

Autobiographical Sketches in 2 Corinthians

When the incredulous King Agrippa asked the apostle Paul if he intended to persuade him to become a Christian, the prisoner replied, "I would to God that both by little and by much, not only you, but also all those who hear me today might become even such as I am, except for these bonds" (Acts 26:29). By answering the king in this way, Paul displayed his utter genuineness. In "singleness and sincerity of God" (2 Cor. 1:12), he sought that others might become the same as he. God made Paul a minister of the new covenant to build up the Body of Christ for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy. Yet Paul did not think of himself as being above any of his fellows. Rather, Paul expected God to gain the same thing in them that He had gained in him.

In this light we can realize why the New Testament not only records many details of Paul's life in Acts but also contains a book that can be considered his autobiography. Second Corinthians, at first glance, does not seem to be an autobiography. The historical details it contains are sparse; in fact, there are only six short passages devoted to them (1:8-10; 2:12-13; 7:5-6; 11:8-9; 12:1-4, 7-9). And the form of the book itself, a letter to the church in Corinth, is unusual for an autobiography. Nevertheless, Paul writes about himself throughout. If chapters eight and nine, which deal with the collection of the gift, are discounted, only 31 out of 218 verses do not actually refer to Paul.

Also unusual in this autobiography is its character. Paul does not tell us what is distinct or particular about his life. This is not an account of a great man whom we should marvel. Rather, 2 Corinthians is Paul's personal record of how God accomplishes His economy in a normal believer. Paul's life is the pattern for all believers, a fact that he often affirms in his other Epistles (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6). With the possible exception of the visions of the third heaven and Paradise in 12:1-4, all the experiences he describes in 2 Corinthians are accessible to every believer. Nowhere is there a sense that what he had attained could not be attained, according to each one's measure, by every member of the Body of Christ. Even the ordeals and calamities he suffered (6:4-5; 11:23-27) are not different in nature to what any faithful lover of the Lord might pass through.

It is true that Paul was an apostle (1:1), and certainly not

every believer is an apostle (1 Cor. 12:29). There are diversities of functions in the Body of Christ. But 2 Corinthians reveals that Paul carried out his apostleship as a minister of the new covenant (3:6). Likewise, every member of the Body, whatever his function, should be perfected to do the work of the ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12). Hence, every believer should aspire to be a minister of the new covenant. Second Corinthians should be considered an autobiography, not of an apostle, but of a minister of the new covenant.

In this book we see in Paul's life the economy of God that he sets forth in doctrine in his other Epistles. Therefore, this book provides us with a most practical illustration of God's economy. In what follows, we will derive six sketches, line drawings so to speak, that give us the essential details of the important aspects of Paul's life. These are the choice he made, the way he was constituted, the experience he had, the work he carried out, his care, and his orientation.

Paul's Choice

At a certain point early in his ministry Paul was confronted with a choice that would critically determine the direction of his life. This was not the choice to follow the Lord Jesus that he made on the road to Damascus, even though it was momentous. Rather, it was one that determined the nature of his service thereafter. It was the choice between gift and ministry.

The two Epistles to the church in Corinth are a strong indication of this choice. The Corinthians were so excessive in the practice of spiritual gifts that Paul even referred to them, not positively, as being "zealous of spirits" (1 Cor. 14:12). Paul was not against the exercise of the gifts, and he certainly did not forbid their use (v. 39). However, a large portion of his first letter to Corinth was devoted to adjusting the Corinthians' practice and to encouraging them to exercise discrimination in their use. They should seek those gifts that profit the church for its building up rather than those that build up the individual (12:31; 14:1, 5).

In the second letter to Corinth, however, where he is

relating his own experience, Paul makes only a brief reference to the gifts (12:12). Instead, in his autobiography Paul stresses the fact that he has received the ministry (4:1; 3:8; 5:18). In 2 Corinthians we see that the matter of ministry replaces that of gifts as the fourth major theme in the Corinthian correspondence, after Christ, the Spirit with our spirit, and the church (1 Cor. 1:9; 12:13; 6:17; 12:12, 28; 2 Cor. 1:5, 22; 2:13; 11:2).

