



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 1:12 - 2:4

“Not Vacillation, but Sincere Consideration”

TRANSCRIPT

Mr. Pryor is absent, and so Mark McCracken is leading the singing and making the announcements. And, Mark, if you don't mind, I'm going to reverse the order and read the Scripture and then pray. [Laughter] But there is no theological difference between it, you understand.

We are studying 2 Corinthians. And for our Scripture reading, would you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, and we are going to read verse 12 through chapter 2, verse 4 for our Scripture reading.

You'll notice as we read through this section that the apostle uses language that is not really in our idiom. And one of the real problems with it for us now is the use of the expression “amen” or “yea” or things such as that. And,, of course, in the message I hope that we'll be able to make that clearer for all of us. But when the apostle states that in Christ are the promises of God are yes. He means essentially that they are ratified in him. That is that God says yes they are true to his promises when Jesus Christ is given and comes. So that's in the background, and I hope as we read through it will help to make it a little more intelligible to all of us because sometimes the idiom of ancient times is a bit difficult for us to grasp. We are beginning with verse 12 and the apostle writes,

“For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and Godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you.”

Those of you who have been here in the preceding messages will remember that the apostle has been criticized for fickleness and unreliability because of changing his plans of visiting them. And since he had critics in Corinth, they took advantage of that and charged him with fickleness and ultimately charged his message and his status as an apostle with the same kind of criticism. So the apostle is seeking to answer the criticism. In verse 13,

“For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end, just as you also partially did understand us.” (That word “partially” probably refers to the fact that there were people in the assembly in Corinth who were opposing the apostle. And so he states, “Just as you also partially did understand us...”) that we are your reason to be proud, as you also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus. And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might twice receive a blessing, that is to pass your way into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped in my journey to Judea.”

Now, if you’ll just turn back for a moment to the last chapter of 1 Corinthians and will notice verse 5 and 6, you will see that to which the apostle is appealing, because in the first letter he made reference to certain plans, “But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia for I’m going through Macedonia and perhaps I shall stay with you or even spend the winter that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.” Now, it is evident since that time that the apostle’s mind has changed because he says in verse 15 “And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might twice receive a

blessing.” So in the meantime he had sent news to the Corinthians that he was going to do this a different way after the words of 1 Corinthians 16. So they charged him with fickleness. He intended to pass your way into Macedonia and, again, from Macedonia to come to you. And he’s also made up his mind he is not going to stay there for the winter but he wants them to send him on the way to Judea. So you can see that his enemies took this as evidence of the changeability of the apostle and, after all, if he was in the will of God when he gave his first instructions then how can you say he is in the will of God now that he has changed his mind. And if he’s changed his mind and he’s now in the will of God, then evidently he wasn’t in the will of God originally. And so how can we believe a man’s message who is so fickle in his plans and purposes?

Now, then, in verse 17 the apostle states,

“Therefore I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or that which I purpose do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time. So if your text doesn’t have at the same time that’s inserted in the New American Standard Bible to make it plain that he’s talking about an individual who will say yes out of one side of the mouth and no out of the other. But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus who has preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy was not yes and no, but is yes in him,” that is in Christ the promises are ratified and confirmed. “For as many as may be the promises of God in Him they are yes, wherefore also by Him is our amen to the glory of God through us. Now he who has establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God who also sealed us and gave us the spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”

Now, Paul will explain things a bit now finally,

“But I called God as witness over my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we loitered over you faith but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm. But I determined this for my own sake that I would not come to you in sorrow again. For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad, but the one whom I made sorrowful? And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.” (It’s evident that Paul was a southerner. [Laughter] He likes you all.) “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

Some students of 2 Corinthians believe that the apostle, when he speaks here about love especially for them, that he really loved the Corinthian church more than other churches. Some very serious interpreters of the word have put that forward as the meaning of this text. I think that a more sober consideration of the matter would lead to the conviction that Paul is simply saying that he does have a special love for them, but it’s not a love that is necessarily deeper than his love for other churches and particularly those for whom he was responsible. May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let’s bow together for a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful and thankful for these words that have come to us from the apostle, for they surely reveal to us the heart of this great man of God called by the Holy Spirit, brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and made the apostle to the Gentiles. We are so grateful, Lord, for the faithfulness that Thou didst manifest to him and that through Thee and Thy grace, he has manifested to us.

