

The Word of Truth Ministry Presents
Special Full Length Studies
#SS12

ABSENT FROM THE BODY

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THE INTERPRETATION OF
2 COR. 5: 1 - 10

There is an idea firmly held throughout Christendom that the Bible declares "that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The phrase "absent from the body" is taken to mean that which happens at death, then the statement is cited as being proof of the idea that at death a man is ushered immediately into the presence of the Lord.

This idea is held in spite of the fact that the one who is supposed to have written these words, the Apostle Paul, had, just a few paragraphs before, given fervent thanks to God for having been rescued from some great distress which to him spoke of almost certain death (2 Cor. 1:8-10). Does it not seem strange that a man would offer such fervent thanksgiving for deliverance from an experience, if the outcome of that experience would be that he would be present with the Lord?

How can this idea be held in view of the fact that Paul in an epistle written to the same people only six months before had declared that if the dead rise not, "then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished"? Does he later fly in the face of his own inspired testimony and declare that the dead, wholly apart from resurrection, are present with the Lord?

Some expositors have noted these seeming contradictions, and in the hope of clearing up the problem, they blandly tell us that Paul has changed the opinion he so valiantly defended in 1 Corinthians 15. Such an explanation comes easily for those who believe these epistles are human documents, but they can find no place in the thinking of those who believe that both 1 Cor. 15 and 2 Cor. 5 are the verbally inspired Word of God.

These facts alone are sufficient to indicate that a careful and honest

study needs to be made of the portion in which the words "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" are found. This is the purpose of this pamphlet.

By way of introduction I would like to say that I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. With Thomas of old I fall at His feet and say, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). I believe that "Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31), that He is the incarnate Son of God, the One who expresses and declares the Absolute God. I believe that the Bible in its original manuscripts is the verbally inspired Word of God. The Bible is my supreme rule of faith and practice.

The conviction that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God is one that grows within me every year that I study, so that now after forty-six years of assiduous study, teaching, and working with this divine book, I would say with the late Dr. I. M. Haldeman: "*The Bible is not such a book as a man WOULD write if he COULD; nor such a book as a man COULD write if he WOULD.*" In view of this conviction I always approach the Bible with reverence and submissive faith, for this is not the word of man, but in truth-THE WORD OF GOD.

My labors in the Bible constitute a personal search for the truth. To me, truth is that which accords with the facts in the case. The facts in regard to God's truth are in the Bible. If these facts are ever brought out, it will be because honest men have diligently sought to find them and bring them forth. And if they become the basis of truth, it will be because we have let these facts have their say in regard to all that men may think or wish to be true.

In the search for truth there comes a time when certain facts speak with such finality that their witness must either be received or rejected. There are many who when they realize that they are face to face with genuine truth will struggle to rid themselves of it at all hazard. Others postpone the task of facing the facts until a more opportune time, but this is about the same as rejection.

Take, for example, one of the first facts that will be found in the Bible by those who make an honest study of the nature of man. The Bible says that: **The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.** Genesis 2:7.

Inasmuch as this passage checks out as being quite true to the Hebrew

from which it is translated, we have in it a statement of several Biblical facts. It follows, therefore, that if anyone holds any ideas or philosophies that are contrary to these facts, they are not the truth. These facts are: (1) that the Lord God made man, (2) that He made man of the dust of the ground, (3) that He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and (4) that man became a living soul.

These are the facts that are declared in this passage. They are facts that must be faced, ignored, or explained away. In them we come face to face with genuine truth. But they are ignored and explained away by the adherents of two schools of philosophy: Those who accept the evolutionary hypothesis of man's origin do not believe that at one point in history the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground. And those who accept the Platonic philosophy as to man's nature do not believe that it was a MAN that God created or that this man became a living soul. They insist that it was a body that God created as a dwelling place for the soul and that this soul is the real or the true man. This flies in the face of the Biblical facts. Those who adhere to these facts believe that man became a soul, and that being a soul is an aspect of his nature.

Since faith can best be defined as taking God at His word and thinking or acting accordingly, it becomes an act of faith when we take Him at His word in Genesis 2: 7 and always think of men as being souls rather than having souls. And even though this may not be the almost universally held view, even though it may not be the popular view, even though it is not considered to be the orthodox view, the one who has determined in advance to submit to the facts of God's Word can only say in kindness, **"Let God be true, but every man a liar"** (Rom. 3: 4) .

Subjects which touch a man personally are those upon which he is likely to form the most definite convictions. This would be good if such convictions grew out of the facts that are set forth in the sacred Scriptures. But, alas, as a rule this is not the case. Far too many convictions are highly emotional and come about as the result of someone determining that a thing shall be the way he wants it to be.

In Greek philosophy, as summarized by Plato, death was made to be a welcome friend, an instrument for man's good. This is the way they wanted it to be, so this is the way it was. But the facts of the Bible declare that death is an enemy, and that it came into this world as the divine punishment for sin. God's Word tells us that this enemy was conquered by Jesus Christ when he arose from the dead, and that because of this we will overcome death when we arise from the dead.

These simple Biblical facts have been overwhelmed by Greek

philosophy so much so that today we find intelligent people who insist they are committed to sound, scientific exegesis of the Bible, and who claim to rely on its revelations, putting forth as truth that which is simply their own wishes in regard to the particular manner they want themselves and their loved ones to survive the awful experience of death. Thus their doctrine is nothing more than the projection of their own desires in the matter.

In Greek philosophy the outstanding idea is "the immortality of the soul", a phrase that cannot be found in the Word of God. In Biblical truth the outstanding phrase is "the resurrection of the dead." These two phrases are mutually exclusive. If one is true, the other is not. And they should cause us to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, as suggested by Paul in 2 Cor. 13: 5.

It should be recognized that one's faith is severely tested when it comes face to face with the Biblical revelation concerning death. In view of the almost universal belief in the immortality of man, it is not easy for one to take his stand upon the revealed facts of God's Word, fly into the face of tradition and declare that death is an enemy, an experience that no one survives, that the dead are dead, and that the only thing that will bring them out of this state is to experience resurrection.

The writer is one of many who accept the stern Biblical revelation in regard to the nature of death. The facts of God's Word force me to believe that death will bring an end to my life and that resurrection will bring me back among the living again. I believe that death came about through sin, and that it is an enemy. I believe that resurrection comes about through Jesus Christ, and that it is a friend. It seems proper and fitting that it should be resurrection, and not death, that should usher me into whatever blessings I have gained through faith in Jesus Christ. This is my belief, and it naturally follows that this is my message when I speak to others on this subject.

Of course there are many objections that can be raised and are raised against such a position. However, I will boldly claim that careful consideration has been given to every possible objection before taking the position I now hold. Every passage that seems to present facts that might indicate that such ideas are in error has been examined with minute care. Among these is one that arises again and again, and more persistently than any other. It is usually presented in the form of a question: "But what about Paul's statement, 'absent from the body, present with the Lord'?"

If I were a blunt and tactless man, I am sure I would reply to all who

raise this objection by saying: "That is nothing more than a garbled and partial quotation of a passage from the King James Version, which is already an inaccurate translation of the original language. Paul said no such thing, and if you were in possession of accurate knowledge of the passage you would not have brought it up." But since I am neither blunt nor tactless, I do not answer in this fashion. If I feel that the objector is honest, that he is actually a seeker for truth, and that he wants to grow in the knowledge of the things of God. Then I will seek to lead him step by step through every fact that related to the true meaning of Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:6-8, the portion from which the above inaccurate quotation is supposed to have come. This is what I plan to do in this study, and it is my hope that many will be willing to travel along as we make this journey of exploration and discovery.

As a teacher of the sacred Scriptures I know that hundreds of believing men and women have an honest desire for a satisfactory interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5: 1-10. There is dissatisfaction with most present interpretations because they are too superficial, they fail to take into account the facts that are obvious, they set forth arbitrary translations in support of preconceived ideas, they are not workable, and they leave a multitude of unanswered questions, unsolved problems, and insurmountable difficulties.

In this study my purpose will be to present the facts which I have obtained as the result of long and careful examination. These will, I trust, help us to come to a true conclusion. Sixteen years ago I wrote and distributed twelve mimeographed pages of "Study Material on 2 Cor. 5:1-10." This material was frankly declared to be "tentative and exploratory," and was issued to stimulate research and discussion in regard to the interpretation of this portion. The results were gratifying, and I now stand in debt to many who contributed their thoughts to this study. I am now able to write with some degree of finality in regard to a definitive interpretation of Paul's words in this chapter.

