

"THE SECOND COMING OF PAUL" or "IS THAT A THREAT OR A PROMISE?"

that's a
promise
not a
threat!!

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 1:21-24

INTRO.: A. Paul had already been to Corinth and had in fact founded the church there. He was very disappointed in the growth of the believers and in their carnality. He had written them concerning church discipline concerning a very public sin. It seems that they had not responded to his counsel & even questioned his authority. He speaks of a soon return (v.15 & 23), but qualifies his desire. Like the second coming of Christ, Paul's statement about returning to Corinth, may be considered either **"A THREAT OR A PROMISE"** depending on your situation. Believers living for the Lord consider the Lord's soon return a promise; those who are carnal may view it as a threat.

B. As is often the case in Scripture, in this passage there is tucked away a wonderful section dealing with very important issues or doctrines, along with Paul's statements concerning his possible return. In this case he first speaks of 4 key ministries of the Holy Spirit for the saint...

I. THE STATUS OF THE SAINT: v.21,22

A. Assurance of Maturity: **"...stablish"**

1. It is Paul's teaching that the Lord has an ongoing ministry with His children after the initial work of salvation & the Spirit's indwelling.
2. This is the ministry of maturation or continuing sanctification whereby the believer is progressively stabilized.

ILLUS.: Whereas the initial ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is passive on the believer's part, this ministry is active, i.e., the believer must cooperate. He must study the Word, pray, witness, give & serve if he is to grow and be established. Ques.: How are YOU doing?! Are you being established? Are you progressing or regressing spiritually?

B. Assurance of Enablement: **"...anointed"**

1. This ministry of the Holy Spirit speaks of appointment to and enablement for special service & ministry.

ILLUS.: There are several pictures in the Bible concerning anointing which come to mind. 1) Every King was anointed at the outset of his term of service (David was anointed 3 times as King over Israel! The Psalmist speaks of being anointed with "fresh oil" in Ps.92:10.) 2) Every prophet had a special anointing of God's Spirit on him to enable him to speak and minister in behalf of the Lord 3) Every priest had to be anointed before he could be engaged in any spiritual activity. Then of course there is the concept of the Messiah, literally **"the anointed One,"** the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

2. There is a sense in which every believer-priest is anointed with the Spirit to serve the Lord.
3. There is also the special anointing received by those in special service.

ILLUS.: There also seems to be an association with spiritual discernment which comes with the anointing ministry of the Holy Spirit.
1 John 2:26-27 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

C. Assurance Of Safekeeping: **"...sealed"**

1. The sealing ministry of the Spirit has to do with sealing the soul of the believer *"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."*

Ephesians 1:13-14 *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (Note that the sealing and "earnest" are related)*

2. Sealing insures the safekeeping of the believer until this body is no longer needed.

ILLUS.: Apparently the Spirit has an ongoing ministry with the believer even after our death, i.e., in securing our salvation and the culmination of our salvation in the final redemption of our body (when we receive our glorified bodies).

D. Assurance Of Future Blessings: *"...earnest"*

1. The "earnest" is a down payment or pledge of things to come.
2. There is great dignity and safety in the sealing & earnest ministry of the Holy Ghost.
 - a. The sealing secures our position in God's family.
 - b. The earnest guarantees our future blessings w/in that family.

ILLUS.: Think of it! What we have NOW in Christ is a mere inkling of what is to come. Sealing provides security, but the earnest of the Spirit guarantees our inheritance.

Someone draws up a will. They sign it and it is sealed. Finally the person dies & all that was designated in the will as an inheritance instantly becomes the other person's property. So it is with the believer. The earnest is the will, the sealing is done by the Spirit and the inheritance is secure & will be collected when we are finally conformed to His image in glory, "to wit, the redemption of our body.

II. THE STATUS OF THESE SAINTS: v.23,24

A. Their Problem: v.23

1. They had not responded appropriately to Paul's rebuke & corrective action.
2. Paul planned to return to rebuke them personally & deal head-on w/the problem.
 - a. Paul swears that the only reason he had not returned was to spare them the severity of his judgment.
 - b. He is alluding to the fact that they questioned his authority and apostleship.
 - c. His delay was only motivated by grace & mercy, not justice or what was deserved.

B. Their Position: v.24

1. Paul's authority or jurisdiction does not extend to their personal faith in Christ, but rather in matters of church discipline.
2. Paul says he would rather add to their joy than add to their sorrow.
3. He says that their position in Christ is determined by their faith in Him.
4. He concludes the chapter by declaring that he believes them to be saved even though carnal.

CONCL.: **"THE SECOND COMING OF PAUL"** was both a **"PROMISE & A THREAT"** - to the spiritual a promise; to the carnal a threat. To the obedient, a promise; to the disobedient & rebellious, a threat. So is the return of our Savior!