadful wrong!

Phillips puts it this way:

Is it because I have not allowed you to support me financially? My humblest apologies for this great wrong!

- v. 14 Look! This is a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you for I am not seeking what is yours but you; for children are not under moral obligation to be saving up for their parents, but the parents for the children.

“Behold” or “LOOK! THIS IS A THIRD TIME I AM READY TO COME TO YOU,”

2 Corinthians 12:8

Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times in order that it might depart from me.

Paul says this is the third time that he is ready to come to them, “AND I WILL NOT BE A BURDEN TO YOU.”

2 Corinthians 11:12

But what I am doing, I will also continue to do, in order that I may cut off the opportunity of those who are desiring an opportunity in order that they may be found just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.

The apostle then gives the reason in the latter part of verse 14:

“FOR I AM NOT SEEKING WHAT IS YOURS BUT (in contrast) YOU;”

And then a further reason:

“FOR CHILDREN ARE NOT UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO BE SAVING UP FOR THEIR PARENTS, BUT THE PARENTS FOR THE CHILDREN.”

We have two NEGATIVE and POSITIVE statements here by the apostle giving reasons why he is not going to be a “burden” to his Corinthian children:

1. (negatively) “I AM NOT SEEKING WHAT IS YOURS BUT (in contrast, positively) YOU;”
2. “FOR CHILDREN ARE (negatively) NOT UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO BE SAVING UP FOR THEIR PARENTS, BUT (in contrast, positively) THE PARENTS FOR THE CHILDREN.”

Phillips says here:

It is you I want—not your money.

The Living Bible says:

Now I am coming to you again, the third time; and it is still not going to cost you anything, for I don't want your money. I want you!

Plummer puts it this way:

For what I am seeking is not your possessions for myself, but yourselves for Christ.

Paul says, "I am not interested in possessions but people in my ministry."

It's not the POSSESSIONS but the PERSONS.

The apostle's focus is on people.

2 Corinthians 2:4

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.

"FOR CHILDREN ARE NOT UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO BE SAVING UP FOR THEIR PARENTS, BUT THE PARENTS FOR THE CHILDREN."

The apostle considers himself as the "spiritual father" of many of these Corinthians who have responded to Christ under his ministry, and he is making the point quite clear that it is the responsibility of the parents to make provision for the children and not the reverse.

v. 15 And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I am loving you the more, am I to be loved the less?

In view of the fact that he does not want to be a burden, and that he is not seeking their possessions but them as people, he says:

"I WILL MOST GLADLY SPEND AND BE SPENT FOR YOUR SOULS."

2 Corinthians 12:9

And He has said to me, "My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching its perfection) in the presence of weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

Phillips puts it this way:

Consequently I will most gladly spend and be spent for your good, even though it means that the more I love you the less you love me.

The Living Bible says:

I am glad to give you myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.

Plummer puts it this way:

most gladly will I spend what I have, and be utterly spent myself, for the good of your souls. Then, if my love for you exceeds that of fathers, am I to be loved less?

“AND I WILL MOST GLADLY SPEND AND BE SPENT FOR YOUR SOULS.”

Ezekiel 18:4

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Matthew 10:28

“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Matthew 16:26

“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Luke 12:19-20

‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

Hebrews 6:19

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

2. "IF I AM LOVING YOU THE MORE, AM I TO BE LOVED THE LESS?"

Here now we come to question #2.

2 Corinthians 6:11-12

Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our hearts is opened wide. You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own afflictions.

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

And he indicates that his love is an unqualified for of love. I remember years ago reading a story of a mother who went down to breakfast one morning and found a bill from her son lying beside her plate. He had written it out for her.

Mowing the lawn	\$2.00
Drying the dishes	\$1.00
Raking leaves	\$3.00
Cleaning garage	\$4.00

Total	\$10.00 owed

She did not say anything, but went about her work. When the boy came home from school for lunch that day he found a bill lying beside his plate. It said:

Ironing clothes	nothing
Mending socks	nothing
Cooking meals	nothing
Bandaging cuts	nothing
Baking cookies	nothing

	Love, Mother

That is the apostle's attitude, isn't it?
p. 216

(A View from the Porch by Ludlow Porch)

Love is sitting up together all night in the hospital waiting room praying to God the doctor can break the baby's fever.

Love is fixing her favorite meal when you are as tired as she is.

Love is the feeling you get watching your son get his first haircut.