We rejoice that we were able to read the words that the apostle wrote to this church, this group of individuals who had professed faith in Christ such as we have and

received from him the instruction and admonition and encouragement, the comfort that we all need. We thank Thee for the place of Jesus Christ in his ministry that he was the theme of the preaching of the apostle. And we thank Thee for the sufficiency of him and his work for our salvation and for all of the affairs of our lives.

O God, enable us by Thy grace to truly lean upon him in all of the experiences of life throughout this week and the weeks that lie ahead of us. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, and we pray that Thou wilt bless it richly, build up the church through the ministry of the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit and bless every individual proclaiming the word of Christ today.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the president and others in his government. In these critical days, give him wisdom and guidance and give him spiritual courage to face the issues that face us.

We thank Thee, too, Lord, for those who have asked us to pray for various problems that face them. We pray for the sick. We ask for encouragement and consolation, wisdom for those who minister to them, and healing in accordance with Thy will. For other problems and trials that we face, we again ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to bear under them as thou wouldst have us to bear under them with our eyes looking off unto him, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. \

We pray for Believers Chapel, its ministry, its outreach, its radio and publications ministries. We pray for our elders and for our deacons and members and friends and the visitors here today. Bless them richly, Lord, build them up in the faith. We ask, too, Thy blessing now upon us in the remainder of this meeting. May it be a meeting in which our Lord is glorified and we are lifted up.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] A kind of liturgical positive answer to things within the worship of these two bodies, and so this morning I was in the eight thirty service making reference to

the fact that it would not be out of order for someone to say amen in Believer’s Chapel in an audible voice, although the building might shake if you did it. But Mark, not knowing what I said has had you all express your amen. That’s fine. That puts us right in the spirit of the passage to which we are looking. The subject this morning is “Not Vacillation, but Sincere Consideration.”

Among many touching things that the Apostle Paul states in this section, he asserts that his behavior is rooted in his message in which there is no ambiguity. God’s men, I’m sure he would say, are faithful. They are not fickle. They are truthful. They are not liars. They are concerned. They are not cold and unconcerned.

I read a story about a man who was interested in preaching on the subject of lying. And as he concluded the message the week before, he announced to the congregation next Sunday I’m going to preach on the subject of liars. And in this connection as a preparation for my discourse, I would like for you all to read the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark. And so on the following Sunday, he rose to begin, and he said now then all of you who have done as I have asked you to do and have read the seventeenth chapter of Mark, please raise your hands. Nearly every hand in the congregation went up, so the story asserts. And then he said, There is no seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark. [Laughter] You are the very people that I want to talk to this morning on the subject of liars. [Laughter]

Well, the apostle, I am sure, would have appreciated that because what he essentially saying is that I’m not a liar. I’m not fickle. I don’t change my mind, according to any whim that may pass over my soul or spirit. I’m seeking, by the grace of God, to do God’s will. There’s another thing in this passage that I think is extremely important. It’s really a notable assertion of the apostle and I think one of the main articles of our faith.

Notice what he says in verse 18 through verse 20 and, particularly, verse 19 and verse 20. He has said that God is faithful. “Our word to you is not yes and no, for the

Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy -- was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

In other words, the apostle states this essentially. Our message is Christ. That’s in thorough harmony with what he said in his first letter. I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He says, “for the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us.” So his message is Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, all God’s promises depend on Christ alone as he states, “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes.” They are ratified. They are confirmed. God says yes to all of those promises in his gift of the Lord Jesus and in the ministry that he has accomplished. So the message of the apostle is Christ only. Any kind of faithful preaching of the word of God should always have as its central feature the Lord Jesus Christ and the promises of God as they are confirmed in Him.