Altering God's Word

Some years ago a well-known woman preacher died in California. A popular picture magazine published numerous photographs taken at the time of her funeral. Among these was one of her church, across the front of which was a large freshly painted sign declaring: "TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD. 2 COR. 5:8."

Inasmuch as a Scripture reference was given at the end of this alleged quotation from the Bible, most people would take it for granted that it was a faithful reproduction of something from the Word of God. Probably very few among the millions who saw the picture bothered to make a check. The few who may have done so discovered a most flagrant alteration of the holy Scripture. The passage reads as follows in the King James Version:

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER to be absent from the body AND to be present with the Lord.

The words in capitals in the above quotation are the ones usually omitted in the alleged quotation of this passage. By so doing Paul's statement of what he is willing to be is altered to make him say that this is the way it is to be. To do this the word **and**, a connecting particle, is deleted and the verb **is** is substituted. No man has the right to alter the Word of God in this fashion.

Such rewriting of Biblical statements is nothing more than a pious effort to make death both desirable and attractive. It reads into Paul's words something he did not say. Those who do this assume that he should have said what is in their minds, not what was in his. They think that he probably tried to do this, but he bungled the attempt, so now they must come to his rescue, straighten out his language, and say in proper words what he was supposed to be thinking.

Being sorely in need of every possible inference they can find in support of the idea that at death a righteous man is ushered at once into the presence of the Lord, and believing that they find one in this passage, they refuse to even consider that Paul may be saying something quite different from what they imagine he is saying. This explains why this passage is constantly misquoted. An honest quotation does not lend support to such ideas, while a garbled version of the Apostle's words seems to do so.

I have learned from experience that those who say "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" do not fully believe this. When we ask if this applies to all who die, they back off and limit it to some men. Thus they admit that to be "absent from the body" does not mean automatically that one is "present with the Lord."

The garbling of this portion of God's inspired Word has a long history.

It began with the first translations of the Greek into English. This should be evident to the mere tyro in the study of Greek, but it does not seem to be. There are no Greek words in 2 Cor. 5:6-9 that mean "present" or "absent", even though these two words will be found five times in this short portion. The use of these two words here is a perversion of Biblical testimony, inserted (by the translators) to give support to a false idea—the idea that a man can be separated from and exist apart from the organized substance (soil) that makes him what he is, a human being.

We have already noted the inspired account of man's creation:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Gen. 2:7.

If we believe this clear record concerning the creation of man, then logic will also force us to believe that the bodily aspect of man is an essential part of his being and there is no possible way that he can be separated from it, or, as some try to say "absent from it." If a craftsman takes wood and makes a chair, there is no possible way that the chair can be separated from and exist apart from the wood of which it was fashioned. And since God took soil and made a man, there is no way that man can be separated from and exist apart from the soil of which he was constructed.

Some may insist that with God all things are possible, and that he can do the seemingly impossible thing of separating a man from the soil of which he is made. If so, then he should also insist that he is not actually made of soil, that he is not soil, and that he cannot return to it. All these things are affirmed of Adam in Gen. 2:7 and 3:19. Whatever we believe concerning man must be in harmony with the testimony of these two passages. We who accept God's Word cannot believe that the man God made of the soil can be separated from the material out of which he was and is made.

In answer to this some will say it is not the man that is separated but the soul. Others will say that it is the spirit. Those who put forth these ideas will quickly discover that they are not workable, not capable of development if they ask a few simple questions. They of course must define the word soul or spirit. If they define either of these as being "the actual man" or "the true man", then they should be ready to tell us when, where, and by whom this "true man" was created. It cannot be the man spoken of in Gen. 2: 7 since that one is made of the "dust of the ground,"

that is, the soil. And it is in this same passage that we are told that the man who was made of the soil became a living soul.

An illustration of this is seen in the fact that when a man marries he becomes a husband, something he was not before. Now there is no conceivable way that the husband can be separated from the man. If the man dies, the husband dies also. It is the man that is the basis of the husband, and there can be no husband apart from the man. Even so it is true of men who are souls. In view of this, let no one ask the question:

"But what becomes of the soul when the man dies?" You may as well ask what becomes of the husband when the man dies.

Paul's Experience

There are many who believe that Paul's account of his experiences recorded in 2 Cor. 12:1-4 gives positive proof that a man can be separated from his bodily aspect. Let us read this record:

1. It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth)

4. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

The argument which is based upon this passage is that if it were not possible for a man to be separated from and exist apart from his body, Paul would not have said that he did not know when this experience took place whether he was in the body or out of the body.

At first look this argument seems to be irrefutable. And it may be quite sufficient for the one who desires to prove that a man can be separated from and exist apart from his body. However, the fallacy of this argument is apparent to all who are familiar with other statements of Paul concerning these matters. If he had never used the terms "in the body"

and "out of the body" before, the argument would have some weight. But he has used these terms before, and in ways that we do not use them today. These provide the clue to their real meaning here.

The Greek words translated "out of the body" in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3 are **ektos tou somatos**. This identical phrase first occurs in 1 Cor. 6:18 where it is translated "**without the body**". The entire passage reads: **Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.** 1 Cor. 6:18.

In view of this, if the words "out of the body" in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3 mean that Paul could have been separated from and exist apart from his bodily frame, then these words must mean the same in 1 Cor. 6:18, since they are identical in the inspired original. This then would require us to believe that every time a man sins he departs from his body to do it, except in the case of fornication, which in doing he remains within his body. Since such an idea is ridiculous, no such meaning as this can be fastened on Paul's words in 1 Cor. 6:18. And, this being true, no such meaning should be fastened on his identical words in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3.

In 1 Cor. 6:18 Paul makes certain statements comparing sinful acts in general with that of fornication in particular, declaring that fornication, as no other sin, violates the body. He states that every sin is "without the body" while fornication is "into the body." All sins begin in the mind except fornication, and it has its beginning in the body. It is physical first and mental second, and it bears a vicious character all its own. Many have challenged Paul's statement concerning the exceptional character of fornication, but I do not. His contrast is between the mental and physical nature of certain sins, and he uses the term **ektos tou somatos** to describe those which are generated by the mind. This helps us to understand the passage we are now considering.

In 2 Cor. 12:1-3 Paul takes up the matter of "**visions and revelations of the Lord**", and speaks of one who was caught away to the third heaven, even unto paradise. There can be no doubt here but that he is speaking of himself. He declares that he cannot say whether this was an actual physical experience (in the body) or a mental experience (out of the body); that is, a vision. He could not say, and he does not say, whether he in person was caught away to the third heaven or whether God brought the third heaven to him in a vision. And since he expressly says it was "a man" who was caught away, no truth is to be gained by inserting the idea of a soul or a spirit. However, in order to come to a true conclusion, more facts are needed to see if the above interpretation

harmonizes with other revelations in the Word of God. Positive help on this will be found in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

The Experiences of Ezekiel

As this prophecy opens, Ezekiel is located physically as being among the captive Israelites by the river of Chebar in the land of Babylon. He declares that the heavens were opened to him and he saw "**visions of God.**" Eze. 1: 1. The "of" here denotes the genitive of origin, meaning visions **from** God. He was not caught away to heaven, but the heavens were opened to him. This experience was strictly mental and in no way physical. He would have seen and known just as much if he had been stone blind.

Later in Ezekiel 8:3 we find the record of an actual physical experience in which Ezekiel was personally raised up between earth and heaven. While there he was given visions of what was taking place in Jerusalem. This combined a physical experience with a mental one. Paul would describe the physical experience as being "in the body" and the mental one "without the body."

In Ezekiel 11:1 we find another actual, physical experience in which he was carried bodily by the Spirit of God from Babylon to Jerusalem. From all this it is evident that some of his experiences were mental and some were physical-some were "in the body" (physical), and some were "without the body" (mental).

When Paul's experience is considered in the light of Ezekiel's experiences, it is evident that Paul could have been transferred bodily to the third heaven, or that the third heaven could have been brought to him in a vision. He declares that he does not know how his great experience took place, whether it was a bodily transfer to paradise or whether it was a vision.