Love is when she walks by your chair and touches the top of your head.
Love is when you enjoy her beating you at Scrabble.
Love is looking into her eyes while Sinatra sings "Yesterday."
Love is the smell of baby powder.
Love is bringing her flowers when it's not a special occasion.
Love doesn't mean never having to say you're sorry; it means being able to say
you're sorry and mean it.
p. 66

(Love For All Your Worth by Joseph C. Aldrich)

Why do we find love slipping away from our relationships? Why do we sometimes feel like last year's model? Why do we find ourselves overlooking the precious value of others? Could it be that our own self-centeredness has distorted our perception of true value? Perhaps our own fingerprints have smudged the lenses. Perhaps we have lost some value in the sight of other's. We've slipped, we've changed, we've become negligent, forgetful, and unappreciative. Our "loved one"...have found new loves.

Why? Why do we abandon that which was previously valued and neglect that which has obvious value? Certainly one reason is that whatever we value is ultimately the which in some way meets a need. A bus company captured this truth in an ad campaign not long ago. The ad caption read:

When You Deal in Basic Needs,
You're Always Needed.

Why are you needed? Because you meet basic needs. We all need love, security, acceptance, esteem, significance, and beauty. We need meaningful and intimate fellowship. We need to know and be known. We need to be needed, to belong. God himself said, "It is not good for man to be alone."

But what happens? We make a contribution to family needs, we cook meals, clean house, bring home the bacon, sacrifice out time for others, drive carpools, go to soccer games, and yet...feel used and unappreciated. What has gone wrong, what is so obviously missing that we exploit and are exploited, that we care and are crushed. That we give and are taken? Why do we find ourselves becoming less lovable and less valuable?

pp. 30-31

(the Disciplines of Life by V. Raymond Edman)

Out of heartache there will be healing for you and for others.

Love grows stronger when assailed;
Love conquers where all else has failed.
Love ever blesses those who curse;
Love gives the better for the worse.

Love unbinds others by its bonds;
Love pours forgiveness from its wounds.
p. 165

- v. 16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, being crafty I took you in by deceit.

Once again the apostle returns to irony as he did earlier in the passage. He did not burden them with financial responsibilities and ask them to forgive his wrong in this regard, and now he returns to that:

“I DID NOT BURDEN YOU MYSELF;”

And then, the critics from Corinth have said:

“NEVERTHELESS, BEING CRAFTY I TOOK YOU IN BY DECEIT.”

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am fearing, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if also his servants are disguising themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

He uses the very words “CRAFTY” and “DECEIT” here to help us get the feeling of irony in the passage.

- v. 17 Certainly of those whom I have sent to you, there was not one through whom I took advantage of you, was there?

This is question #3 now:

3. “CERTAINLY OF THOSE WHOM I HAVE SENT TO YOU, THERE WAS NOT ONE THROUGH WHOM I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF YOU, WAS THERE?”

“CERTAINLY OF THOSE,” that is:

Titus

Luke
Trophimus
Timothy
Silas
Apollos

And maybe even some others who had been assigned some service in Corinth. Of all those that I sent to you, “THERE WAS NOT ONE THROUGH WHOM I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF YOU, WAS THERE?”

“TOOK ADVANTAGE” in the sense that they made the Corinthians obligated to them financially.

v. 18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?

In this 18th verse now we have question #4 and #5. The 4th question focuses upon Titus. Titus has probably spent the longest period of time in Corinth in the ministry there of any of the rest of the staff.

“I URGED TITUS TO GO, AND SENT THE BROTHER WITH HIM.”

The apostle mentions someone else but does not give us his name but only that he is a brother in Christ who traveled with Titus.

4. “TITUS DID NOT TAKE ANY ADVANTAGE OF YOU, DID HE?”

This is question #4. He didn’t take any advantage of you by obligating you to himself financially?

5. “DID WE NOT CONDUCT OURSELVES IN THE SAME SPIRIT AND WALK IN THE SAME STEPS?”

“Weren’t Titus and I alike in the way we conducted ourselves in the same spirit and walked in the same steps?”

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Colossians 2:6

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

1 John 2:6

the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

- v. 19 For a long time you are thinking that it is to you I am presenting my verbal defense. In the sight of God in Christ we are speaking, but all the things, beloved, are for your upbuilding.

Phillips puts it this way:

Are you thinking all this time that I am trying to justify myself in your eyes? Actually I am speaking in Christ before God himself, and my only reason for doing is to help you in your spiritual life.

The Living Bible puts it this way:

I suppose you think I am saying all this to get back into your good graces. That isn't it at all. I tell you, with God listening as I say it, that I have said this to help you, dear friends—to build you up spiritually and not to help myself.

Plummer makes a division in the text at this point and says:

Think not that I am on my defense before you; it is to God that I am responsible; and it is for your good that I speak, for it is you that have to be judged by me. I pray that, through your repentance, I may have no need to punish, and you may go on to perfection.

“FOR A LONG TIME YOU ARE THINKING THAT IT IS TO YOU I AM PRESENTING MY VERBAL DEFENSE.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad.

“IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IN CHRIST WE ARE SPEAKING,”

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

The Lord is seeing and listening. He is seeing what we are doing and listening to what we are saying.

“BUT ALL THE THINGS, BELOVED, ARE FOR YOUR UPBUILDING.”

Everything we have done is for you.

EVERY PROJECT, EVERY PROGRAM, EVERY PERSONAL SACRIFICE has been made for your personal benefit.

“BUT ALL THINGS, BELOVED,” He speaks of them very affectionately here.

“BUT ALL THINGS, BELOVED, ARE FOR YOUR UPBUILDING.”

This “upbuilding” involves three things:

1. the spiritual walk
2. strengthening for service
3. edifying other members of the body of Christ as a result

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- v. 20 For I am fearing that perhaps, having come, I may find you to be not what I am wishing and I may be found by you to be not what you are wishing; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, outbreaks of selfishness, slanders, gossips, inflated egos, disturbances;

Phillips puts it this way:

For I must confess that I am afraid that when I come I shall not perhaps find you as I should like to find you, and that you will not find me coming quite as you would like me to come. I am afraid of finding arguments, jealousy, ill-feeling, divided loyalties, slander, whispering, pride and disharmony.

The Living Bible puts it this way:

For I am afraid that when I come to visit you I won't like what I find, and then you won't like the way I will have to act. I am afraid that I will find you quarreling, and envying each other, and being angry with each other, and acting big, and saying wicked things about each other and whispering behind each other's backs, filled with conceit and disunity.

Plummer says:

The effect of my visit may be mutual disappointment,...I mean that I fear lest there may be among you strife and jealousy, wraths and factions, backbitings and whisperings, swellings and tumults;

Paul says:

“I AM FEARING”

In verse 20 and then down in verse 21:

“I AM AFRAID”

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am fearing, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Galatians 4:11

I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

“FOR I AM FEARING THAT PERHAPS, HAVING COME, I MAY FIND YOU TO BE NOT WHAT I AM WISHING AND I MAY BE FOUND BY YOU TO BE NOT WHAT YOU ARE WISHING;”

The apostle is saying that:

“When I get there I may not find you to be what I desire for you, and as a result I’m going to have to handle this in such a way that will cause you to be uncomfortable.”

2 Corinthians 11:28

Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me, of concern for all the churches.

Much of the apostle’s emotional energy was probably spent in these interpersonal relationships.

(A View from the Porch by Ludlow Porch)

I live kinda out of town, and my bank was about the last one to get instant all-night tellers. But I was sure glad to get my card in the mail. It was called Maurice, the Money Man, and boy! Was I proud to get my Maurice card.

I went down to the bank to take out some money the first night, just to see how it worked.

I put my Maurice card in and punched my magic number. The little screen lighted up and said, “Hey, Luddy. How’s your mama n’ ‘em?”

I punched in, “Not bad, Maurice. How you been?”

“Fine, thanks. Can I help you?”

I punched in that I wanted to take out \$200.

Maurice lighted up and said, “What you trying to pull, fat boy? You ain’t had a \$200 balance in your life. Shove off or I’ll call a cop!”

I should have known there ain’t no way to have a meaningful relationship with a computer.

p. 49

(Love For All Your Worth by Joseph C. Aldrich)

If we are to “speak the truth in love,” then our speaking must be controlled and influenced by the facets of love described in this great love chapter. Each quality of love is a vital ingredient of the kind of soil which stimulates healthy growth. We speak, therefore,

with patience because “love is patient”

with kindness because “love is kind”

without envy because “love does not envy”

without boasting because “love does not boast”

without pride because “love is not proud”

without rudeness because “love is not rude”

without self-seeking because “love is not self-seeking”

without anger because “love is not easily angered”

without being “historical” because “love keeps no record of wrongs”

without delighting in evil because “love rejoices in truth”
with protection because “love always protects”
with trust because “love always trusts”
with hope because “love always hopes”
with perseverance because “love always perseveres.”

Stated negatively, we have nothing to say if:

we are impatient
we are unkind
we are boastful
we are prideful
we are rude
we are self-seeking
we are angry
we are “record keepers”
we delight in evil
we have no commitment to protect
we do no trust
we do not communicate hope
we have no commitment to persevere.

pp. 89-90

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gail and Gordon MacDonald)

GORDON: Remember when Billy Graham's small grandson fell while he was running to his mother? He quickly got up, brushed himself off, and said, “Oops, I dropped myself!” How's that for not taking yourself too seriously? Well, we have tried to see imperfection in our home in much the same way. It's to be expected. As leader in our home, I am no exception but must be first performer in facing that fact.