Now, we are living in very strange days. We are living in days in which we have many, many millions of people who are making profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The thing that is missing in Evangelicalism today is the very thing about which the apostle is speaking. It’s remarkable. The word of God states in the New Testament that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. But how many people are really studying and learning and seeking to live those spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ? In fact, if you’ll look at the Christian church today it reminds you, I think, of Israel, given all of the blessing by God as he brought them out of the land of Egypt into the land feeding them with angel’s food, the manna from heaven, they spoke about despising this light bread which thou hast given to us. They were complaining. They were murmuring. They were not rejoicing at all in the things that God had given to them.

Now, the situation in the Christian church today, it seems to me, is clearly like that. Instead of being interested in the spiritual blessings that are found in the word of God and pouring over them to find the ways in which God ministers to us through Jesus Christ, in what are we interested? We are interested in the signs and the miracles and the speaking in tongues and so on. And the result is that we have forgotten the promises, the glorious promises. We are not studying them. We are not acquainted with them. If you speak about them, it’s obvious that the people with whom you speak, who are professing Christians, do not understand really what you are talking about. And one of the striking things to me is the fact that this is not only known in Evangelicalism, by some, it’s seen by those who report on the life of the world about us. For example, Richard Ostling, Times religion director, has said this, “The interesting thing about religious television programming most of it is Protestant and conservative Protestant is how little of the very rich and complex content of the Bible makes it onto television. We have a lot of people telling us what the Bible would instruct us to do, but there is very little Bible teaching going on.” This is the religion editor of Time magazine. You would expect him, if a man should say a few things that come from the Bible, to say these programs are full of Scripture. “Maybe that’s what the church is for. Maybe it’s totally unrealistic to expect anything of this sort on television,” he says. “But you really get a thimble full of Scripture on television. Maybe it’s because the Bible has to be worked at, sweated out, and discussed and prayed over.” He’s a nice man. He’s trying to find an excuse for it that won’t be convicting. And you can’t do any of those things while watching a T.V. program. The fact is that the Christian church is more interested in entertainment than they are in the word of God. Attend their meetings, observe their meetings, and one will clearly see that that’s so, in my opinion.

Now, I don’t think the apostle would have been very happy with that. I think Paul would have had some rather pointed words to say about it. Now, he’s not talking about T.V. here obviously, but he is talking about the central place of the Lord Jesus

Christ and the fact that his message was simply Christ and the promises of God that have been confirmed in him. And further he goes on to talk about how much God has done for us and how encouraging it ought to be to us to realize it. Now the background is the fact that in Corinth the church that the apostle was the instrumentality for bringing into being through his preaching is now troubled with some individuals who have come up from the land of Palestine, it seems, and while they were not Judaists, that is not preaching a gospel of works, they were insisting that the apostle was not really an apostle like the twelve, and, furthermore, his authority was not the authority of God. As a result, and particularly since the apostle has given some indication of changing his mind with regard to plans, they have evidently accused him of being fickle, changeable, ambiguous, and consequently unauthoritative. So the apostle must defend himself with the people for whom he has been the word of God through Christ. It’s an amazing thing. One would wonder how it could ever happen, but it does happen. And the apostle is one of the first illustrations of it in the New Testament church.

Now, he does something that I think it’s important for you to realize in order to understand what follows. I know this passage is difficult. I’ve had people say to me after I have read it. I don’t understand what he’s talking about. I’ve tried to give you a clue by the use of the terms amen or yes and no, but there’s one other thing that might trouble you as you read through it. The apostle is talking about the charge against him of insincerity, but when he launches into his defense, suddenly what he’s talking about is not so much his insincerity as the message that he proclaims. So in order to, I think, make this sensible and understand what he really is saying and the background against which he is saying it, we must assume that not only did the false teachers and those who were not his friends in Corinth accuse him of insincerity, but they made the next charge as well that therefore his teaching is unreliable.