From both Acts and 1 Corinthians, we know that Paul was endowed with spiritual gifts for his service. Unlike the Corinthian believers, however, he did not emphasize the gifts, and they were certainly not a central part of his ministry. It is significant that in Acts, in only seven places where Paul traveled does it record that he used his spiritual gifts; in fourteen places there is no mention of them. In addition, in two other places Paul received visions for encouragement (23:11; 27:23-24). And even though God did works of power “of no ordinary kind” through Paul at Ephesus (19:11), in his farewell message to the Ephesian elders, Paul makes no mention of the gifts; he prefers to emphasize his regular ministry in teaching and admonishing the saints from house to house (20:27, 31).

Signs and wonders bear witness to the divine source of the apostles’ preaching (Heb. 2:3-4) and so do indeed contribute to the impact of the gospel. Yet the experience of the believers in Corinth proves that the gifts are of little effect in causing the believers to grow in life and in building up the church. The Corinthians, in spite of their zeal for the gifts, were still infants in Christ and fleshy (1 Cor. 3:1-2). Paul even likens their exercise of spiritual gifts to childish play (13:11).

At some point early in his ministry, Paul must have realized that ministry, not gift, was most crucial for the growth of the believers and the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ. He therefore chose not to depend on spiritual gifts, nor to emphasize them. Whereas gifts are the abilities and enablements conferred on the believer by virtue of his receiving the Spirit, ministry is the Christ we have experienced and whom we minister to others for their experience and growth in Christ. Gifts are freely given, but ministry is obtained at a cost, namely, through partaking in the sufferings of Christ for His Body (Col. 1:24).

In 2 Corinthians we see that Paul’s experience of Christ is the content of his ministry to the believers. In 1:5-6, through his experience of Christ’s comfort, the Corinthians obtained the same comfort for the endurance of the same sufferings. Therefore, Paul’s experience of Christ became the means of the Corinthians’ experience of Christ. Similarly, in 4:7-12 Paul’s experience of the putting to death of Jesus, caused life to operate in the Corinthians. In verse 15 of the same chapter, he declares

that all the things he experienced were for the sake of their possession of the abounding grace. This implies that a believer enters into certain aspects of the experience of Christ through the ministry of one who has already obtained these experiences. Gift, however powerful, cannot accomplish this.

Gifts, in fact, manifest power, for they are signs, wonders, and works of power (12:12). Ministry, in contrast, is characterized by weakness. The experience of the cross that produces the ministry requires weakness, just as Christ was crucified out of weakness (13:4). The words Paul uses to describe his experiences—“burdened, beyond our power,” “despaired” (1:8), “pressed,” “unable” (4:8), “persecuted,” “cast down” (v. 9), “delivered unto death” (v. 11)—are all words of weakness. When Paul suffered affliction, the weakness of his humanity was manifested, causing him to not base his confidence on himself but on God, who raises the dead (1:9).

This matter is also seen in the physical weakness that Paul suffered, the “thorn in the flesh” (12:7). Paul had the gift to heal others (Acts 19:11-12), yet God would not grant his request for his own healing. Instead, the Lord pointed him to His sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:8-9). By remaining “in weakness,” Paul’s experience of God’s power, the inward power of the resurrection life (Phil. 3:10), was perfected. This was a much greater gain for Paul than the outward blessing and testimony of a divine healing. It may have been the reason why, near the end of his life, he did not seek healing for his close co-workers, Timothy and Trophimus (1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20). By submitting themselves to the discipline of the Lord, instead of being released from their suffering by the power of the gift, Paul and his co-workers experienced the grace of life inwardly. This grace, gained through the experience of the cross, caused them to become rich in the experience of Christ, and it afforded them their portion, their allotment, of the ministry (2 Cor. 4:1).

Paul’s Constitution

Interestingly, when Paul comes to the matter of his preparation to be a minister of the new covenant, he makes no mention of his upbringing, education, or training. Instead, he uses five metaphors to describe how he was constituted: a captive, an incense-bearer, a letter, a mirror, and an earthen vessel.