When we are not transparent with one another in our relationships, people fall victim to an unrealistic, unwholesome view of true humanity. Because the windows are shaded over, we begin to treat each other on the basis of serious distortions. Take, for example, the words of a woman who once wrote to Bruce Larson:

My husband is a much-beloved church leader, praised and admired. Doctors tell me he is psychotic, a very sick man. When you see the one you love so much turning bitterly hostile, drawing further and further away in a shell of loneliness, yet still teaching all the truth, there is a continuing grief that cannot be expressed.

Every attempt at help is blocked. Every expression of love is interpreted in the wrong way. And all the while his Christian friends admire and praise him and force him further and further into his prison of loneliness, where any admission of fault or failure becomes so threatening that it seems to mean destruction.

p. 37

The apostle then lists in the passage eight things that he might find there among them. I would like for us to look at these for a few brief moments.

“THAT PERHAPS THERE MAY BE:”

STRIFE
JEALOUSY
OUTBURST OF ANGER
OUTBREAKS OF SELFISHNESS
SLANDERS
GOSSIPS
INFLATED EGOS
DISTURBANCES

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outburst of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. STRIFE

The word communicates “discord or contention.” It describes a circumstance where a lot of quarreling is going on.

The second word is:

2. JEALOUSY

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I gave you in marriage to one husband that I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin.

Here the word is used in a bad sense of “jealousy or envy.” It is to be jealous of one another because of something.

The third word we have translated:

3. OUTBURSTS OF ANGER

This is the picture of something building up and building up and finally exploding.

(None of These Diseases by S.I. McMillen, M.D.)

I received much inspiration for this chapter from Dale Carnegie's account of a trip to Yellowstone Park and a visit to the place when the grizzly bears are fed. He did not have to wait long before a grizzly bear came into a clearing where garbage had been dumped to entice him. The guide told the group that the grizzly bear can whip any animal in the West with the possible exceptions of the buffalo and Kodiak bear. That night, as Dale Carnegie sat with the other tourists in the bleachers, he noticed that there was only one animal the grizzly would allow to eat with him—a skunk. Of course, the grizzly could have won in any fight with a skunk. He resented the skunk and yearned to get even with him for his brazen impudence. But he didn't. Why? Because he knew there would be the high cost of getting even.

Smart grizzly! Certainly much smarter than many human beings who spend weary days and sleepless nights brooding over their resentments and trying to hatch ways to squelch someone. Man doesn't ever seem to learn that the high cost of getting even may be toxic goiter, strokes of apoplexy, and fatal heart attacks.
pp. 67-68

(Getting Together by Em Griffin)

This may sound risky, but it's really safer than letting the anger fester. That's gunny sacking. You toss all the slights, hurts and irritations into a bag until it's stuffed full. Then you clobber them with it. It's overkill, like dropping an H-bomb on Luxemburg. Dealing with complaints as they occur makes more sense and is biblical as well. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul reminds us that love doesn't keep account of evil. By keeping short books, getting out our anger before the sun goes down, we'll avoid an eruption.
p. 154

(Discipline Them, Love Them by Betty N. Chase)

The following are ways parents can provoke children to anger. You list may include some of these:

- yelling
- embarrassing or ridiculing
- ignoring child; being too busy; not listening
- disciplining or striking child in anger
- not caring for child's needs
- comparing or showing favoritism
- impatience
- lack of sensitivity
- using a harsh tone of voice
- name-calling

too many rules; not enough rules
pretending to be perfect
lying to a child; not keeping promises
overreacting
overprotecting
not respecting privacy
demanding perfection; too high expectations
falsely accusing; jumping to conclusions
teasing
disciplining in front of others
parental fighting; making a child take sides
interrupting
inconsistency
failing to discipline
lack of trust
inflexibility
punishment which is unjust, too harsh, or unfair
threats without discipline; nagging
giving tasks beyond child's ability
not answering questions; not explaining
critical; always seeing bad
talking about child's faults
denial of requests without consideration
not forgiving
not respecting child's decisions
conditional acceptance
p. 17

(The Walk-On-Water Syndrome by Edward B. Bratcher)

An example of the stress situation that leads to anger is being "on call" seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. The telephone rings. The familiar voice of a church member says, "I hate to call you at home and on your day off, but Mr. Jones has had a heart attack and is in intensive care. I thought you would want to know." What can a minister say? He is glad that someone has taken the initiative to call him, so he can't get angry at the person who called. He can't get angry at Mr. Jones for having a heart attack. But the minister is angry, and rightfully so. The stress of being called on his only day off makes him angry. So he keeps it bottled up and silently prays for help.
p. 29

(Make Anger Your Ally by Neil Clark Warren)