In view of these Scriptural facts, there is nothing in the words used by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3 to support the idea that a man can be separated from his bodily aspect. That such a thing may be possible is a part of Plato's fancies, a purely human idea that has no basis in the facts of God's Word. So with the ground cleared of the problem that seemed to be raised by Paul's terms in this passage, we are now ready to consider the passage that is the subject of this study, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

Before me as I write is the King James Version, opened to this chapter. Behind me on the shelf of my auxiliary desk are twenty seven versions of the New Testament. Some of these are of doubtful value, but all of them have been considered to see what light if any they may throw upon the translation of this chapter. On my desk are certain large sheets of paper, each one having fifty lines and each sheet divided into five columns. In the first column is listed every word of the original Greek text of this portion, one word to each line. In the second column the root of each word is listed, and, as a rule, the page where this word can be found in the Englishman's Greek Concordance. The third column is given to the parsing of the word, the fourth is given to as literal a rendering as is possible of the inflected word, and in the fifth the King James Version is set forth for comparison.

Lexicons such as Cremer, Abbott-Smith, Thayer, Liddell and Scott, Arndt and Gingrich, Moulton and Milligan, and others are carefully examined for any light they may be able to give in regard to the meaning and usage of these words. From all this a resultant version is worked out, so that I can proceed with assurance that I am attempting to interpret what God actually said, rather than trying to find the meaning of an erroneous translation.

I say all this because far too many think that a few special men have exclusive pipe lines to the source of truth which ordinary men such as you or I do not have.

In order that the reader may have the essential material before him in these pages, the King James Version will be printed (designated as KJV), and then my own resultant version (designated as TRV), each word of which will be explained in the interpretation.

2 Corinthians 5 :1-10, KJV

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 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 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:

7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9. Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5 :1-10, TRV

1. For we are aware that if our elementary house, that is to say, this tabernacle should be demolished, we have a dwelling out of God, a house not made by hands, eonian in the heavens.

2. For in this we are groaning, earnestly desiring to be clothed in our habitation which is out of heaven.

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

4. For we who are in this tabernacle are groaning, being burdened, on which we are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that this mortal may be swallowed up by life.

5. Now He who produces us in respect to this very thing is God, Who also gives us the earnest of the Spirit.

6. Being then always courageous, and fully aware that while we are among our own people in the body, we are separated from our own people, being from the Lord:

7. For we are walking by faith, not by sight.

8. Yet we do not lack courage, and we are delighting all the more to be separated from our own people, out of the body, and to be among our own people in relationship to the Lord.

9. And for this reason also we are ambitious, that whether we are among our own people, or whether away from our own people, to be well pleasing to Him.

10. For all of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, that each one may receive for that which he does through the body, whether good or bad.

In interpreting the things declared in this portion of Scripture, the first fact that must be faced is that figures of speech abound. Nothing is called by its literal name. Metaphor follows metaphor. We find such terms as "earthly house", "tabernacle", "building of God" "house not made with hands", "clothed upon", "house which is from heaven", "clothed", and "naked" in the first three verses. None of these terms has the literal meaning that ordinarily comes to mind when it first meets the eye. In other words, something which is not literally an "earthly house" is called an "earthly house", some experience which is not literally the putting on of garments is called "being clothed", and some experience which has nothing to do with nudity is called being "found naked."

There is probably no other short portion in the Bible where one thing is used to represent another so many times. This places upon the interpreter the task of finding what is meant by these terms, a thing that should not be done arbitrarily. No man should impose his funeral sermons upon this passage. There must be sound principles of interpretation that will guide us to the true meaning of each term used.

The second fact to be faced is that this portion has a subject. Paul is talking about something. It cannot be right to ignore his subject, then apply what he says to another matter. For example - - Is he dealing with what happens when one dies? My answer is, NO! I would have to close my eyes to the most obvious truths in order to say that this is the subject of this portion.

In interpreting any statement in the Word of God, even the shortest, there is one basic law that must never be transgressed by the student whose desire is to lay hold of God's truth. This rule can be summed up in two questions: (1) What is the subject of: the portion? (2) What does the particular statement under consideration have to say about the subject? In this we have a principle that will always act as a safeguard against misapplying and misinterpreting the Word of God. Inasmuch as the passage we are considering is a part of a larger portion, we must look for the subject in the context.

The Subject is Paul's Ministry

The commentators have been very skimpy in their expositions of this portion. Most of them prefer to give it very brief treatment, simply repeating in other words what is said in the King James Version. R. C. H. Lenski, the Lutheran commentator, has dealt with it at length, recognizing most of the problems, seeing most of the difficulties,

avoiding most of the pitfalls, until he comes to the heart of the matter (verses 6 to 8) where he takes off in the wrong direction and misses the truth altogether. However, he ridicules the idea that the "earthly house" can mean the human body.

William E. Biederwolf (The Millennium Bible) deals with this portion at length, providing an excellent resume of theological thinking upon this chapter, but fails to come up with any soundly based interpretation of his own. However, all reverent commentators are agreed upon one thing in connection with this portion-the subject is ministry, especially the ministry of Paul and his fellow apostles. A. C. Gaebelien says that the subject of the first seven chapters of 2 Corinthians is "True Ministry as Manifested in the Life and Character of the Apostle." The Scofield heading of the portion from 2:4 to 6:10 is simply: "The Ministry." Lenski sees in the first seven chapters a record wherein Paul glorifies "his office with its work and suffering." James M. Gray sees 2:14 to 4:7 dealing with "The Triumphs of Paul's Ministry", and 4:8 to 5:21 as dealing with "The Trial of Paul's Ministry." There can be no doubt in regard to this. The subject of this portion (2:14 to 5:21) is the divine ministry of Paul and his fellow apostles in that time and under those conditions that prevailed in the Acts period. In it he explains the nature, the extent, the triumph, and the trials of such a ministry

Paul's love for the Corinthian believers, to whom this epistle was written, can never be doubted. They were the fruits of his ministry in Corinth. He called them his "beloved children" (1 Cor. 4:14), declared that they were the seal of his apostleship in the Lord (1 Cor. 9: 2), said that he would very gladly spend and be spent for them (2 Cor. 12: 15). But he regretfully complains to them that the more abundantly he loved them, the less they loved him (12: 15) . From his second epistle it is quite evident that false brethren, feigning great affection for the Corinthians, had broken into Corinth and through subtle criticism and insinuations had destroyed the fine relationship that had existed between Paul and them.

To reestablish this original good relationship is the main purpose of this epistle. This must be done through them arriving at a correct understanding of his ministry, his commission, and his afflictions-especially his afflictions since his trials and sufferings were used by his detractors to cast doubt upon his standing before the Lord.

If paragraph summaries are made of the entire portion being considered they will run somewhat as follows:

Divine service, resulting from a divine commission and performed under God's direction is always triumphant. 2 Cor. 2:14-17.

Divine service always accredits itself to God's people. The testimony of Christ was confirmed in them (1 Cor. 1: 7) and it needed no letter of commendation. 2 Cor. 3:1-5.

Divine service, such as Paul's, was not a mere repetition of the words of Moses. The truth had made a great advance, and as God's messenger Paul spoke a message that was in harmony with this. His message was gracious, not legal. He and his fellow apostles were dispensers of a new agreement (covenant) between God and man. 2 Cor. 3:6-18.

Divine service as performed by Paul and Timothy was honest, not crafty, not deceitful. 2 Cor. 4: 1,2.

Divine service that centers in the proclamation of Jesus Christ will not be received by many, and Paul tells why. It is not the fault of the message of the messenger. 2 Cor. 4:3-6.

Divine service cannot be judged by the physical appearance of the servant. 2 Cor. 4:7.

Divine service involves the servant in a certain amount of real suffering. The nature of this suffering must be understood by both the servant and those whom he serves. 2 Cor. 4: 8 to 5: 5.

Divine service is often a paradox, and seems to involve a logical contradiction. This is resolved when its character is understood. 2 Cor. 5:6-9.

Divine service will be judged by Christ. 2 Cor. 5: 10.

Divine service must be recognized as being what it is, a man constrained by the love of Christ, serving Him as an ambassador. 2 Cor. 5:11-21.

If these paragraph summaries do not appeal to the reader, he can work out his own, but whatever he may do, he cannot divorce this portion from the subject of divine service, particularly the ministry of Paul as performed for God under the conditions that prevailed in the Acts period. Since Paul was not the only man performing divine service we find many plural pronouns in this portion. Nevertheless, it centers in him.

The Trials of Paul's Ministry

As already suggested, those who performed divine service in a world alienated from God were sure to experience physical suffering. Paul and his fellow servants were the objects of many personal attacks. Of him they said, "His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). He admits this obvious truth. There was no reason to deny it. He tells them that the glorious treasure he dispensed had been placed in an earthen vessel. Earthen vessels were cheap, common, least valued, used with little care, and bound to break sooner or later.