In 2:14 Paul says that God “always leads us in triumph in the Christ.” Conybeare amplifies this phrase in his translation as follows: “Leads me on from place to place in the train of his triumph, to celebrate his victory over the enemies of Christ” (444). Paul does not associate himself with the victorious aspect of this metaphor, as Barret, Bruce, and Thrall suppose, but with the defeated aspect.

Collange argues that in this metaphor Paul is a captive, a prisoner, and Conybeare elaborates Paul's thought for us:

The metaphor is taken from the triumphal procession of a victorious general. God is celebrating His triumph over His enemies; St. Paul (who had been so great an opponent of the Gospel) is a captive following in the train of the triumphal procession....The metaphor appears to have been a favourite one with St. Paul; it occurs again in Col. ii. 15. (444)

Paul was now Christ's captive. Christ had fought, subdued, and conquered him, and the apostle's movements for the gospel were a triumphal procession in which Christ, the victorious General, led His captives in a display of His victory.

Verses 14 and 15 continue, "And manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing." Here Paul identifies himself with another part of this procession—the incense-bearers. The incense scattered during this procession was, to those who would be executed when they reached the capitol, "a savor out of death unto death," and to those who would be released, it was "a savor out of life unto life."

The fact that the apostles were first conquered by Christ and then became a fragrance of Christ suggests that they were possessed by Christ. "They were not merely a sweet savor produced by Christ, but Christ Himself was the savor being exhaled in their life and work to God" (Lee 550).

In 3:3 Paul speaks of the letter of Christ inscribed on the hearts of the Corinthians, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. The letters of the alphabet with which this letter is composed are the many items of the unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), the *A* and the *Z*, and this implies that He is all the letters in between as well. These letters were formed by the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6) and ministered by Paul. Mysteriously, however, as the letter was being written on the Corinthians' hearts, a second copy of the same letter was written on Paul's heart (v. 2). This indicates that Paul's ministry was not merely doctrine and knowledge; rather, it was produced by his experience of Christ in the process of his ministry to others.

In 3:18 Paul likens himself to a mirror which beholds and reflects the glory of the Lord. By its beholding, the mirror itself is transformed into the same image as the object it beholds, and this transformation is one that proceeds "from the Lord Spirit." The Lord is the transforming

Spirit (v. 17), whom Paul received by beholding Him with unveiled face. By being transformed from the glory of the Lord, Paul could shine this glory forth into others, as the reflection of the image in a mirror. He describes this shining in detail in 4:1-6, where he says that God first shined in his heart. This shining produced the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ that became his ministry.

Finally, in 4:7 Paul says that the apostles "have this treasure in earthen vessels." The treasure is the Christ of glory in verse 4, who was brought into Paul by God's shining in his heart. He carried out his ministry as an earthen vessel that contained a treasure of great value. According to verse 16, while the outer man (Paul's natural soul with his body) was continually decaying, the inner man (his regenerated spirit and renewed soul) was being daily renewed. The process of decay by the "lightness of affliction" (v. 17) and renewal by the Spirit in the spirit of the mind (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23) worked out in Paul an "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). It is a glory not of some future state, but a present glory of eternal consequence. It is the glory mentioned in 3:18, which is synonymous with the progressive conformity to the image of the Lord (Rom. 8:29).

These five metaphors are full of meaning with regard to how Paul and his ministry were constituted. All of them indicate that the ministry depends on what has been gained in the person of the minister, not on the minister's learning and natural or spiritual gift. Paul was conquered, captured, and subdued by Christ, and he became a display of Christ's victory over His enemies (cf. Eph. 4:8) in all the places where he was led. By becoming filled with Christ, even soaked and permeated with Him, he exhaled the aroma of Christ, as one satiated with wine exhales the aroma of wine. His ministry to the Corinthians was not merely a matter of teaching, but of writing a living letter of Christ by the impartation of the life-giving Spirit in their hearts. This writing simultaneously made them a letter in his heart (cf. 1 Thes. 2:8) to be known and read by others. For this writing, there needed to be an adequate supply of the Spirit, the ink.