Explosions from the mouth, whether they are part of a hit-and-run action or a long, brutal beating with words, ought to be labeled for what they are: "Aggression—Dangerous to Any Important Relationship You May Have."
p. 43

(Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion by Carol Tavris)

Verbal aggression usually fails because it riles up the other person and makes him or her inclined to strike back, whereas a description of your state of mind constitutes less of an attack, inspiring the other person to make amends. People who shout and yell when they feel angry thus tend not to get the results they hope for (that is, apologies and changed behavior from the yellee), so the next time they feel angry they yell louder. The object of their wrath either counterattacks or ignores them, as the children of some weary parents do. "Yelling does not do any good," said a woman in Suzanne K. Steinmetz's study of families. "...Makes the neighbors think you are crazy. The children turn a deaf ear when you yell. Eventually, they say, 'Oh, there she goes again!'"

p. 129

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I hid my wrath, my wrath did grow.
--William Blake

p. 120

As a young man in G. Stanley Hall's 1899 study recalled:

Once when I was about 13, in an angry fit, I walked out of the house vowing I would never return. It was a beautiful summer day, and I walked far along lovely lanes, till gradually the stillness and beauty calmed and soothed me, and after some hours I returned repentant and almost melted. Since then when [I am] angry, I do this if I can, and find it the best cure.

p. 127

...I believe that a careful study of anger matters because anger, like love, has such a potent capacity for good and evil. And I do mean good and evil, not "adjustment and deviance," the gutless language that so often characterizes modern discussions of psychological topics. Anger, like love, is a moral emotion. I have watched people use anger, in the name of emotional liberation, to erode affection and trust, whittle away their spirits in bitterness and revenge, diminish their dignity in years of spiteful hatred. And I watch with admiration those who use anger to probe for truth, who challenge and change the complacent injustices of life, who take an unpopular position center stage while others say "shhh" from the wings.

p. 23

Judgment and choice distinguish human beings from other species; judgment and choice are the hallmarks of human anger.

p. 36

(How to Have a Creative Crisis by H. Norman Wright)

It is important to develop a plan of action for interrupting your anger. This plan should involve immediate action to disengage from the situation. It should also be a want to face and handle the problem at a later time. Interrupting the conflict is an application of Nehemiah 5:6-7, "I [Nehemiah] was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words. I counseled with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers" (AMP). Another version states, "I thought it over."

p. 67

(No More Mr. Nice Guy! By Stephen Brown)

Someone has said that anger is the wind that blows out the lamp of the mind. That is true, and if it is left unrestrained it is of no use whatsoever.

p. 170

I have a Catholic priest friend who has a card he sometimes gives people. On one side is written, "Bless those who curse you..." On the other side: "...because they may be right."

I have written in the back of my Bible, "You wouldn't be so shocked at your own sin if you didn't have such a high opinion of yourself." I sometimes flip to the back of my Bible and read that just before I preach. It helps me deal with my real sins and also the vague feeling of guilt that I can't attach to any biblical standard I have violated.

An old, wise statement makes the point well: "There is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill behooves any of us to judge the rest of us." That philosophy ought to be applied to oneself as well.

p. 108

The fourth word is:

4. OUTBREAKS OF SELFISHNESS

The word can mean strife or contentiousness. It comes from selfishness or selfish ambition. It has to do with disputes or outbreaks of selfishness.

(Stress Without Distress by Hans Selye)

Egotism or selfishness is the most ancient characteristic feature of life. From the simplest microorganism to man, all living beings must protect their own interests first of all. We can hardly expect someone else to look after us more conscientiously than after himself. Selfishness is natural but, since it is considered to be ugly, we try to deny its existence in ourselves. It is also dangerous to society. We are afraid of it because it harbors the seeds of fight and revenge. Furthermore, curiously, despite our inborn egotism, many of us are strongly motivated by altruistic feelings. Yet, these two apparently contradictory impulses are not incompatible; the instinct for self-preservation need not conflict with the wish to help others. Altruism can be regarded as a modified form of egotism, a kind of collective selfishness that helps the community in that it

engenders gratitude. By making another person wish that we should prosper because of what we have done—and, hence, are likely to do for him again—we elicit goodwill.
p. 53

(Secrets for Successful Living by Robert D. Foster)

“Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam as you were coming from Egypt”
(Deut. 24:9).

Miriam...a leader who overestimated herself! In the book, Her Name Is Woman, Gien Karssen, shares with us: “She was not just a tag-along sister to Aaron and Moses. She was a co-laborer, with leadership responsibilities. Miriam, an unmarried woman, was called by God to an exceptional task. She had the privilege of being the first female prophet...a spokeswoman for God. Miriam was a woman at the top...”

