

"GOD INVADES SATAN'S PLAYGROUND"



TEXT: 2 Corinthians 1:1,2

INTRO.: A. **Wealth & sins are twins.** Find one & you will usually find the other. Corinth was a wealthy, commercial, large, seaport city. With the flourishing Greek culture, civilization, fine arts, athletic games, schools of philosophy, etc. Corinth was known for its immorality and ungodliness. Gluttony, drunkenness and even licensed religious prostitution flourished. Immoral people were referred to as those who "lived like Corinthians."

B. Paul arrived on a ship in Corinth, dropped anchor in the azure waters and no doubt marveled at what he saw & experienced. But he didn't come as a tourist or sightseer or to play in this playground of Satan – he came to preach & to plant a church. He won some wealthy & influential Jews, e.g., Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, and Gaius a very wealthy man (all saved & baptized – Rom.16:23). As usual the majority of those who believed the Gospel were poor Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:26 *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

C. Paul labored for 1 ½ years in Corinth & established a church seething in carnality. (It often takes time for believers to mature & jettison their former life-styles.) He had left to keep the Passover in Jerusalem, but planned to return when he heard of the troubles in the Corinthian church.

2 Corinthians 12:20-21 *For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.*

I. A DIVINE COMMISSION: v.1a

A. Paul the Man:

1. A compassionate friend: *"Paul..."*

NOTE: In this most personal of Paul's letters you will feel the pulse of the man, not just his supernatural gifts and official position as an Apostle. You will see something of his human weaknesses, tender affection, hurt feelings, sternness, irony, self-vindication, humility and love for his converts & Christ's Church...

2. A companion in ministry: *"...and Timothy our brother"*

- a. Paul had several close friends in the ministry; Silas, Barnabas, Titus and the young man Timothy, his protégé.
- b. Paul refers to Timothy as his "son in the faith" implying that although he was instructed in the Scriptures from infancy by his mother & grand mother, Paul had led him to the Lord himself.
- c. Paul not only led him to Christ, but trained him in the ministry & took him with him on his second missionary journey.
- d. Paul also appointed Timothy as his successor to the pastorate in Ephesus.

B. Paul the Messenger:

1. The authority of an Apostle; but he had to reestablish his Apostleship with those who questioned his authority in Corinth.
2. The humility of the man; he had to work as a tentmaker while ministering to those in Corinth because of their carnality. (In 2 Cor. He apologizes to them for this **"wrong."**)

2 Corinthians 12:13 *For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.*

ILLUS.: While it may speak well of Paul's humility to work without remuneration while serving as pastor of this church, it speaks ill of the church for failing to assume this obligation. Many men-of-God feel it necessary to accept outside preaching opportunities, hold special meetings, take part-time jobs, etc. to support their family due to a church's neglect in the area of proper financial support. Though Paul was forgiving, I wonder how the Great Shepherd felt about this situation?! It is almost always not just the pastor who suffers, but mostly the church.

3. The message of the Master: **"...of Jesus Christ"**
4. The will of the Savior: **"...by the will of God"**
 - a. Paul again asserts his authority by stating his calling from God Himself.
 - b. The church needed to understand that he wasn't coming to them again by the will or plan of man, or because of his own desire, but by the will & plan of God.

II. A DEEP CONCERN: v. 1b,2

NOTE: This salutation was almost identical to the one given in 1 Corinthians & is very typically Pauline. Though it was his customary greeting, it is not perfunctory or purely formal. Paul had a deep and abiding interest & concern for this church he fathered.

A. For the Church: **"unto the church of God which is at Corinth..."**

QUOTE: O. Greene **"The Church of...God"** is a heavenly ORGANISM, not an earthly ORGANIZATION. We became members of that organism through the...spiritual birth that takes place when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are baptized into His body by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor.12:12-14) Deviations from *scriptural phraseology* bring about unscriptural organizations, human traditions, sectarianism, manmade programs wearing *the attire of a 'church'* but not possessing the heart & soul of the Church of the living God."

" There is much gross error abroad in the land today concerning *THE Church*, the body of Christ. There are many groups who *claim* to be the true Church. They claim that *they* will make up the bride of Christ and that all who do not belong to their group will be **"friends of the bridegroom."** They do not consign others to hell, but they give all others a *secondary place* in God's eternal economy...These preachers and teachers are deceived. *Every born again believer* is a member of the body of Christ, the Church of the living God. There are many preachers who teach that unless you are baptized in *their* denomination you do not belong to the bride (or body) of Christ. Such teaching is due to gross ignorance of the Word...The devil cares not how long nor how loud any minister preaches – just so long as he mixes error with his preaching and fails to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ as head of *THE Church* and Savior of the body, *THE Church* that was purchased with His blood."

1. Some have even taken this term "the church of God" and claim it as their denomination.
2. But Paul speaks of the **"church of God"** – not "of Paul" as its founder, or of its present pastor.

B. For the Saints:

1. This term acts as a reminder of what they had been, of what they are now and what they will be.
2. Paul speaks of the "grace" and "peace" that is the possession of every true **"saint"** of God.
3. The term **"Father"** speaks of the relationship every "saint" has with the Lord, whereas the term **"Lord Jesus Christ"** speaks of our fellowship.

CONCL.: Paul's salutation here is very personal, courteous, cheerful, generous and extensive. These saints needed to realize that though they lived in Satan's playground, God had invaded it and placed a witness there of which they were a part. Paul would address some ongoing problems, but would also commend them for dealing with previous problems. It is a great opening for a great book and what he would recognize as a great church (at least potentially).