Paul had the bountiful supply of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19); hence, the letters he wrote were full of the ink of the Spirit. Furthermore, his heart was fully unveiled and turned to the Lord. As he beheld the glory of the Lord, his inner being, his soul with its mind, emotion, and will, was transformed into the image of the Lord and so reflected to others what he was beholding. Finally, conscious of the fragile nature of his being, he realized that he was a vessel, not an instrument, commissioned to contain a treasure. Paul's being was a vessel that was continually open to the Lord and so continually filled. He was fully constituted with the Lord as the life-giving and transforming Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18).

Hence, what he ministered was what he contained, and so he could boldly commend himself to each man's conscience (4:2).

Paul's Experience

Two portions in this book are needed to comprehend the breadth of Paul's experience of grace, which qualified him to be a minister of the new covenant. The first, 1:21-22, comes at the beginning of the book, and the second, 13:14, concludes it. Together they testify to the fact that grace was a matter that involved Paul's participation in and experience of the Divine Trinity.

According to 1:21 God the Father firmly attaches the apostles with the believers unto Christ the Son and has anointed them with the Holy Spirit as the anointing oil (Heb. 1:9; Matt. 3:16), sealing them with the same Spirit and also giving the Spirit as a pledge in their hearts. Anointing implies participation (Heb. 1:9; 6:4), sealing implies possession and image, and pledging implies a foretaste and a guarantee.

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 the grace of Christ the Son, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Spirit are all with the believers. These are not three different things to the believers, but three aspects of their experience of the grace of God, the Triune God. The love of God is the source, the grace of Christ is the embodiment, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the transmission. God is love (1 John 4:8), and He is embodied in Christ the Son, who in incarnation came to be grace to man (John 1:1, 14, 17). Through His death and resurrection, Christ became the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ (1 Cor. 15:45). When He appeared to His disciples on the day of His resurrection, He breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). This was the impartation of the grace by the entering in of the Holy Spirit, and the grace now continues to be transmitted constantly by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Hence, grace is nothing less than the processed Triune God for our participation and enjoyment.

Second Corinthians reveals that the meaning of all the hardships and afflictions that Paul passed through, including his physical weakness, was not for him to receive an outward blessing from God. It was not the removal of the thorn that he counted as grace, but the supply of inward power that he received to endure the thorn. Every "so great a death" (1:10) ushered Paul deeper into the enjoyment of the processed Triune God, who is the God of resurrection, the resurrected Christ.

This grace is evident in the seemingly contradictory experience of the churches in Macedonia that Paul

describes in 8:1-2. The saints in Macedonia were being proved by affliction, yet they simultaneously had an abundance of joy; in the depth of their poverty they abounded in the riches of liberality. Here the grace of God neither delivered them from affliction nor relieved their poverty. Instead, their enjoyment of God as grace surpassed these negative factors, enabling them to manifest the wealth of their joy and liberality that issued from their enjoyment of the processed Triune God as grace.

Through grace, Paul came to know the sufficiency of God in every circumstance (9:8; 12:9; 3:5). The greater the insufficiency that the killing work of the cross manifested, the more he experienced the sufficiency of God. His experience and enjoyment of grace sustained him to live the life he described in this book.

Paul's Work

Paul's work is the work of reconciliation to God (5:18—6:2). This work encompasses a much greater scope than just the judicial reconciliation of sinners to God through Christ's redemption, as described in Romans 3:23-26 and 5:1, 9-11. As believers, the Corinthians had received reconciliation through Paul's preaching of the gospel to them. They had been justified in the name of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11), they were in Christ (1:2, 30), and they were sons of God through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26).

Nevertheless, Paul still entreats them, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Even though there are some attempts to apply Paul's word here to his preaching to the unsaved (Bruce and Thrall), Collange notes that the second person plural of this imperative leaves no doubt that Paul is addressing the Corinthian believers. However, we need not define it in the narrow terms of Collange, who sees the Corinthians' reconciliation to God as equivalent to their reconciliation to Paul as His ambassador. Rather, Paul's entreaty indicates that he has in view a further step of reconciliation beyond the one that the Corinthians have already received through faith in Christ's redemptive work.

In what respect did the believers in Corinth still need to be reconciled? The context of this chapter shows that it was in their living. In verse 15 Paul points out that Christ died for all so that those who live "may no longer live to themselves but to Him." This verse, which echoes Galatians 2:19, indicates that the believers have an obligation to God in the divine life after salvation, namely, a responsibility to live to God in the resurrection life.