She was probably the gal who watched the ark of bulrushes in which her younger brother Moses was laid. She associated herself with her brother years later in the Exodus. She is called “the prophetess” and led the choir of maidens who sang the triumph song after the crossing of the Red Sea.

“Miriam’s story offered a wonderful challenge as long as she used her position to honor God. However, Miriam gradually shifted away from God’s control in her life to self control.”

Along with Aaron, she opposed Moses at Haneroth (Numbers 12:1-5). Perhaps they were disgusted with his marriage to Zipporah. Up to this time, Miriam had “free access” to Moses...now another woman was there. Could it have been jealousy in Miriam’s heart as an unmarried girl...especially since her “kid brother” had married someone of whom the rest of the family disapproved?

Aaron and Miriam also resented of Moses’ government...not of the mismanagement...but of the monopolizing. They probably wanted a hand in the operational affairs.

The fifth word is:

5. SLANDERS

The word communicates evil speech or defamation, detraction, evil speaking.

(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

Criticisms is often a put-down, while correction is a “put-right.” Criticism is a destructive attack, while correction is teaching how to set things right. To tell someone what is wrong is often futile, but to help someone correct a bad situation is an exercise in caring.

p. 65

Criticism can easily make us bitter or just as easily make us sweet. Our attitude can be, “How nice it is for these people to take the time to tell us what we ought to do.” Criticism can be a club to knock us down, or a prod to drive us forward. Many persons

have become great trying to prove to their critics that they could do what critics said they could not do.

Demosthenes listened to the critics make fun of him, and he stuffed his mouth with pebbles to practice speaking until he became one of the world's greatest orators. As a boy, Teddy Roosevelt was laughed at and called "four eyes" and "sissy." It so motivated him that he became president of the United States. Life provides many challenging stories of those who have overcome their critics. How can we become one of those winners? The answer is found in our determination that criticism will not put us down but drive us up.

pp. 88-89

In learning how to criticize other people without hurting them, psychologists have learned that there are several words we need to be very careful in using. These words are you, must, shouldn't, always, and never. You is an attack, must is a command, should is a guilt trip, and always and never are absolutes.

p. 62

The sixth word is:

6. GOSSIPS – whispering secret gossip or talebearing

(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

Gossip can be one of the worst things ever to happen to a person, or it can be one of the best things. When we stumble over a rock, sometimes we awaken the life force, alert the mind power, and motivate the soul energy to watch where we are going and turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

We can make gossip a stepping stone by ignoring it as much as possible. We can forgive the gossip and avoid revenge or bitterness. We can build ourselves up, motivate ourselves, emphasize good news, and pray for the gossipers.

p. 121

I have an Arabian poem called "Three Gates" that I quote to myself before I speak:

If you are tempted to reveal
A tale to you someone has told
About another, make it pass,
Before you speak, three gates of gold.

Such narrow gates: First, "Is it true?"
Then, "Is it needful?" In your mind
Give truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest, "Is it kind?"

And if to reach your lips at last

It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be.

pp. 112-13

The seventh word is translated:

7. INFLATED EGOS

This word is only used here in 2 Corinthians 12:20. In secular writings it was used as a medical term. I read of a doctor the other day who called the M.D. after his name "Medical Deity."

The word means "being puffed up," pride or conceit.

8. DISTURBANCES

This word means "disorder or unruliness." It's the word used for insurrections.

A disregard for authority, in fact, living above it.

Judges 21:25

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

(How to Get Along with Difficult People by Florence Littauer)

Sam Sermon means well and his charisma in the pulpit, but he has no idea how to pull this group together and he's sick of hearing of how Past-Pastor Paul Perfect did it right.

Marvin Music is a creative composer and choir director, but he's inflexible and frequently depressed with the difficult people.

Sister Sally Spiritual knows her Scripture, but the congregation is tired of her dropping a verse onto every passing person.

Joyce Judging is brilliant at the organ and has taken every seminar ever given, but she makes people nervous when she looks them up and down and sighs.

Bob Bossy has everyone impressed and intimidated. He seems to be doing things right, but right is unpopular.

Debbie Depressed keeps coming to church and seeking counsel, but she's no happier now than she was five years ago.

Harriet Hurry's in charge of many committees, but no one knows what she's really like underneath.

Martha Martyr is willing, available, and dutiful, but people are tired of her testimony and tawdry tales and wish she could do one thing without looking for credit.

Larry Lazy is lovable, but he doesn't want to get involved and is critical of those who do.

Winnie Witness is so eager for converts that people flee when they see her coming.

Joe Jock is handsome and athletic, but he's totally absorbed in himself and his body.

Gloria Gossip is friendly to everyone, but what goes in her ear comes out her mouth.