This was the metaphor Paul used to describe his physical being. He tells them why God had seen fit to do it this way- "**That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us**" (2 Cor. 4:7).

It seems that Paul's detractors pointed to the constant turmoil in which he was enmeshed as being evidence that God was not behind his efforts. Was it possible that personal representatives (ambassadors) of the great King could be treated in this manner and He not intervene to put a stop to it? And why should Paul suffer more than others who served this King?

That he and his fellow workers were troubled on every side, Paul readily confesses. But he is quick to point out that the combined efforts of all the powerful forces that opposed them had never brought them to distress (4:8). At times they were perplexed, but never baffled; they were pursued, but never left undelivered; they were cast down (a preparation for stoning), but never destroyed (4:9). Every day they experienced something of the death of the Lord Jesus, but they also enjoyed the life of the Lord Jesus in their mortal flesh (4:10-11). Thus while death worked in them, life worked in those to whom they ministered (4: 12).

Those to whom this epistle was written were those who stood as the blessed of God in Corinth. The rich blessings they enjoyed had come to them by servants of God who were being hounded and persecuted because of the message they proclaimed. These servants had believed, they had spoken, and they continued to believe and speak the message that was theirs. They refused to keep quiet, and they remained courageous in spite of the suffering the continued proclamation of the message brought upon them. Even the threat of death did not deter them. They had confidence that the One who raised up the Lord Jesus would also raise them up (4:13-14). This alone is enough to show that Paul's hope was in resurrection and not in death.

All this leads Paul to introduce his next statement by saying: **"Wherefore we are not despondent"** 2 Cor. 4:16 TRV. A careful study of the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians will reveal that a great wave of discouragement had swept over those who had become believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ Paul plunges into this matter in the opening words of this epistle. This can be seen in Rotherham's translation of 2 Cor. 1:3-7 where some form of the word encouragement is found ten times in this short portion of five verses. This throws much light on Paul's words from 4:16 to 5:5 which begin with the statement, **"Wherefore we are not despondent"**

They never collapsed, never lost courage, never became cowards. Even though the outer man was wasting away, suffering wear and tear, the inward man was being renewed day by day (4: 16). These designations of outer and inner man apply only to a believer. He alone has an inner, renewable life. These little troubles, as Paul characterizes them, were momentary, and they were producing for these servants of God a vastly preponderating and ever-flowing weight of glory. These courageous servants of God were looking all the time, not at the visible things, but at the invisible. The visible things were transitory but the invisible things were ever-flowing (4:17-18).

Thus we see that every statement which precedes the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians has to do with the ministry, the divine service performed by Paul and his companions. And there is no digression. The same subject continues as we enter chapter five. Many were viewing with great alarm the fact that the "earthly house" was going to pieces and in great danger of immediate dissolution. Paul's detractors may have charged that his ministry was speeding the action. He now deals with this.

We will examine each word he said, quoting each passage first from the King James Version and then from The Resultant Version which has already been given in these pages. The interpretation will deal with the meaning of The Resultant Version. I see no value in attempting to interpret the inadequate and arbitrary renderings of some unknown translator of the King James Version. Each word of my own version will be explained and justified in the interpretation.

2 Corinthians 5: 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. KJV.

For we are aware that if our elementary house, that is to say, this tabernacle should be demolished, we have a dwelling out of God, a house not made by hands, eonian in the heavens. TRV.

FOR WE ARE AWARE-meaning, we have come to a full understanding, an understanding that is based upon what God has already revealed. Since Paul makes no hint of any special revelation that was the basis of this awareness, we will need to look in the Old Testament for the revelation that provides its foundation. The word **for** connects this portion very closely to the preceding statement.

THAT IF OUR ELEMENTARY HOUSE-The word translated "elementary" here is **epigeios**, a most difficult word to handle. I am not at all willing to translate it "earthly" in this context. The root of this adjective is the noun **ge** which means earth. From it we get such words as geography and geology. If the adjective forming suffix **ios** is added to **ge** we have **geios** which means earthly. This word is not found in the New Testament, but is found often in classical Greek. The prefix **epi** is an accelerative contribution which makes it mean "on-earthly" but such a rendering does not help us here. This prefix gives it a technical meaning that cannot readily be expressed in English. If this word were **geios** we could translate it "earthly" and go on from there, but to translate **epigeios** "earthly" is to ignore the divinely inspired prefix.

In the word **epigeios** we have a good example of an adjective that draws its meaning from the noun it qualifies or from the context in which it is found. If we try to fix upon it one rigid meaning, we will quickly face insuperable difficulties when we come to other New Testament occurrences of this word. Consider John 3:12 where the Lord said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly (**epigeios**) things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly (**epouranios**) things." Then, consider this same adjective in James 3:15 where it speaks of wisdom that is "earthly (**epigeios**), sensual, devilish." It does not seem that the truth spoken by our Lord could possibly be described by the same adjective we find in the unholy trio in James 3:15. Yet it is! And this shows clearly that no single meaning can be attached to this word.

In John 3: 12 our Lord used this word to designate primary, basic, elementary truths. If they stumbled at believing such things as these, what then would they do if He told them more exalted things. In view of this I have translated epigeios by "elementary", and believe that this comes as near as we can to expressing the truth that the Spirit of God intended when Paul was inspired to use this precise word. That which is elementary has to do with rudiments and beginnings.

The word house in this passage brings us to the heart of the matter. Something is called a house which is not a house in the literal meaning of this word. Thus it becomes our task to discover what Paul had in mind when he used this metaphor.

There are those who will rush in and come up with the crude conclusion that the "elementary house" here is the human body, but they do this in ignorance of the insurmountable difficulties it creates when they try to interpret the four verses in which this phrase is found. For if this means the human body, then "a dwelling from God" must mean a corresponding body. Some have tried to solve this problem with a theory about "an intermediate body" which is received at death and is occupied until the time of resurrection. They hold that at death this body is placed in the grave, while "the soul" receives some kind of other body from God. They ignore altogether the problem this will create when resurrection takes place, creating a need for the disposal of the interim body.

The idea that the elementary house is the human body, and that the "dwelling out of God, a house not made with hands" is a corresponding heavenly body is contrary to the facts and foreign to the truth. It is not a viable interpretation. If it were true it would make resurrection both unnecessary and undesirable. It denies altogether Paul's great statement that if there is no resurrection of the dead then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. It should be plain to all that if we have bodies "eternal in the heavens" to replace the one destroyed by death, then the resurrection of this present body is undesirable.

Paul's words rebel against such an interpretation. Consider the adjectival phrase "not made with hands." This is a clear warning that the term "elementary house" does not mean our bodies, since this implies that the elementary house is made with hands. If not, then Paul's contrast is meaningless.

The word for house is **oikia**. In 95 occurrences in the New Testament it is translated "house" 93 times. Examination of these occurrences will show that it literally means an inhabited edifice, a dwelling, a building

used as a dwelling place, as for example "When Jesus was come into Peter's house" (Matt. 8:14). The literal use predominates, it being used figuratively only six times, two of which are found in the passage we are now considering.

There can be only one literal meaning of a word. This meaning remains constant. But a word can have numerous figurative meanings which are diverse and variable. The word house has one literal meaning and several figurative meanings in the New Testament. The human body is not one of its figurative meanings, and this idea should not be arbitrarily inserted here. What Lenski says of this is worth noting: "The sense of what Paul says, (his metaphors so carefully worded), is simple and easily understood, until the commentators begin to expound it, the majority, we are sorry to report, with outrageous anti-biblical results, the more sober ones with inadequate results."

THAT IS TO SAY, THIS TABERNACLE-The most important word in this passage is not "house" (oikia), but the word "tabernacle" (**skenos**). The words **oikia tau skenous** have been translated "house of this tabernacle" in the KJV. The word "of" here denotes the genitive case, and here it is the genitive of apposition or definition. Of this phrase A. T. Robertson says, "the genitive is appositional or definitional, the house is the tent", and E. W. Bullinger says that this should read "our earthly house, that is to say, our tabernacle." Again he says, "It is the Genitive of Apposition. The earthly house is a tent."

Thus it is that Paul defines what he means by "elementary house." By means of a second noun in the genitive case he tells us that by this he means "this skenous" to use the same Greek word he used. In view of this our primary task is to find what skenos means (skenous is the genitive form), since this is Paul's own definition of what he meant by "elementary house."