The Corinthian believers, however, were still living in their natural, soulish life as fleshly persons (1 Cor. 2:14—3:3); thus, they were unrighteous in their living and in need of reconciliation. They risked forfeiting their

inheritance in the kingdom of God (6:10), though not their eternal salvation. Therefore, in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul shows us that there is a second step of reconciliation. The first step was accomplished by Christ's dying for sins (v. 19), whereas the second step is possible because He also died for man himself, so that all died with Him (v. 14). Now those who live, that is, who are resurrected with Christ, need no longer "live to themselves" in the flesh or their natural life (v. 15), but can live to God in the spirit by the divine life.

In the first step of reconciliation the believers receive the righteousness of God objectively through faith (Rom. 3:22). In the second step they become (not receive) the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). By living a life in the resurrection of Christ, they live Christ (Phil. 1:21), and Christ lives in them (Gal. 2:20). Such a living expresses the righteousness of God. It is evident that this righteousness is just the image of God in 2 Corinthians 3:18, an image produced by the transformation from the Lord Spirit. To be the righteousness of God, therefore, involves more than morality or ethics. It is to express God in one's living, just as the Lord Jesus in the flesh expressed God. He fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3:15; Acts 3:14) by denying His human life and living by His divine life (John 6:57). To live to God is likewise to die to our natural, human life and to live Christ, that is, to live the divine life in resurrection.

Because the Corinthians were living in the flesh, they were at enmity with God and could not please Him (Rom. 8:7-8). They needed Paul's ministry of reconciliation, a ministry that would enable them to walk according to the spirit and spontaneously and effortlessly fulfill God's requirements (v. 4). Paul was one who had himself been reconciled to God in his living (2 Cor. 5:18), and as a result he had the word of reconciliation that could free the believers from the bondage of their natural life to live and walk according to the spirit.

Paul's Care

An autobiography often manifests a person's passion, his point of intense care. For Paul this was the church (11:1-3). The care that Paul had for the church exceeded all human ability. It was an extraordinary care, patterned after that of a father and mother for their child (1 Thes. 2:1-12), one that seemed to be unlimited in its virtue. Paul loved the church because he was one with the church-loving Christ (Eph. 5:25). Paul's love manifested the virtue of Christ; indeed, it expressed the righteousness of God in his human virtue.

The church for Paul was not merely an ideal. The church consisted in practical local churches, not only those raised up by his ministry, but all the churches that

together comprised the practical expression of the Body of Christ at that time. Of the many things he counted as hardships, the "things of [his] weakness" (2 Cor. 11:30), the one that particularly pressed upon him daily was the crowd of cares and the anxious concern for all the churches (v. 28).

The apostle put the needs of the churches before the other aspects of the Lord's work. Paul was exceedingly concerned for the building up of the church, not just its establishment. After he wrote his first letter to Corinth, he waited for news of how the church had received it. His concern for the church was so great that he abandoned an opening from the Lord for his ministry in Troas in order to go to Macedonia to find Titus, who would bring news from Corinth (2:12-13).

Paul cared for all the churches, not just those in the Gentile world raised up by his ministry. His concern for the churches in Judea led him to sacrifice to gather a collection for their relief (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9). This matter even allowed his detractors to sow suspicion among the believers by accusing him of taking advantage of them for his own gain (12:17-18). Moreover, his concern for the churches in Judea was not only practical. His visits there (Acts 11:30; 15:1-29; 18:22; Gal. 1:18; 2:1-2) and events at Antioch (2:11-14) caused him much concern for their spiritual condition. Eventually, this led him to interrupt his ministry among the churches in Asia and Europe in order to visit Jerusalem (see Lee 398). He did so in spite of the presence of false apostles among the churches, who would take advantage of his absence (Acts 20:29-30), and the certainty of great suffering, which the Lord warned him about beforehand (v. 23; 21:11).