Gilda Guilt is creative, but she's constantly angling for control.

Gertrude Grudge has a good memory for details, but if you've ever wronged her, watch out!

How can we ever get along with these difficult people?

p. 35-36

- v. 21 I am afraid that having come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I have mourn over many of those who have sinned previously and did not repent of the impurity and immorality and sensuality which they practiced.

Phillips puts it:

When I come, will God make me feel ashamed of you as I stand among you?
Shall I have to grieve over many who have sinned already and are not yet sorry for the impurity, the immorality and the lustfulness of which they are guilty?

The Living Bible says:

Yes, I am afraid that when I come God will humble me before you and I will be sad and mourn because many of you who have sinned became sinners and don't even care about the wicked, impure things you have done: your lust and immorality, and the taking of other men's wives.

Plummer says:

lest when I come back to you, my God should again as He did before, humiliate me by showing what faulty Christians you are, and I should have to mourn over many of you who have clung to their old sins, and never repented of the impurity and fornication and lasciviousness which they practiced.

The apostle in verse 20 says:

"I am fearing"

and now in verse 21:

"I am afraid..."

“THAT HAVING COME AGAIN, MY GOD MAY HUMILIATE ME BEFORE YOU, AND I MAY MOURN OVER MANY OF THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED PREVIOUSLY.”

The problem is they have sinned previously, and they did not repent.

The question that comes to us right here is:

How can he tell if they did?

And I would say by the following 5 ways:

1. Making confession
2. Forsaking the sin
3. Restitution where it is necessary
4. A walk with God that involved prayer, the Word, and fellowship with believers
5. An attitude of dependence upon God and upon other believers

The apostle lists three things here:

1. IMPURITY
2. IMMORALITY
3. SENSUALITY

Which they practiced.

Galatians 5:21

envying, drunkenness, carousings, and things like there, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Hot Tub Religion by J.I. Packer)

Our situation reminds me of some lines of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, titled “The Way through the Woods.”

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods.

pp. 166-67

...there would be a love of holiness, growing out of deep conviction of sin, deep repentance, deep gratitude for forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ, and a deep desire to please God. Casualness about righteousness, cutting moral corners, areas of blatant self-indulgence, love of luxury, and broken commitments have disfigured twentieth-century Christianity at all levels. This would change, as indeed it needs to, for moral standards among Christian people, as in the world around them, seem to be getting worse rather than better. It is frightening to see how little believers nowadays seem to be bothered about personal sin.
p. 225

(Love for All Your Worth by Joseph C. Aldrich)

From the very moment a man exchanges the untainted glory of God for something tainted and corruptible, two things happen: First, he defines (devalues) the nature of man; second, he acts accordingly. When man casts God in bronze or gold and worships the "Golden Calf," the product of his imagination, everything changes. "God? Oh, he's out in the pasture somewhere chewing his cud. We don't pay any attention to him." He's a "safe" god, a god with fangs and claws removed.

When God is put out to pasture, all hell breaks loose. As long as we view ourselves as evolution's children, anything goes. We're free as the birds and beasts. Assigned animal value, man lines up to be saddled.

And we are saddled. Saddled with epidemic divorce, increasing perversion, multiplying abortions, and unchecked sexual immorality. We have been devalued and debased. Major trends in contemporary art and music herald man's descent into despair and depravity. Our divine umbilical cord unplugged, we have settled for the lowest common denominator. Human value is no longer tied to an infinite, divine, holy being. It floats and fluctuates on the current tide of public opinion. Morality is purely statistical. It is no longer viewed as the reflection of the character of Almighty God. Consequently, if the unborn child (an image bearer of God himself) is an inconvenience, kill it. If the wife becomes a bore, bail out. If kids become a liability leave. And so we kill, bail out, and leave.

p. 38

(Birthright by David C. Needham)

The first three "deeds," immorality, impurity, and sensuality, obviously relate to man's attempts to get at meaning through his body—his glands and senses, his fantasies. Idolatry is very broad. And idolator is one who has made up his mind on where and how he will find life. And whatever it is, he will work feverishly to get it, guard it, sacrifice to it, and worship it. To lose it is to lose life.

Sorcery focuses on the search for meaning in the occult. Enmities, strife, jealousy, and outbursts of anger reflect the standard reactions of one who is frustrated with a given set of circumstances. Either some supposed meaning in life has been taken from him, or threatened, or kept just beyond his reach.

Disputes, dissensions, and factions point to conflicting ideologies as to where life really is—where values are. Envyings is clear enough. Someone else has “made it,” and I want it.

The final two “deeds,” drunkenness and carousing, evidence the fact that I have now given up.

I have no will to seek meaning anymore.

I’ve tried and tried to make some sense out of life.