Now, the apostle, I’m sure, didn’t mind people speaking and saying nasty things about him. After all, if a man is going to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, if he’s

going to be a prophet of Yahweh, he may expect criticism and persecution. In fact, Paul says all that will live Godly in Christ shall be persecuted. So it didn’t disturb him nearly so much that they were saying these things about him, as the fact that they went on to charge his gospel with error. That disturbed him. And so he defends his gospel, and then later on in the last part of the section, he will then turn to himself. But it’s obvious he’s more concerned that they get his word correct than they are to approve of him.

So if you’ll keep that in mind, I think this passage will become much clearer. Verse 12 through verse 14, he makes simply the positive claim of godly sincerity. He says,

“For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; (In fact, he could say something like, you get what you read.) and I hope you will understand until the end; just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.”

And so the apostle essentially says here, we have been sincere toward you. And he uses a very striking word that all expositors of the word of God, whenever it appears, have had words to say about it because the word itself is composed of two roots, and it so happens in this case the roots do give some inkling of the force of the word. That’s not always true. One of the words is a word that refers to the heat of the sun and the other is the word that means to judge, and so the idiom that lies back of it is an individual holding up something to the light of the sun to see if it’s transparent, see if it’s clear, pure. So that’s the word the apostle is using. And, in effect, when he says that “our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity,

not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves” before you is if you held up our lives to the light of the son -- this time S-O-N, not S-U-N -- to the light of the son you would find that we have been absolutely sincere, not ambiguous, not fickle with you.

It’s clear that the apostle doesn’t feel very happy about duplicity. Duplicity is something that’s part of human nature. It should have been one of the seven major sins, but duplicity is still with us. It’s characteristic of the saints. It’s characteristic of preachers. Preachers are very skilled at duplicity. You need to know that. You need to be on your guard because preachers not simply have the ordinary skills of sinning that the saints have in sin, but they have, in many cases, become experts at these things. So duplicitous behavior is characteristic of all the saints. And the apostle, in this sense, is not like the rest of us. He’s pure. He’s doing his thing by the grace of God as he says it.

Now, he begins in verse 15 through verse 22 to talk about his change in plans. The original plans are given in verse 15 and verse 16. He says,

“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.”

In this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might twice receive a blessing, that is to pass your way into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.” So those were his original plans and the change is referred to in the fact that he was going to make his way back through Macedonia, but in 1 Corinthians he had made the change and the false teachers were upset about it or at least acted like they were upset about it and used it as the foundation of the criticism of the apostle.

So he was charged with fickleness and not only with fickleness but carnality. Now, that, of course, is something else. He says,

“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”

You see, what they’re actually saying is that he not only was ambiguous and fickle, but he also was making decisions according to the flesh. Now, the flesh in Paul’s usage quite frequently and probably here refers to the carnality that characterizes unregenerate flesh. So actually they were accusing the apostle of having no contact whatsoever with the Lord God in the making of his change in plans. Paul, of course, will say plans may change, but principles never and my principles have never changed.

Now, these things, of course, are characteristic of the life of the world. They are characteristic of the saints as well. Some of us who have lived as long as I have, you’ll remember that when you were young, you read in the paper about how Hitler and Soviet Russia had made a peace pact. And it wasn’t long -- in fact, I had just begun work in the insurance business in Alabama, that suddenly there were big headlines in the paper that Germany had attacked Russia. So it was a piece of paper that Joseph Stalin had relied upon heavily in order to do some things that he needed to do internally. And much to his chagrin Adolph Hitler was marching in spite of the contract and the treaties that had been signed. And a little while after that, as I remember, in what President Roosevelt called a day of infamy that would be in history eternally, the Japanese were sending representative to Washington in order to engage in negotiations and at the same time planning to attack Pearl Harbor, which they did. Duplicitous behavior is characteristic of human nature, and it’s characteristic also of the sin principle that dwells within us.