Paul's care for the church was an organic one. Regardless of how the believers in Corinth treated him, his love for them was unwavering. He gladly spent his money on them and allowed them to spend him (his own soul, 1 Thes. 2:8) as well. It seemed that the more he loved the Corinthians, the more they were suspicious of him and loved him less (2 Cor. 12:15).

Ultimately, Paul labored and suffered not just for the members of the Body of Christ in his own time, but also for those in all succeeding generations. He endured unjust arrest and imprisonment that effectively ended his missionary work and frustrated his ambition to reach Spain with the gospel. Yet, in the sovereignty of God, this allowed him to compose his final Epistles. His imprisonment at Caesarea and Rome "was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time...that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord" (Lee 409).

Paul's Orientation

In 2 Corinthians 2:13 Paul writes, "I had no rest in my spirit." This word continues a number of instances in the Corinthian correspondence in which Paul specifically mentions his human spirit (1 Cor. 5:4; 14:14; 16:18). Paul highly regarded and paid attention to his human spirit, for it was in his spirit that he was joined to the Lord and mingled as one spirit with Him (6:17). As a person "who lived and acted in his spirit" (Lee 549), Paul's orientation was his mingled spirit.

Two items are synonymous with Paul's mention of his human spirit in this book: grace and faith. In 1:12 Paul's conduct in the grace of God is in opposition to a conduct in fleshly wisdom. Normally, Paul would contrast a walk in the flesh with a walk in the spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). This is a strong indication that Paul experienced the grace of God by means of his human spirit, a fact that is confirmed by Galatians 6:18, which locates grace in the human spirit. In 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul declares that he has the same spirit of faith as the psalmist, who declared, "I believed, therefore I spoke." To speak in faith requires the exercise of the spirit of faith so that others may hear and receive faith.

Grace and faith are two ends of the experience of Christ in this book. As grace, Christ, the embodiment of the processed Triune God, was available to Paul. Through faith, Paul experienced this grace. The key was his human spirit. He exercised his spirit, lived in his spirit, and restricted himself to his spirit's sense (2:13). Hence, he was rich in the experience of Christ. He experienced the person of Christ (v. 10), the changelessness of Christ (1:12-20), the meekness and gentleness of Christ (10:1), the truthfulness of Christ (11:10), the power of Christ (13:3-4; 12:10), Christ speaking in him (13:3), and the grace of Christ (v. 14).

Conclusion

From these autobiographical sketches of Paul in 2 Corinthians we have a vivid portrait of a minister of Christ who lived and worked according to the principle of God's economy. Paul realized that the goal of God's economy was the building up of the organic Body of Christ, so he made a definite choice to take the way of ministry rather than gift. Ministry is of great importance in building up the Body of Christ, whereas gift has only a minor role. To prepare himself for this ministry, he placed no trust in his own natural attainment, but instead he submitted himself to be constituted. First, he was conquered, captured, and subdued by Christ, and then Christ possessed him, worked Himself into him, and saturated him. The ministry that came forth was the product of this constituting work. By giving God the ground to work Himself into

him, Paul was one with the central work of God in His economy, which is to work Himself into man.

Paul was attached to Christ the Son by God the Father and anointed with God the Spirit. He enjoyed the grace of Christ with the love of God through the fellowship of the Spirit. Therefore, he demonstrated through his experience that God carries out His economy, not by teaching, but by dispensing Himself as the processed Triune God into His chosen people. Paul's work was the work of reconciliation. His ministry to the Corinthians proves that there is a further step of reconciliation beyond that of reconciling sinners to God through objective justification. Believers also need to be reconciled to God in their living, by living Christ to be the righteousness of God in Him. This is in accord with the goal of God's full salvation, the full conformity to the image of God's firstborn Son.

Paul cared for the church, the Body of Christ, as the bride of the consummate couple in God's economy (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 22:17). In orientation, Paul was a person who lived in his spirit. He realized that the key to enjoying Christ as grace through faith is the human spirit mingled with the divine Spirit. The apostle Paul's life and work described in 2 Corinthians are the pattern for every member of the Body of Christ. Though differing in function and measure from the others, each member must be a minister of the new covenant to accomplish the work of the ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ. In choice, constitution, experience, work, care, and orientation, we must all aspire to be the same as the apostle Paul.

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