I’m trough trying.

I want out.

p. 32

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: It is our responsibility to COMMEND and not be CRITICIZING one another.

LESSON #2: The apostle saw himself as nothing.

LESSON #3: The apostle was WANTING AND WAITING for a response from the Corinthians, and instead received CALOUS, COLD, CRITICAL indifference.

LESSON #4: Paul kept himself financially free from the Corinthians.

LESSON #5: Paul’s focus was on the PERSON and not the POSSESSIONS.

LESSON #6: Everything Paul did in Corinth was for the Corinthians.

LESSON #7: When the works of the flesh are among us, the Spirit cannot bless.

LESSON #8: REAL REPENTANCE must precede RESTORATION.

(On Being Family by Ray S. Anderson & Dennis B. Guernsey)

According to James Torrance, a covenant is “a promise binding two people or two parties, to love one another unconditionally.” It is the most fundamental statement of relationship that exists. It is the nature of the relationship between God and man, between husband and wife, between parent and child.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the concept of covenant is in contrast to the concept of contract, which is “a legal relationship in which two people or two parties bind themselves together on mutual conditions to effect some future result.” The significant difference between the two is that the relationship between God and his people is always covenantal and never contractual. The covenant or agreement of relationship is

unilateral. God, and God alone, passed through the middle of the sacrifice as he committed himself to Abraham (Gen. 15). God and God alone sacrificed his Son on the cross for the sins of humankind. The mentality of covenant is that "I commit myself to do or to be for you whatever I have agreed to do or to be because of my commitment." The commitment becomes a structure in and of itself.
pp. 50-51

(Close to His Majesty by David C. Needham with Larry Libby)

When God, therefore, speaks of His presence—His face—He is saying much more than simply that He is there. It is a term that underlines a most wonderful truth: the reality of personal relationship.

You and someone very dear to you could be sitting together on a park bench. You would be correct in saying that the other person, the bench, and you are all equally "omnipresent," equally "close." But there is a world of difference between that person and the bench!

Moses understood this when God reassured him with the words, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest (Exodus 33:14). God was saying, "Moses, not only will I be there where you are, but My focus will be on you. You will be on My mind. I will never look away!"

Our home is on a hillside a few blocks from an elementary school. When our son Greg was attending the school, my wife Mary Jo occasionally would look down to the school playground to see if she could spot her little boy. It was not too difficult to pick him out among all those little bodies scurrying about. Sometimes when she looked, suddenly she would see among toward the house. Because of the glare on the windows, it was impossible for Greg to see her from the playground, but he simply assumed his mom was there and would be waving back. How often, she wondered, had he waved when she was not there?

Child of God, do we even begin to comprehend that whenever we wave toward home, God waves back? His face is always our way!

But God does not share this relationship with everyone. His face will not be toward the one who rejects His grace and spurns His love. Cain, with willful determination, walked away from the face of God. There was no longer any relationship. And the destiny of all who reject Christ, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, is to ultimately be removed from the face of God...forever. There will be no hope of any relationship. Never, in all eternity, will God look their way again.

That is hell.
pp. 56-57

(Higher Honor by Robert Boardman)

Gaps and walls sometimes seem insurmountable. Yet there is One who specializes in reconciliation. He actually breaks down the walls between generations, just as He does between nations, who have hostility for one another. He alone brings peace to individuals and families who are experiencing hostility, fear, tension, confusion,

alienation, and unhappiness. He goes beyond these unsettling conditions and even brings personal forgiveness of sin to those who repent and put their trust in Him.

His name: Jesus Christ, Lord of heaven and earth. No generation gap is too difficult for Him to bridge and reconcile. At the foot of the Cross upon which He died for our sins is the meeting place for repentant antagonists.
p. 83

A highlight, before we toured key points of interest on the island, was the unveiling of a memorial plaque of granite stone—an earthly attempt to memorialize the reconciliation between former enemies of forty years past. Our hearts were stirred at the message engraved in English on the seaward side where the Marines landed and in Japanese on the landward side where the Japanese defended:

REUNION OF HONOR
ON THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF
IWO JIMA, AMERICAN & JAPANESE VETERANS MET
AGAIN ON THESE SAME SANDS, THIS TIME IN
PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP. WE COMMEMORATE OUR
COMRADES, LIVING AND DEAD, WHO FOUGHT
HERE WITH BRAVERY & HONOR, AND WE PRAY
TOGETHER THAT OUR SACRIFICES ON IWO JIMA
WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED AND NEVER BE
REPEATED. FEBRUARY 19, 1985. 3RD, 4TH, 5TH
DIVISION ASSOCIATIONS: USMC AND THE
ASSOCIATION OF IWO JIMA

pp. 134-135