

# Unveiled

July 16 – 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

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Day 197 – 168 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Paul continued his damage control from the previous section (1:12-2:17). Since his plans had changed, and he was only able to visit Corinth once (instead of twice), some of the false teachers used that against him, saying that he was not trustworthy. Thus, Paul defended his actions. He was also having to defend his ministry, for his enemies were constantly trying to cast him in a negative light.

Therefore, Paul had to separate himself from his opposition, who were most likely jealous Jews. They were discrediting his credentials and ministry as an apostle and promoting the traditions of the old covenant. Thus, he wrote at the end of the previous passage, "We are not like many (Judaizers), peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, as from God, we speak in Christ..." (2:17).

Often when prophets or preachers came to town with a word from God, they had letters of recommendation to vouch for their authority. Perhaps, the Corinthian Jews asked for Paul's letters of recommendation (3:1). His letter of recommendation was the church in Corinth, a body of believers whose lives had been changed by the gospel (v.2, 3). Their transformation was a credit to Paul's authority and ministry. He needed no other recommendation.

However, Paul was not boasting of his self-sufficiency. In fact, **he claimed no adequacy except that which was given to him by God** (v.4, 5). By His grace and strength, Paul was able to fulfill his mission and propagate the gospel; and that gospel was superior to what the Jews were preaching — the old Mosaic covenant of the law. Thus, Paul not only separated himself from the Jewish false teachers, but he also demonstrated the superiority of the new covenant (gospel) to the old covenant (law).

For example, Paul explained that the letter (of the law) kills, but "the Spirit (of the gospel)

gives life" (v.6). The Mosaic Law, especially the Ten Commandments, exposes man's sinfulness, and "the wages of sin is death" (*Rom. 6:23*). All men stand condemned before the law of God, but "the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ..." (*Rom. 6:23*).

Because the new covenant gives life, its glory surpasses the old covenant that resulted in death (2 *Cor. 3:7-11*). Since the new covenant (gospel) is superior, Paul said, "We use great boldness of speech" (v.12), unlike Moses who hid behind a veil (v.13). Furthermore, **those Jews who believe that following the law of God would earn them righteousness were still under that same veil** (v.14-18). Their minds were darkened, and the hearts were hardened.

**But, whenever a person comes to Christ for salvation, He indwells him with His Spirit and frees him from the law and the penalty of sin. As a result, the veil is lifted, and he is transformed (v.5-17). He experiences the liberty of the gospel.**

## Daily Reflection

Re-read *1 Corinthians 3:5*. The word *adequacy* refers to a sufficient supply, in this case an adequacy of confidence before God, that you are righteous in His eyes. Who or what is the source of your adequacy?

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If you think that you are adequate to stand before God in your own righteousness (as did the Jews), you are deceived and under a veil. **If you depend on Christ alone for your adequacy, then the veil has been lifted, and you have been liberated from sin and its penalty. Your face is unveiled, and you are being transformed into the image of your Savior, Christ the Lord.**

# A Treasure in Earthen Vessels

July 17 – 2 Corinthians 4:1-5:8

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Day 198 – 167 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Paul continued to defend his ministry in his second letter to the Corinthians. His opponents were Jewish false teachers who tried to discredit and destroy his credibility and message. But Paul skillfully demonstrated the superiority of the new covenant (gospel) to the old (3:1-18). Next, he explained that because of the glory of the gospel, he was willing to endure anything so that people might be saved.

Paul referred to the gospel as a treasure in earthen vessels or jars of clay (v.7). The earthen vessels refer to our human bodies. Like jars of clay, they are cheap, fragile, and temporary. **Paul viewed himself like an earthen vessel who carried a great treasure that would far outlast him.** Therefore, he was content with whatever happened to him, knowing that his body would be replaced in the resurrection. It was far more important that the treasure be shared with as many people as possible, which was his call to ministry (v.15).

With this treasure in earthen vessels as our context, the rest of the passage makes sense. First, he wrote, he had repented of his hidden shameful sins (v.2). He spoke plainly the words of truth and let God do the rest (v.2), knowing that the enemy would blind the eyes of men from seeing the truth of the gospel (v.3, 4). Paul viewed himself as a servant of Christ who was like a light shining through him (v.5, 6). Because we are broken vessels, the power of the gospel is obviously not from us, but from God (v.7). He should receive all the glory.

Next, Paul explained that because he carried this treasure of the gospel, he was willing to endure persecution on Christ's behalf (v.8-15). What happened to him did not matter because he was expendable. Besides, he knew that even though his vessel (body) would be destroyed, and his earthly tent would be torn down (death), the Lord would give him a new, glorious body in the resurrection (v.16-18). He

knew that when his mission was over on earth, he would enjoy the blessings of heaven for eternity, something he looked forward to with great anticipation (5:1-8).