That the word skenous means "tent" is a fact that none can rightfully deny. And yet if we were to say "our elementary house, that is to say, this tent", it would mean that Paul is defining one metaphor by another. He would not be this careless or this elusive since his purpose was to reveal truth and make it plain. "Elementary house" is a metaphor, a figure of speech; "this tabernacle" is literal, and means just what it says. This indicates that we must find what a first century Hebrew or Greek would think about when he heard this word. It is quite evident already that it has more than one meaning, a primary meaning and a developed meaning.

Among the Hebrews the word tent meant a dwelling place made of cloth or skins, and this is what would come to his mind when he read the words of Paul concerning Abraham "dwelling in tents' (skene) with Isaac

and Jacob" (Heb. 11:9). However, this is not what would come to mind when they read the words of John in Rev. 21:3, "the tent (skene) of God is with men." The translators attempt to show this developed meaning by using the word "tabernacle", but they are not consistent.

A study of all occurrences of the Hebrew word **abet** (tent) and the Greek word **skene** (tent) will show that they developed along natural parallel lines and that both came to mean a center of life and activity. This grew out of the fact that wherever an Israelite pitched his tent, this became the center of his life. It was from this center that he went forth to labor, and it was to it he returned when his day's work was done. Thus when he spoke of "my tent", it meant much more than a dwelling made of skins or cloth. At times assemblies were dismissed with the words, "To your tent", meaning that each man was to return to his own center of activity.

One factor that had to do with the development of skenos was the fact that in ancient armies everything centered in the chief's or general's tent. At times he was the only one who had a tent. Soldiers were expected to sleep in the open. Thus "the tent" was central, and it came to mean something like our word headquarters.

But there was a more important factor that played a part in the development of this word. It became intimately associated with the Greek theater.

The early Greek theaters were round and in the open. The spectators sat facing a tent (skene) in the center, which, when the sides were dropped, the place it enclosed became a stage or scene for the acting out of a play. In time the setting of the play was given the name of that which enclosed it, the skene or tent. From this comes our English word scene. Thus while skene always retained its meaning of a tent, it developed to mean a stage, and from this it came to mean a center of activities, the stage or scene upon which one acted out his life.

This brings to mind Shakespeare's familiar lines: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." The Greeks used the word skene to describe this stage, this center and circumference of one's activities. This is what skene had developed to mean in the day that Paul used it to define what he meant by "our elementary house."

All this is in harmony with New Testament usage. Consider the following passages.

Matt. 17:4. **"Let us make here three tabernacles (skene); one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."** While Peter may have had in mind three booths or tents to shelter these from the cold mountain air of the night, this does not seem likely. In such case, separate tents would not be needed. It seems more likely that he was suggesting the construction of three dwellings that would become centers of activity from which they would carry on their work.

Acts 15: 16. **"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle (skene) of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."** This is a promise of the restoration of the Davidic scene, in connection with which a great prewritten drama will be acted out - - **"And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it."** Eze. 34:23, 24.

Rev. 21:3. **"Behold, the tabernacle (skene) of God is with men."** There is a time coming, beyond the thousand year reign of Christ, when the center of divine activity will be this earth. When this goal is realized, the earth will be God's mediatorial planet in respect to His purposes for the universe.

The verb skenoo, which comes from the noun, provides further information as to the developed meaning of this word. This can be seen in the following passages.

John 1:14. **"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt (skenoo) among us."** The stage or scene of the, ministry of Jesus Christ for three years was the land of Palestine, the city of Jerusalem, the people of Israel, and twelve chosen men. All these made up the stage upon which He acted out the great drama of redemption.

Rev. 7:15. **"He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell (skenoo) among them."** That is, He will make them a center of divine activity, so that from them will radiate blessings to others. This passage alone is sufficient to show that skene was not used to denote a temporary dwelling.

Rev. 12: 12. **"Rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell (skenoo) in them."** This shows that a place or realm can be a skene. See also Rev. 13:6.

Rev. 21 :3. **"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle (skene) of God is with men, and He will dwell (skeno) with them.** We find further proof. here that neither of these words are used to denote a temporary dwelling.

When all these passages are considered, they show that skene developed to mean a center of life or activity. This cannot be contradicted by pointing to the word skenoma in 2 Peter 1:13,14.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle (skenoma), to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

There are those who insist that Peter here has reference to his body when he speaks of "this tabernacle", but this is nothing more than a mistaken interpretation based upon Platonic theory of man's nature. This must be understood in the light of Acts 7:46 where we are told that David "requested to find a tabernacle (skenoma) for the God of Jacob." Since there was already a tabernacle in Israel, it is evident that David desired to find a location, that is, a city that would be the center of all divine activities (see 1 Kings 8: 16). This was the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem-A Tabernacle

In the interpretation of 2 Cor. 5: 1 the student comes to the point where he must decide whether he is going to follow one of the arbitrary and unworkable ideas of men in regard to what Paul is telling us here, or go to the Word of God and find something that corresponds with this passage and make this the basis of his interpretation. We will either keep our feet upon the solid rock of God's Word, or else abandon it for some fanciful reasoning of our own or of others.

There is a place in the Bible where something quite harmonious with this is found, where "habitation" and "tabernacle" are used in apposition, the one defining the other, and both clearly identified.

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. Isa. 33.20.

If ever in Scripture one passage explains another this is the place. Isaiah 33: 20 speaks of a character that will be invested upon Jerusalem when Jehovah assumes sovereignty and becomes Israel's judge, lawgiver and king (33: 22). It is described as a quiet habitation (dwelling), a tabernacle (a divine center of activity) that shall not be taken down (demolished). In contrast we see in 2 Cor. 5: 1 a house (dwelling) that is also defined as a tabernacle, that was about to be taken down, that is, demolished. From this it can be seen that the "elementary house" of 2 Cor. 5: 1 refers to the city of Jerusalem and all that was related to it, and "the building of God" is a quite different Jerusalem, the one described by Isaiah, Jerusalem in the kingdom of God.

Paul spoke of these two Jerusalems in Galatians, speaking of one as **"the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children"** and **"the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."** Gal. 4:25, 26. These two set forth Jerusalem in Paul's day and Jerusalem under God's government, that is, Jerusalem in the kingdom of God. (This is not to be confused with new Jerusalem of Rev. 21:2.)

In order to appreciate the fact that Paul is speaking of Jerusalem as the center of Israel's life when he speaks of "our elementary house", one needs to know and understand the place that Jerusalem holds in divine revelation, in the divine purposes, and its place in the hope of Israel. This permits one to approach this passage with a backlog of truth that makes a true interpretation possible.

In the final commands concerning the observance of the Passover, it was declared that it could only be observed **"in the place which the Lord shall choose to place His name there"** (Deu. 16: 1-7). When this choice was made known it was the city of Jerusalem, **"of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put My name for ever"** (2 Kings 21: 7). This declaration is found over and over. See 1 Kings 11:13,32,36; 2 Kings 21:4; 23:27; 2 Chron 6:6, 33:7. The place that Jerusalem filled in the life of an Israelite is revealed in many passages.

Psalm 122

- 1. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.**
- 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.**
- 3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:**
- 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.**
- 5. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.**
- 6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.**
- 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.**
- 8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.**
- 9. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.**

This beautiful Psalm, which probably was chanted by the people as they went up to Jerusalem to the feasts, sets forth Jerusalem both as a divine center and as a center of life for every Israelite. Later when they went into captivity, another Psalm expresses their feeling toward this beloved city.

Psalm 137:1-6

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.**
- 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.**
- 3 For there they that wasted us, required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.**
- 4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?**
- 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.**
- 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.**

An Israelite did not need to be a resident of Jerusalem in order to have this strong attachment to it, for this was a bond that was produced in them by the Spirit of God. Indeed, Jerusalem was central in the life of every Israelite.

In the prophecies as to the future of Jerusalem, that is, Jerusalem in the kingdom of God, we find it remains a great divine center. Of it we read: **"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"** (Isa. 2: 3); **"The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously** (Isa. 24:23); **"Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem"** (Isa. 52:9); **"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth"** (Isa. 62:6-7); **"But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I do create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in her people"** (Isa. 65: 18,19); **"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem"** (Jer. 3: 17) ; **"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord"** (Zech. 8:22).