So the apostle now is going to ask, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? I do not do things according to the flesh. I do not speak out of one side of my mouth and then out of the other side of the mouth. But now, surprisingly, you would expect him to go on and defend himself, but as I said earlier he talks about his message. It’s obvious that lying back of their criticism of Paul was their attack on his message. That was the thing that they really wanted to attack. And so the apostle turns abruptly, almost seems to avoid the train of thought, and talk about his message, but it’s one of the great sections on the message of the apostle, and we need to look at it. In fact, what he is essentially saying is whatever you think of me as a man my message is not ambiguous. It’s not unstable. It’s reliable.

So verse 18, “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.” In other words, the doctrine is not variable. It’s as true as God is faithful to his promises. As God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. But he goes on to talk about the subject. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.”

Now, that is a marvelous statement if you can just grasp what he’s talking about. What he’s saying is essentially this: that Christ’s person, the divine son, and Christ’s work, the representative covenantal mediator, the one who stands for the people of God and accomplishes all of the promises that have been given in the Holy Scriptures, Christ’s person and work is the means, the summation, the proof, that God is graciously inclined toward us. Isn’t it marvelous to think that God us graciously inclined toward us? And the proof of it is the ministry of the person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s evidence. In fact, that’s the son. He’s the means. That’s the proof that God is graciously inclined to us. His promises are the testimonies of fatherly good will toward us. And when Jesus Christ came it was as if God said yes to all of the promises, they are true. The Son of God is here to lay the foundation for them and the ratification of the covenant, the new covenant and to make these promises have their foundation in the shed blood of the atoning sacrifice.

We possess, incidentally, as a natural emphasis of this, these promises only in Christ, the covenantal head. We do not have any promises that are not promises in him and only if we are in him do we possess the promises. If you are here today, and you are not in Christ, do not know him as your savior, these promises are not your promises. They are promises in Christ and only those in him have the promises and have the assurance of all that the promises speak about. So we possess them only in Christ.

His coming then is the yes that’s true to all of the promises of the word of God. And we give our assent to them by the simple expression of “amen.” That’s what Paul means when he says, “For as many as may be the promises of God in him they are yes wherefore also through him is our amen to the glory of God through us.”

When I was in the insurance business in Alabama and had been converted by the grace of God through Donald Grey Barnhouse’s preaching in our church, the South Highlands Presbyterian Church, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer came to Birmingham for a weekend series of meetings, and I attended them. And I remember Dr. Chafer speaking on the doctrine of justification by faith. He spoke from Romans chapter 3. And then in order to illustrate what was meant by Romans 3 and justification being declared righteous in Christ, he turned to the Old Testament in Genesis chapter 15 and spoke about the promises that God had given to Abram. And he commented specifically on the text and Abram believed in the Lord and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. God had said to him, Abram take a look up at the sky, look at the sky, and see the stars. If you are able to number them, so shall your seed be. And then Moses added the words and Abram believed in the Lord, and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. And Dr. Chafer was no student of the Hebrew language, and he was no student of the Greek language, for that matter either, but he did attend Bible conferences for many years and he listened to some men who knew something about it. And I remember him saying now the word “to believe” is the word “amen.” I don’t remember how he pronounced it, probably pronounced it wrong, but, nevertheless, he said the Old Testament word to believe is the

word “amen.” He may have said “amen.” And he said that’s the word that is rendered here and Abram believed in the Lord. And he said you know that’s the word from which we get “amane” which means something like truly. It’s the word our Lord uses so often, verily, verily I say unto you, amen, amen, or, as more dignified people say amen, amen, we say unto you.