## Daily Reflection

I love this passage! It is so encouraging for several reasons. First, because we know that the gospel is a treasure, and we know that it can transform lives, **we do not lose heart** (v.1, 16-18). No matter what happens to us in this life, we can be of good courage, knowing that the treasure will survive us and continue to affect change (5:6, 8).

Second, I am thankful that the Lord uses earthen vessels (people) that are cheap, fragile, and temporary. Despite our weaknesses, imperfections, and unreliability, God has chosen to include us in His plan and to use us to carry His treasure to those who need it. **Despite my brokenness, I get to carry His treasure!**

Finally, although we endure difficulties, they are nothing compared to the glory we will share in heaven. Whatever we are facing is "momentary, light affliction," which will soon be forgotten in the afterlife. We have so much to look forward to, for when we are absent in this body, we will be present with the Lord (v.5:6-8).

What encouraged you most from this passage?

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We should read this passage regularly, both to remind us of who we are (earthen vessels) and to encourage us when we are low. **For we have a lifetime to carry a great treasure, and then we get to spend eternity with the Treasure Himself!**

# He Has, Therefore I

July 18 – 2 Corinthians 5:9-6:2

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Day 199 – 166 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We covered one of the most well-known and beloved chapters in the New Testament. It is packed with such powerful truths that we could easily spend a week of devotions unpacking their significance. However, let's consider the chapter in the bigger picture of the letter.

Paul continued defending his ministry to the Corinthians, explaining the motives and purposes for the things he said and did. The context for his remarks is a previous passage (3:6-18), in which he contrasted the superiority of the new covenant (gospel) to the old covenant (law). Because the gospel is "a treasure" that he carried to the lost (4:7), he was not afraid of what happened to his body, for it would be resurrected and replaced (4:1-5:8).

In this context, Paul made eight "therefore statements." Noah Webster defined the word *therefore* as meaning "for that reason, referring to something previously stated." Let's briefly consider each "therefore statement."

The first three *therefores* occurred in yesterday's passage and had the same conclusion. The gospel is a treasure, "Therefore," Paul wrote, "we do not lose heart" (4:1, 16) and "we are always of good courage" (5:6, 8). Let's look at the other five *therefores*.

Here's the fourth one. "Therefore, we have this ambition... to be pleasing to Him" (5:9). Paul wanted everything he said and did to glorify God, knowing that all would be judged by Him someday (v.10). Live to please God alone.

Fifth, Paul wrote, "Therefore, knowing the fear of God (referring to judgment), we persuade men" to believe in Jesus (v.11). The word *fear* here is not dread or fright but respect and love. Paul wrote, "For the love of Christ controls us" (v.14). Why love? We love because of what He has done for us in salvation, having died for us that we might live in Him (v.15, 16).

Next, Paul wrote, "Therefore, we no longer recognize anyone according to the flesh..." (v.16). As saving souls was Paul's mission and goal, he no longer viewed people in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. Similarly, Christ is no longer with men "in the flesh," as He once was, but He is now with us in Spirit.

Then, Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away, and all things are made new" (v.17). Here is a picture of salvation, the message that Paul preached to the lost. Sinners can be reconciled (brought into friendship again) to God through Christ. Since we have been reconciled to God, we can help others do the same. We, like Paul, have "the ministry of reconciliation" (v.18, 19).

Finally, Paul wrote, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ..." (v.20), His envoys or representatives, to tell others the wonderful news. What news? "That He made Him (Christ), who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (5:21). We also tell them, "Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time" (6:1, 2).

## Daily Reflection

Christ has done so much for us. Therefore, we go and do for Him. He is our driving force, our passion, and our joy. Is there anything He could ask of us that we would not do willingly?

What are your "therefore statements"? Write them here. **Because He has, therefore I...**

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# Come Out From Their Midst

July 19 – 2 Corinthians 6:3-7:1

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 200 – 165 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, in which he defended his ministry against the false teachers who had infiltrated their church. These unbelievers had imbedded themselves in their midst and were causing a great deal of confusion and immorality. One of their strategies was to discredit the message of the gospel by attacking Paul, the messenger.

Thus, in our passage today (which is a continuation of yesterday’s, starting in 5:20), Paul separated himself from false teachers. As an ambassador for Christ, his ministry looked very different from theirs. For example, he “gave no cause for offense in anything...” (6:3) but rather proved to be a servant of God (v.4). What follows is an assortment of differences between his ministry and that of false teachers (v.4-10). Those who are not committed to the gospel would never endure such things as beatings, imprisonments, or hunger, and they would never exhibit such things as patience, kindness, or genuine love.

Then, Paul displayed an affection for the Corinthian believers, appealing to them as a loving father would his children (v.11-13). “Our hearts are opened wide to you... Would you please open up to us?” False teachers, who work for the devil, do not care about the wellbeing of God’s children, but Paul did. Though the Corinthians might have given him a headache, he expressed great love for them.