Can anyone read these passages and fail to see that, until its destruction in A.D. 70, Jerusalem was the center of life for every godly Israelite, and that in the future it will be this even more so than it has ever been before? And this was true of the godly Israelite, Paul. We need to consider his situation when he wrote these words. Many try to deny his position.

Paul was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11: 1). He readily confessed that he was a Jew (Acts 21: 39). His life had been devoted to a nation, a people, and a land, all of which he fervently loved, and all these centered in Jerusalem. His hope was the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20); and Jerusalem, the temple, the land, and people of Israel, were ever upon his heart. See Acts 18:21, 19:21, 20:16 and Rom. 10:1. His hope had long been in the promised Messiah, and when, after quite a struggle, he received and believed on the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, he did not cease to be a Jew. His life still centered in Jerusalem and all that was vitally related to it.

In fact, Paul tells us that Jerusalem was the center of his ministry, declaring that it was **"from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum"** he had fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15: 19).

At the time Paul wrote the words of 2 Cor. 5, Jerusalem, and all that centered in and around it was threatened with destruction. The city and people had long before been conquered by Rome, but they had never

been subjugated. The fires of nationalism and patriotism burned deep within them, and these flared up again and again. Rome looked upon Jerusalem and Israel as threats to the security of the Empire, and voices in Rome were calling out for radical treatment. Ever since the death of Christ, conditions in the land and capital had grown more desperate. Famine stalked the land. The city of Jerusalem and the temple had become the scene of assassinations and massacres as factions in Israel sought to exterminate one another. Members of the Roman army of occupation were being killed almost daily as fanatical Israelites sought to drive them from the land. Rome was making threatening noises that suggested the annihilation of the city and its people. These threats became a reality ten years after Paul wrote this epistle. The Roman General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and decimated and scattered the people.

It was Jerusalem that Paul had reference to when he spoke of "our elementary house" and went on to define it by adding "this tabernacle." He stayed out of the political and governmental strife of his day by speaking after this fashion, but there was not a single believing Jew that knew the Old Testament that did not know at once what he was talking about.

This interpretation harmonizes with the language Paul used. Note carefully that he said: "**We (plural) are aware that if our (plural) elementary house (singular), this tabernacle (singular) should be demolished, we have a dwelling (singular) out of God, a house (singular).**" Thus it is many people, but only one house. If this passage were a statement concerning the human body it would be consistent -- many people, many houses, but it is not. It is many people, one house. This house is Jerusalem and all that revolved around it.

WERE DEMOLISHED-This is the word **kataluein** which means "to loose completely" and it corresponds exactly to skenos, (tent). Our idiom is "to strike tent", but the Greek term used is "to loose completely", that is, to loose the ropes from the pegs so that the tent can be rolled up.

WE HAVE A DWELLING OUT OF GOD-This is Jerusalem in the kingdom of God, a divine center for the redeemed and restored nation of Israel. "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem". Jer. 3:17. We need to note again here the plural and the singular-many people and one dwelling.

A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS-This is an idiomatic phrase which Paul defines in Hebrews 9: 11, where he declares it means "not of this creation." The term "this creation" refers to a period of time that began when Noah left the ark and continues until God assumes authority and the kingdom of God becomes a reality in the earth. Concerning Jerusalem in that time God says, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Isa. 65: 19. Note again here it is "a house", one house for many people.

EONIAN IN THE HEAVENS-those who hold that aionion means "eternal" have long been puzzled by this statement here, and they are puzzled all the more if they hold that Paul is speaking here of "another body" which is given at death. How can these bodies be "eternal in the heavens"? Are they stacked up there, like cordwood, waiting for that moment when a soul that has left its body upon earth shall incarnate them and endue them with life?

Some expositors have tried to solve this problem by saying this should read "in the eternal heavens", an idea made popular by the late Dr. Harry Rimmer. But this is not possible since the word translated "eternal" (aionion) is singular, and the word "heavens" (ouranios) is plural. In Greek, adjectives must agree in number with the noun they qualify, and there is no agreement here.

The adjective aionios is from the noun aion, a word that has to do with that which is flowing. It can be used of things that are intended to flow, or that are flowing. We have already been told that this dwelling is "out of God", and the same truth is repeated here when we are told it is "eonian in the heavens." It has its source in God, it flows out of the heavens, even as the Lord said of Jerusalem in Isa. 66:12:

For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glories of the nations like a flowing stream.

2 Corinthians 5 :2,3

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. KJV.

For in this we are groaning, earnestly desiring to be clothed in our habitation which is out of heaven. If so that being clothed we shall not be found naked. TRV.

By declaring that the rich blessings of God that are in store for Jerusalem are even now "eonian in the heavens", Paul is repeating in these words the truth detailed in Psalm 46:4,5:

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

When one reads this beautiful passage, he cannot help but say, "Truly, the glory of the Jerusalem that is to be flows out from God. It is 'eonian in the heavens'."

FOR IN THIS WE ARE GROANING-Note again it is "**in this** (singular) **we** (plural) **are groaning**." The word "this" is neuter and refers back to the skenos of the preceeding verse. The conditions that existed in the milieu that centered in Jerusalem could not but cause groaning among all who were a part of it. Even the Lord Jesus Christ lamented over Jerusalem, saying:

0 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. Matt. 23: 37,38.

In anticipation of the future blessing of Jerusalem the Lord had long before said through Isaiah:

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her. Isa. 66:10.

When Paul wrote his words, it was a time of mourning for all who loved Jerusalem and all that it stood for. This condition, of course, created an earnest desire.

EARNESTLY DESIRING TO BE CLOTHED IN OUR HABITATION- This cannot refer to death or to what takes place at death. And while it is true that some desire to die, this can only be the desire of those whose bodies are in such shape that they long for release from suffering. As Tennyson has said:

“ Whatever crazy sorrow saith, No life that breathes with human breath Has ever truly longed for death.”

And again it should be noticed that it is "**our** (plural) **habitation** (singular) ", one habitation for many. If by "habitation" Paul had meant the human body, as so many insist, he would have said "our habitations." But he did not do so.

The glorious hope that had been generated in Israel by the promise that they would yet "see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down" (Isa. 33:20) is reflected in these words of Paul. They earnestly desired the fulfillment of this promise, to be clothed in "our habitation which is out of heaven."

Some think that it is strange for Paul to speak of being clothed with a city, a nation, a people. However, this objection dissolves away once we become familiar with the Hebraic use of this figure. Long before this the Lord had said to Israel:

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. Isa. 49:18.

WHICH IS OUT OF HEAVEN-This is true. The Jerusalem that will be a reality in the kingdom of God will have "Designed in Heaven" stamped upon every aspect of it. In the first verse it was a "dwelling out of God." Here it is a "habitation out of heaven." These are two statements of the same truth.

IF SO THAT BEING CLOTHED-There are alternatives here. If one happens, it rules out the other. There is no uncertainty here about their being clothed. It is the timing of this event that is open to question. A few months later Paul will write "to all that be in Rome" and declare that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand"

(Rom. 12: 12). Paul's hope is that the day will arrive before the night becomes still darker for Jerusalem and all who are related to her.

WE SHALL NOT BE FOUND NAKED-Those who have read the story of "The Man without a Country" by Edward Everett Hale get a picture of a man stripped of his country. As the story recounts the mental torments of this countryless prisoner, one gets an idea of what it means to be found in such a state. It must have been a burdensome thing to Paul to watch his nation disintegrate. He cries out, "**Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved**" (Rom. 10: 1). By this he meant that he desired that his nation should be rescued, delivered, and made safe. Yet he knew that this would not be until the Deliverer out of Zion should turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11: 26) .

2 Corinthians 5:4

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. KJV.

For we who are in this tabernacle are groaning, being burdened, on which we are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that this mortal may be swallowed up by life. TRV.

FOR WE WHO ARE IN THIS TABERNACLE-Again it is to be noted that "we who" is plural and "this tabernacle" is singular. It is one center that takes in many people. If Paul here is using a metaphor to indicate "the human body" it would read "we who are in these tabernacles." Any interpretation that is advanced in respect to this portion must be in harmony with these singulars and plurals.

ARE GROANING, BEING BURDENED-This sweeping statement cannot be true of every human being, not even the majority; therefore, we have further proof that it cannot refer to the human body. However, this was true of every godly Israelite, those in the land as well as those in dispersion. Jerusalem was the divine center to which they hoped to return. Paul's words here seem to spring right out of the Old Testament.