So, Dr. Chafer said, What is faith? Why, it’s simply this, when God said Abram look at the stars and see if you can number them. Moses adds and Abram, amen to God. That is he said simply, amen. That’s faith. That’s to say the promises are true. I’m resting upon them. That’s true faith to amen the promises of God. That’s what Paul is talking about here when he says for as many as may be the promises of God in him they are yes wherefore also by him is our amen to the glory of God through us. We give assent to the promises of God with that internal amen. Incidentally, in other places Paul says that’s given us by God. It’s initiated by God’s work within us, that we say amen to the glory of God which is the goal of all God’s saving work.

So the promises then are ratified in him and all the anticipations of the Messiah in the Old Testament from Genesis chapter 3, verse 15 all the way through to the coming of our Lord, all of those promises relate to him and to his ministry. As he said to the disciples on the Emmaus Road, Old fools and slow of heart to believe the things that have been written in the Scriptures concerning me.

Verse 25 through verse 27 he goes on to say, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them the things concerning himself and all the Scriptures. That’s the exposition of the word of God in which, like a building that has been closed up for a long time, the Lord Jesus enters into the building of the promises of God. He goes around opening the windows, throwing open the shutters and letting the light flow in on the promises of the word of God that they may understand just who he is and what he has done for them.

But now Paul doesn’t stop with saying that because, after all, we do live on after we have come to know him. And so the apostle continues by saying now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us in God who has also sealed us and given us the spirit in our hearts as a pledge. So here are the magnificent things that comprise the continuation of the Lord’s work. He guarantees the faith that is given to us and says it is preserved forever. He establishes us with you in Christ. And notice the present tense. He establishes us. This is a work that continues. He’s doing that right now for all of us. In all of our wayward ways in which we move away from the Lord God, the Holy Spirit is there to constantly work and to bring us into conformity with the will and the word of God. He has anointed us with the Holy Spirit, just as our Lord was anointed to carry out his messianic work, so we too, after we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell with us forever so that we have been anointed as he was anointed with the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, he says, we have been sealed. Now, sealing is a figure, of course. It means, essentially, we are valid goods for heaven to speak in a commercial way. We are valid goods for heaven. We’ve been sealed. It also, as you know, expressed ownership. The seal expresses the ownership of God. We belong to him, and we are destined for heaven. And finally, he says he has given us the spirit, notice the word “give,” don’t forget this is all of grace, and has given us the spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Now, that word is a word that all Bible expositors love because it’s so vivid in its meaning. The word *arrhabon* means essentially what our word “earnest” means or “pledge” or “down payment.” So it was the first installment of a payment, paid as a guarantee that the rest were sure to follow. I imagine that everyone in this room has had some existential experience with installment buying. Avoid it if you can. But nevertheless, you’ve had experience with it and maybe some of you are paying on something right now. Well, the first payment is the *arrhabon*, the earnest, the interest. Maybe someone has bought a house and you have paid earnest money which means

essentially you will complete the transaction. It was a common word in Greek legal documents. A woman selling a cow, so we read in the documents, receives a thousand *drachma* as *arrhabon* that the rest of the purchase price will be paid. Some dancing girls who are engaged for a village festival receive so much as *arrhabon* that will be included in the final payment. So that was the guarantee that the contract will be honored and the full money paid when the festival is over. But I like this one, in the literature of Hellenistic Greek a certain man writes to his master that he has paid a man named Lumpon. And he describes him as a mouse catcher, an *arrhabon* of eight drachma. You don’t get near as much for catching mice as you do for various other things, but, nevertheless, a mouse catcher so that he will start work and catch the mice while they are still with young and that appears in the literature. So when Paul writes here he has sealed us and has given us the spirit in our hearts as a pledge, the Holy Spirit has come to indwell the saints permanently as a pledge that God will ultimately redeem the whole thing.