Finally, Paul followed his display of affection with a sincere appeal. **He plead with the Corinthians to “come out from their midst and be separate”** (v.17), referring to those pretending to be Christians. “Do not be bound together with unbelievers” (v.14). The word *bound* here is literally translated “unequally yoked.” When oxen are yoked or tied together to pull a plow, they need to work together. Thus, one can’t be slow, weak, or stubborn, or the team will fail to accomplish its mission.

Likewise, **those who love the Lord and those who despise the Lord should not be yoked (v.14-18), for how will they glorify Him and accomplish His mission?** How can those seeking to be righteous blend with those who glory in unrighteousness? How can light mix with darkness? How can those in the temple of God (Christians, church) work with idolaters?

## Daily Reflection

How should we apply Paul’s appeal today, to “come out from their midst and be separate?” What does that look like?

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How do we fulfill Paul’s appeal and, at the same time, honor Jesus’ challenge in *John 17*, to be in the world but not of the world?

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Should we have anything to do with the world at all, or should we live like hermits, separate from everything, and live by ourselves? Explain.

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# Godly Sorrow

July 20 – 2 Corinthians 7:2-16

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Day 201 – 164 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, in which he has been defending his ministry against the assaults of false teachers. He even challenged them to separate from those who do not love the Lord or have their best interests in mind (6:14-7:1). Next, Paul expressed his concern about their response to his first letter.

After being informed of the Corinthians' immoral and immature behavior, Paul wrote two letters of rebuke. One letter we have today (which is *1 Corinthians*), and the other letter was lost or destroyed (*1 Cor. 5:9*). Though it is not clear which letter Paul was concerned about, it is obvious that he was in distress. "Our flesh had no rest," he wrote, "but we were afflicted on every side..." (*2 Cor. 7:5*).

However, Paul's affliction was eased by his meeting with Titus in Macedonia (*2:12, 13*). Titus had carried his letter to Corinth and returned with a report regarding the church's wellbeing (*7:6, 7*). To Paul's relief, the Corinthians responded positively to the letter. In fact, **they were convicted by Paul's rebukes. As a result, they repented of their sins and took steps to restore their church.** This news brought Paul great comfort and joy (*v.13-16*).

Though the letter caused Paul a great deal of fear, he did not second-guess sending it. In fact, he wrote, "For though the letter caused you sorrow, I did not regret it..." I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance..." (*v.8, 9*). He loved the Corinthians dearly. He had not written the letter to condemn them (*v.3*) but to convict them, and it worked.

Paul referred to their conviction as "godly sorrow" or "sorrow according to the will of God" (*v.9-11*). **Godly sorrow produces repentance, a desire to change, to please God in all respects.** Worldly sorrow is guilt or remorse for

wrongdoing, but it only leads to anger or resentment for getting caught. In the end, remorse can drive one to depression and death.

Peter and Judas were examples of these types of sorrow. Both betrayed Jesus, but Peter's sorrow led him to a renewed commitment to follow and honor the Lord. Judas' remorse led him to madness and suicide (*Matt. 27:3*).

## Daily Reflection

I love Paul's transparency in this passage. He said (or wrote) what the Lord prompted him to say, but it still caused him to fear the people's response. He was obedient to God and delivered His message with boldness, but he loved the people so much and hoped that they would repent.

This anguish is a great depiction of a pastor's heart and struggle for the flock. He knows what they need to hear, but he is afraid that his rebukes will drive them away from God. **It is tough love, a parental decision to discipline your children because you love them.**

The American church has grown soft on sin. Pastors desire to be more seeker-friendly and avoid topics that might alienate their audience. Thus, **tough love is absent. Godly sorrow is missing. Rather than confront sin, they would rather coddle the sinner. Rather than rebuke the church, pastors tickle their ears with words they want to hear.**

How often do you hear words from your pulpit that lead to godly sorrow? Is repentance a regular rhythm of your life? Explain.

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# Money Matters

July 21 – 2 Corinthians 8:1-24

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 202 – 163 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After writing a lengthy section defending his ministry against the attacks of false teachers (1:1-7:16), Paul introduced a new topic in his second letter to the Corinthians. He encouraged them to support the suffering saints (Christians) in Jerusalem with a financial gift (8:1-9:15). Though Paul mentioned this collection in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:1-4), he now encouraged them to complete “this gracious work” (2 Cor. 8:6, 7, 10, 11).

As part of his encouragement, Paul shared what the Lord had done through the churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica). Even though the Macedonian believers experienced affliction and poverty, they were so excited to be a part of this endeavor that they gave generously, beyond what Paul expected (v.1-5).

However, Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that giving to this cause was not a command (v.8). Rather **he wanted them to give freely, “of their own accord,”** as did the Macedonians (v.3). **He wanted them to give out of love for others, as Jesus did, not out of obligation or guilt** (v.9).

Paul also reminded the Corinthians that they should give “from what they have, not according to what they do not have” (v.12). In other words, they were not expected to take out a loan or go into debt in order to give an offering; rather they should give from what the Lord had already given them. **God gives to us so that we can meet our needs, of course, but at times, He gives us more than we need so that we can meet the needs of others.**

In light of this truth, Paul explained that this collection would meet the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem, but someday the opposite may be true (v.13-15). The Christians in Jerusalem might give in order to meet a financial need of the Corinthians. **Christians taking care of Christians — this is God’s redistribution of wealth program.** To illustrate

his point, Paul reminded them of the gathering of manna during the exodus (v.15). Some people gathered more, some less, but all shared so that no one went hungry.

## Daily Reflection

Today, when we hear the phrase “redistribution of wealth,” we think of socialism (equity), everyone having the same. Is Paul supporting a socialist doctrine? Not at all. Socialism is a state mandated program (forced taxation), where the government takes from one person to give to another. Socialism is essentially legal plunder. The state takes what one person has earned to give to another person who has not earned it.

**The Bible does not support socialism.** These believers had different amounts of property (wealth, possessions), and they each gave freely as they prospered. The “way of equality” that Paul mentioned is not referring to equity of resources but equal lack of need (v.13, 14).

Finally, Paul expressed his desire to be above reproach regarding the Corinthian offering (v.16-24). **Money has a way of attracting the worst sorts of men, and it has a way of appealing to the baser instincts of good men.** Therefore, Paul made sure to “take precaution so that no one would discredit him in his administration of the gift” (v.20). He achieved this precaution by giving the responsibility of delivering the money to a representative that the church had chosen. He even sent a witness to vouch that it was delivered (v.18, 22).

Have you ever witnessed the love of money ruining a pastor, leader, or church? Explain.

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# Cheerful Giving

July 22 – 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 203 – 162 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Paul extended his comments on the collection for the church in Jerusalem (8:1-24). The Christians there had fallen on hard times financially (probably because of persecution), so Paul was raising money to relieve their burdens. The churches that he had planted were more than willing to help. The Corinthians, too, had demonstrated a great zeal to give, and they even promised a bountiful gift (9:1-5).

Because of the Corinthians' excitement and generosity, Paul encouraged them with four truths related to giving. First, **giving is a practical way to combat greed** (v.5). As sinful people, our natural tendency is to desire more wealth, possessions, or resources for ourselves (which is covetousness). By giving away our resources, we are beating back and even breaking that desire. Therefore, giving is not only good for others, but it is also good for us.

Second, **giving is an investment that has great benefits** (v.6). Paul used a farming illustration to explain this principle. The more seed a farmer sows, the more harvest he will reap. Simply put, what we invest in others will return to us somehow. Of course, this is not a promise of financial reward necessarily. The benefits of giving are multifaceted and, yes, may include financial blessings. However, the point is that we reap what we sow when we give to others (Prov. 11:24, 25; 19:17).

Third, **cheerful giving is an expression of love** (v.7). Gifts are given in love. Money given by force is a duty, a requirement (i.e., a tax). God does not want us to give because we have to, but because we want to. Giving should be a delight, something we do to glorify God and to express our love for others. Our example is the Lord Himself. John wrote, "For God so **loved** the world that He **gave** His only Son..." (Jn. 3:16). God is the most generous person of all, and as an expression of His love, He gave us an "indescribable gift" in Jesus (2 Cor. 9:15).

Fourth, **giving is a way to exercise our faith** (v.8-11). When we give money that could be used to meet our own needs, we are trusting God to make up the difference. We believe that He will somehow provide or resupply us. Paul wrote, "God is able to make all grace abound to you... so that you may have an abundance for every good deed" (v.8). If we will trust God with the money He's given us, we will find that He is more than able to meet our needs. We cannot outgive Him. He is faithful to refill any financial gap we might have from giving to others.

## Daily Reflection

To be transparent, my wife and I have never had a great deal of money. In fact, for much of our early married life, we were on the receiving end of others' financial gifts. Without the generosity of others, I don't know how we would've survived with four kids. We are eternally grateful for cheerful givers.

But, because of our limited resources, I was reluctant to give to the church, to ministries, even to others with needs. The Lord has done a great work in my heart by teaching me these four principles; and as I have become a cheerful giver, He has always resupplied us somehow. I can't explain it, but we've never gone without. All our needs have been met. Every time we've stepped out in faith to give away resources, He's been faithful to enrich us in various ways.

What about you? Have you grown in your giving? How have you seen God prove His faithfulness? What lessons have you learned?

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