Note carefully these words:

Psalms 102 :13-22

13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come.

14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.

15. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory.

16. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory.

17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.

19. For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;

20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

21. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem;

22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

When an Israelite, one who loved the very stones and dust of Jerusalem, considered these glorious promises, and then looked upon the condition of Jerusalem as it was in Paul's day, he could not help but groan and feel the burden.

ON WHICH WE ARE NOT WANTING TO BE STRIPPED, BUT TO BE DRESSED-Paul could have divorced himself from Jerusalem and all its problems. At times his close friends urged him to do this. He had said, "I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there" (Acts 20: 22) , but he was determined to go. A prophet named Agabus gave a dramatic portrayal of what would happen to him there (Acts 21:11, 12), but he insisted that he was "ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21: 13) . He had no desire to escape, no desire to be stripped of this burden. He will accept it as long as it exists. His earnest desire was not to put off, but to put on.

THAT THIS MORTAL MAY BE SWALLOWED UP BY LIFE - This is in harmony with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. The prophet looked upon a scene of death, but saw it swallowed up by life. This is what Paul desired for Jerusalem and all that it represented.

2 Corinthians 5:5

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

Now He Who produces us in respect to this very thing is God, Who also gives us the earnest of the Spirit. TRV.

Long before this a faithful man in Israel had said:

But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Isa. 64 :8.

"This very thing" was God's aim and goal in all the previous work He had done in them. He had produced them with the end in view of clothing them in a new habitation, of giving them a new center of life and activity. The earnest of this was the Spirit that had already been given to them. This was the earnest of what God had promised concerning them:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Eze. 36 :26-28.

2 Corinthians 5 :6-9

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

7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the lord.

9. Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. KJV.

6. Being then always courageous, and fully aware that while we are among our own people in the body, we are separated from our own people, being from the lord:

7. (For we are walking by faith, not by sight.)

8. Yet we do not lack courage, and we are delighting all the more to be separated from our own people out of the body and to be among our own people in relationship to the lord.

9. And for this reason also we are ambitious, that whether we are among our own people or whether away from our own people to be well pleasing to him. TRV.

BEING THEN ALWAYS COURAGEOUS-This begins a new paragraph. The previous paragraph began with verse one of this chapter and ended with verse five. The new paragraph takes in verses six to ten. It begins with a positive statement of truth which has already been stated twice before in a negative construction.

2 Cor. 4:1-"We faint not", meaning, "We are not despondent." 2 Cor. 4:16- "We faint not", meaning, "We are not despondent."

2 Cor. 5:6-"Therefore we are always confident", meaning "Being then always courageous."

Each of these statements introduces a new paragraph, and each paragraph presents a new thought; nevertheless, every thought is related to ministry. The subject does not change. Paul's thoughts do not wander. The paragraph we now have before us has been so badly garbled in translation that one wonders if it is possible to straighten it out. The translators did not know what Paul was talking about, so they rewrote the passage to make it sound as if he were talking about what happens at death.

There was a paradox in Paul's ministry that needed to be explained. He, and all others commissioned of God, claimed to be God's ambassador, and no man is ever an ambassador to his own people. Thus while his claim seemed to be absurd, it was still true and in accord with the facts. Thus the true meaning of this passage is tied closely to one statement which Paul makes a few sentences later: **Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.** 2 Cor. 5 :20.

This declaration is the key to all that Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:6-9, and it needs to be objectively considered, that is, considered apart from all our feelings and prejudices in the matter. These words have been lifted from the Bible and have been applied to everyone who seeks to serve Jesus Christ. Young converts are urged to "go forth and be ambassadors of the Lord Jesus", as if one can be an ambassador by his own volition. This is not right, for this meaningful word cannot describe the service of anyone who is laboring for Christ today-no matter what service he may be performing. A man is traveling under false pretenses if he today claims that he is an "ambassador for Christ."

If the word ambassador means nothing, then we can all claim to be ambassadors, but if it has a definite meaning, then we had better discover what it does mean and see if this word can be applied to the servants of Christ today.

What Is An Ambassador

Consider carefully the position of one who is an ambassador. He is a diplomatic officer of the highest rank, the representative of the sovereign or head of one nation at the court of another. In this capacity he is expected to support the interests and the dignity of his own government. Ambassadors are exempted absolutely from all allegiance and from all responsibility to the laws of the country to which he is accredited. He is considered as if he were out of the territory of the foreign power, by fiction of law, and it is implied among nations that the ambassador, while he resides in a foreign state, shall be considered as a member of his own country, and his government has exclusive cognizance of his conduct and control of his person. This exempts him from arrest or civil process.

An ambassador, as such, is not a herald, not a preacher, not a teacher. And while he may speak in behalf of his sovereign or his country, he does not seek to make converts of those to whom he has been accredited.

The Greek word for "ambassador" (**presbuo**) is found only here and in Eph. 6:20. Of this Adolf Deissman says (Light from the Ancient East, page 374), "It was the proper term in the Greek East for the Emperor's Legate." Paul, as Christ's ambassador, had the right to speak and act in His behalf and stead. This is a right which none can honestly claim today.

By the word "ambassador" Paul declared his position in regard to Christ, and also his position in regard to all to whom he ministered. However, the basic truth that is inherent in this word is that the one who serves as such must leave his own country and his own people and represent his sovereign in a foreign country and before a foreign people. No man can be an ambassador to his own country or to his own people. This was the paradox of Paul's ministry. His claim to be an ambassador contained a contradiction which made it seem absurd, yet it was still true and in accord with the facts.

The things set forth above are honest, factual statements in regard to the meaning of the word ambassador. If we accept them it would seem that Paul, Timothy, and the other apostles would be disqualified in applying this term to themselves or in using it to describe their service. Nevertheless, they did this, as we have already seen in Paul's bold claim, "**Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.**"

Paul was a Roman citizen, but he never left Roman territory, and as a rule was dealing with his fellow citizens in the Roman Empire. He was also a Jew, and his ministry was to the Jew primarily (Rom. 1: 16), his own kinsmen according to the flesh. He was not an angel of God who had come down from heaven to conduct an embassy among the people of earth. His declaration that he is an ambassador of Christ was made to fellow believers in the Lord Jesus. In every way Paul was one ministering to his own people--whether they were Romans, Jews or fellow believers. How then can he claim to be an ambassador of Christ?

Paul recognizes this paradox, and he explains in detail how this is true before he declares that he is an ambassador. This explanation is found in the paragraph we are now considering.

As has already been suggested there are no Greek words in this portion that mean "at home", "present", or "absent" We find the words **endemeo** and **ekdemeo** three times each in this passage. The first of these is rendered "at home" once and "present" twice. The second is rendered "absent" in all three occurrences. These are arbitrary renderings which ignore altogether what these words obviously mean.

If Paul had meant to say "present" he would have used the word *pareimi*, just as he did in 2 Cor. 10:2, 11; 11:9; 13:2, 10; and Gal. 4: 18, 20. He would not have used this rare verb if he had intended to express the idea of being present. Neither would he have used the word *ekdemeo* if he meant to say "absent" He would have used the word *apeimi*, even as he did in 1 Cor. 5:3, 2 Cor. 10:1, 11; 13:2, 10; Phil. 1:27; and Col. 2:5. In view of this, our first duty is to establish the meaning of the words *endemeo* and *ekdemeo*. This will not be difficult

Any Greek word that has as its root the element *dem* or *demo* has in it the idea of the people or the populace. This is also true in English as is seen in such as democracy, demography, and epidemic. This is more evident in Greek words that contain this root

Consider *demos* in Acts 19: 3 3 where it is rendered "people"; *demosion* in Acts 16:37 where it is translated "openly" but means in view of all the people; *demegoreo* in Acts 12:21 where it is translated "oration" but means to speak to the people; *parepidemos* (pilgrims) in Heb. 11:13 which means one among an alien people; *apodemeo* in Matt 21:33 (went into a far country) which means to leave ones own people and travel in foreign places.

Other words can be cited, but this is enough to show that all words that are based upon the root *demo* have to do with people. In view of this any translator, lexicographer, or expositor who fails to recognize this in these two words shows that he is prejudiced against the truth.

There can be no doubt-the word *endemeo* means to be with or among your own people, and the word *ekdemeo* means to be away from or separated from one's own people. These words do not mean "at home" and "away from home" as many try to make out.