Now, of course you might say, Well, do we have just part of the spirit? No, we have the whole spirit, but the enjoyment of him is partial at this time. The full enjoyment awaits the future. So the spirit then is the seal of the Lord God upon the soul of believing saints. And those who do not have the Holy Spirit don’t belong to him. So Paul said, he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his. And if your heart getting warm right now, that may be the sign you do have that seal within your heart because no Christian could hear something like this and not be a little excited. May look glum like a Presbyterian, but nevertheless deep down within you have to be thrilled by the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells me permanently, and that’s the seal that God has put in my heart that I belong to him and that he will complete the transaction. You’ll notice the whole trinity is involved in this, my dear friends, because all heaven is involved in this. In fact, I have no doubt that heaven is greatly interested in what is happening right here, right now.

So we read here in verse 21, “Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,” that is the Father, “who has sealed and given the spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” The whole trinity involved in the work of God.

Now, the apostle finally gets to explain why he did change his mind. And he says essentially in verse 23 through chapter 2, verse 4 -- we’ll not deal with this in detail today. He says essentially this, conditions have required a change. If I were to come when I had originally intended to come, then you would have been very torn up, very grieved, very upset, and really I did not want to make you sorrow, because if you sorrow, I sorrow. And so essentially I didn’t come until the situation is better. Out of affliction and a flood of tears, he writes of sovereign grace as the cure of the soul and says it was because of my love for you and my concern for you and for me, too, that I didn’t come at that time. If we ever have any insight into the heart of Paul, you have it here in what he says.

One of the great blessings of life, as far as I’m concerned, is the fact that the ministry of Believer’s Chapel has gone out over the last ten to twelve years at a number of places and I get some very interesting letters. And as you know, the kind of ministry that I give is not the kind of ministry that appears on the Christian radio stations as a rule and of course we don’t always appear on Christian radio stations. I have frequented people writing me and saying we listen to a Christian station all day long and this is the only program in which we get the study of the word of God. It’s an amazing thing. It’s amazing. I don’t know whether that is true, but that’s the way some do write. Some feel that way, and I think that that’s confirmation of the fact that they understand that we are trying to study the Scriptures.

One of the places we have been is Buffalo. They have been very responsive. I think largely, as well as because of the ministry, but largely because the radio station is extremely well run. This is a letter from a lady who is now living in Dallas, just moved back to Dallas. She lives about twenty miles from here and so she is probably not here this morning. She goes to another church actually on the south side of the city. But she

wrote me a two-page letter about a problem that they are having, but this is the first paragraph. She said, I would like to tell you how much your ministry over tapes has meant to me over the last number of years. There was a time in my life when I was severely, clinically depressed and in the process of ruining my marriage. But in the providence of God I began hearing you over WDCX in Buffalo, sending for your tapes, Galatians, that was a good choice, providence of God, and attending a fine Bible Presbyterian church. Your precise teaching on the matter of sovereignty and the mercy of God and my pastor’s counsel confronted me with the fact that I deserved hell and had experienced only good from God and then she says this magnificent line. It’s hard to remain depressed and angry when that truth strikes home. How true. If the sovereign mercy of the Lord God strikes home, how difficult it is to remain depressed and angry since God has confirmed all the promises in Jesus Christ. He said amen to them, and he’s offered us the benefits of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are for all who desire the deliverance that God gives from the difficulties and trials and sin and guilt of the life which we have from Adam.

If you are here today and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to come to him, to trust in him, to believe in him who has offered the atoning sacrifice by which all of the divine promises are ratified and confirmed. Come to him, receive him as your own personal savior, and discover that being in Christ means the promises are yours. That’s God’s way of letting us know that in Christ, he’s favorably disposed to all who by his grace come and believe in him. We hope you will trust in him. As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, I invite you in his name to come to him.

May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these magnificent things that the apostle wrote to the Corinthians. We thank Thee that all the promises of God are yah and amen in Christ. And by Thy grace, Lord, right at this moment, we say amen. By the grace of God to the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we have been

“Not Vacillation, but Sincere Consideration” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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truly blessed. And, Father, if there should be someone here who does not know him whom to know his life eternal may at this very moment they turn to thee in faith and say to the promises of God in Christ “Amen.”

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.