There is no idea of "home" in these words. One can be at home (where he lives) and not be among his own people, as many who make their homes in foreign countries will testify. And he can be among his own people and not be at home, as many travelers could testify who have sought out a colony of their own people while in foreign lands. The words *endemeo* and *ekdemeo* provide an exactness of meaning which we should not destroy by failing to see the basic idea of people in them. If we do so, we blunt the sword of the Spirit.

Certain lexicographers have given these same definitions, but I have never found them admitted or recognized in any commentary on this passage. Dr. Robert Young defines *endemeo* as meaning to be among one's people, and *ekdemeo* to mean to be away from one's people. Dr. A. T. Robertson says of *endemeo* that it is a rare verb from *endemos* which means one among his own people as opposed to *ekdemos*, one away from his people. However, these meanings are flagrantly ignored by both translators and commentators when they deal with this passage. I feel this is wrong and want no part of it.

The Spirit of God caused Paul to select these two special words for use here. They are found nowhere else in the New Testament. These words were selected because they alone were capable of expressing the truth God desired to reveal. We will see what this truth is.

BEING THEN ALWAYS COURAGEOUS - There was no faltering, no hesitation, no indecision, no tear in Paul's ministry or message. Notice this courage in his declaration to the Thessalonians:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 Thess. 2 :13.

AND FULLY AWARE - Paul is aware of the paradox that is evident in his ministry. He does not deny it, and he will now show that what seems to be a paradox is in reality a divine arrangement.

THAT WHILE WE ARE AMONG OUR OWN PEOPLE - This was the reality, the literal fact in the case. Even as we read in Acts 17: 1, 2 concerning Paul and Silas: **Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.**

IN THE BODY - It is quite evident to the careful student that Paul used the terms "in the body" and "without the body" in ways that communicated certain ideas that are not immediately apparent to us today. Most people who hear the word body today think of the human frame that is composed of flesh, bones, and blood. They close their eyes to the simple fact that his word has numerous meanings in the Scripture. If one considers Rom. 6:6; 1 Cor. 6:16; 6:18; 15:40; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 2:17; and Heb. 13:3, he will see some of the various ways in which this word is used. In all these passages the word body draws its meaning from the context in which it is found.

This is also true in English. Among the numerous definitions given in an unabridged dictionary of the word body we will find that it means "something that is perceptible and realizable, or gives concrete reality to a thing" and "the real as opposed to the symbolical"

In the passage we are now considering, "in the body" means "in the reality", or simply "in reality" as we would say it, and it refers to the actual position of the apostles when they ministered to men. They were among their own people.

WE ARE AWAY FROM OUR OWN PEOPLE - This was not the reality, but it was the actuality since it was so decreed by God. He calls "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4: 17). When they spoke or acted on behalf of Christ, they did so as those who bore no relationship to the ones to whom they spoke.

FROM THE LORD - There seems to be an ellipsis here that can best be supplied by adding the word being, making it to read "**we are away from our own people, being from the Lord.**" However, this could also mean that the Lord was the creator of this situation, which while it was not true in reality, became true by His decree.

FOR WE ARE WALKING BY FAITH - Since faith is taking God at His word and acting or responding accordingly, they were walking by what God had revealed as to the nature of their service and their relationship to others.

NOT BY SIGHT - As Paul's eyes surveyed his hearers, he would often see familiar faces, maybe the faces of those who had in times past been loyal friends, yet he had to close his eyes to all of this and declare that there was no salvation in any other save Jesus Christ, there being none other name given under heaven among men whereby you must be saved.

YET WE DO NOT LACK COURAGE - This is repeated for emphasis and it picks up again the thought that was interrupted by the parenthetical utterance about walking by faith.

AND WE ARE DELIGHTING ALL THE MORE - Since this is the way that God had ordered it, they were delighted to have it this way.

TO BE SEPARATED FROM OUR OWN PEOPLE - Ordinarily this could not be a delightful thing, but since this was the good pleasure of His will, they were pleased with the arrangement. As to how this can be true, Paul explains in the next phrase.

OUT OF THE BODY - This is **ek tou somatos** in the Greek, and it means "out of reality." We would say "not in reality." Paul was not separated from his people in reality, but by decree of the Lord whom he served, this was the situation. How else could he speak without prejudice?

AND TO BE AMONG OUR OWN PEOPLE - It was as if the Lord had said to Paul, "Go proclaim My word to your own people, go to them first (Rom. 1: 16), but when you stand before your own people I will separate you from them and it will be as if you were not one of them, and then you will speak to them as one sent from Me."

IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD - The Greek here is **pros ton Kurion**. The word pros means toward and one definition of toward is "in relation to."

An example of all this can be seen in the first visit to Antioch in Pisidia as set forth in Acts 13. Their ministry was "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1: 16), so on the first sabbath day after their arrival they went into the synagogue and sat down (13: 14). Thus, in reality, they were **endemeo**, that is, among their own people. They were not at home, but they were among their own kind. And they were fully received as such, for after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on" (13:15).

What these rulers did not know was that while to all appearances these men were "brethren" who had sought out and were among their own people, yet in the divine arrangement they were actually **ekdemeo**, separated from their own people so that they could serve Him, without predilections of any sort, as His ambassadors.

As Paul speaks, this relationship becomes evident. As patriotic Jews, which they were, their inclination would be to minimize the part Israel played in the crucifixion of Christ and to magnify the part the Romans played. Yet they did not. As God's ambassadors they must represent Him, and speak the message He gives to them. Thus Paul says with great emphasis:

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him, And though they found no cause of death in Him yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in the sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead. Acts 13:27-30.

As he finishes his message, Paul, as one who in reality is among his own people, yet out of reality was separated from his own people, and speaking to them as one sent from the Lord, utters this warning: **Behold therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.** Acts 13 :40,41.

If we follow out the results of Paul's proclamation, we will find that he was a "savor of life" to some and a "savor of death" to others, but as always a sweet savor of Christ in those who were saved and in those who perished. See 2 Cor. 2:14-17.

AND FOR THIS REASON ALSO WE ARE AMBITIOUS - that is, we make it our aim. The verb here means to act from love of honor, to be ambitious, in a good sense. It could be translated, "We love it as a point of honor."

THAT WHETHER WE ARE AMONG OUR OWN PEOPLE - a condition that could be true when he was not acting or speaking as an ambassador of Christ. He was among his own people when he lodged with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. He was not with them because he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ, but because they were tentmakers. See Acts 18: 1-3.

OR WHETHER A WAY FROM OUR OWN PEOPLE - a second condition-not physically separated from them but apart from them in order to serve his Lord.

TO BE WELL PLEASING TO HIM - This was his earnest desire no matter what the condition. From these words the Corinthians could better understand the motives of Paul and his associates. They were not seeking to please themselves nor other men; only the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 5: 10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad. KJV.

For it is binding for all of us to be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, that each one may receive for that which he does through the body, whether good or bad. TRV.

There are major problems in this passage. However, from it we know that it is binding for all of us to be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. Whatever this tribunal is or wherever it may be held, we do not need to be personally present in order to be judged. We can be judged in absentia, and this would probably be for the better. This is the only place in Scripture where we find the phrase "the tribunal of Christ." The one in Rom. 14:10 should read "the tribunal of God." I believe that this is the same truth as that which Paul declared to Timothy:

I charge you therefore before God, even Christ Jesus, Who shall determine what is right for the living and the dead at His shining forth, even His kingdom. 2 Tim 4:1. TRV.

The term "through the body" in 2 Cor. 5: 10 presents a major problem of interpretation. What is the alternative to that which is done through the body?" Does this refer back to what he had told them in the first epistle: "**Now ye are Christ's body**"? I believe that it does, but I wait for further light on this passage.

From the time that God gave Paul the revelation of his relationship to Jesus Christ and his relationship to his own people, he never recognized

anyone "after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5: 10). The word "henceforth" means from the time Paul became aware of this relationship, not the moment of the writing of this epistle. The phrase **apo tou nun** is found quite often in the New Testament, and it means henceforth, that is, from now on, but we must be careful in determining the starting point.

The peculiar nature of Paul's ministry made it so that it was easily misunderstood. The Corinthians had not liked the sharp, plain way that Paul had dealt with them. In 2 Cor. 5:6-9 Paul sets forth the divine reasons why it had to be that way. He was acting as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He was constrained by the love of Christ. Even as he said unto them:

We are not as the majority, who are peddling the word of God, but as of God, in the sight of God in Christ, we are speaking. 2 Cor. 2:17 TRV.

The End SS12