

First and Second Corinthians

Authentic Christian Ministry

Lesson #10 for September 5, 2026

Scriptures: 2 Corinthians [chapters] 3-7; Colossians 1:19-23; Ephesians 2:13-16.

1. Aren't all ministries authentic? Certainly, all "Christian" ministries are. Aren't they?

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] A young pastor, fresh out of seminary, arrived at his first church appointment with a thick folder in his hand. Inside were glowing letters of recommendation—from professors, previous pastors, and mentors. He handed them proudly to the church board, believing they were the key to earning trust and proving his worth. Unfortunately, after a few months, things didn't go as planned. His sermons felt flat. The congregation was distant. He worked hard, but something was missing.

One day, an older member invited him to her home. She listened kindly to his frustrations, and then said something he would never forget: "We don't need a letter telling us how good you are. **We need to see Christ in you. Show us your heart. Let us see how God has changed you—and then let God change us through you.**" It was a turning point. He stopped trying to impress and started to open his heart. He visited homes. He prayed with people. Cried with them. Shared his own struggles. And over time, lives began to change—not because of his credentials but because the Spirit was working through an authentic heart.

In 2 Corinthians 3-7, the apostle Paul focuses his message on genuine ministry. He reminds the Corinthians that **authentic ministry isn't about outward letters of recommendation or spiritual performance. Rather, it's about hearts changed by the Spirit, ministers who are open and vulnerable, and a life that reflects the glory of God. Paul invites us into a deeper vision of ministry, one that's Spirit-led, emotionally honest, and powerfully transformative.**—T-BSG* 132.^{†‡} [Could we do that?][‡]

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] [In the prior lesson], we saw that Paul, by affirming his simplicity and sincerity, defended himself from the accusations of inconstancy and lack of love toward the Corinthians. He always worked for the best interests of his spiritual children. He began a line of thought in 2 Corinthians 2:12–17 that goes to 2 Corinthians 7. While doing so, he reflects on what an authentic ministry for Christ looks like. We can draw so many lessons from Paul's thoughts in that regard.—BSG* for Sabbath Afternoon, August 29.[‡]

2. Read **2 Corinthians 2:12-17.**

[T-BSG:] This ... lesson highlights four important themes:

Spiritual Transformation. Ministry leads to changed lives through the Spirit.

Emotional Honesty. True ministry includes vulnerability and open-heartedness.

Moral Integrity. Ministers are called to holiness and separation from worldly

compromise.

Relational Reconciliation. Ministry seeks restored relationships through truth and grace.—T-BSG* 132.†‡

Background of Letters of Recommendation

[T-BSG:] **Letters of Recommendation in the Greco-Roman World:** As a wealthy, cosmopolitan city in the Roman Empire with an ethnically and socially diverse population, Corinth reflected the values of Mediterranean societies of the period, emphasizing honor, shame, status, and public recognition. **Wealthy patrons supported clients and gained influence, often expecting public praise and loyalty in return.** Skilled orators were idolized. People were drawn to speakers who were eloquent, entertaining, and self-promoting. Many so-called “super-apostles” fit this mold.

Paul deliberately avoided worldly eloquence or manipulation (see *1 Cor. 2:1–5*). He ministered in weakness and humility, emphasizing the power of the Spirit, not human wisdom. **Paul’s humble ministry, filled with sacrifice and suffering, clashed** with Corinthian values of power, charisma, and status.

In such a climate, letters of recommendation were important. “Such letters were well known in the Greco-Roman world and functioned against the backdrop of Mediterranean concepts of honor and shame. Travelers often carried letters of recommendation that their friends had written for them in order to request a kindness or favor, such as hospitality, help, or employment. The letter writer commended the traveler and essentially asked the recipient to trust his or her judgment about the bearer’s character. **Recipients of letters of recommendation understood their obligation to treat the letter-bearer in the same way they would treat the writer.** Such letters usually included features common to other Graeco-Roman letters, such as an opening, closing, and salutations.”—Derek R. Brown and Wendy Widder with E. Tod Twist, “2 Corinthians,” in *Lexham Research Commentary*, ed. John D. Barry (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), notes on 2 Cor. 3:1–3, Logos digital edition.

Paul states that he did not come with any such letters (*2 Cor. 3:1*), but that his letter of recommendation could be “read” in the existence of the Corinthian church itself: **“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all”** (*2 Cor. 3:2, ESV*). Ministry in Corinth meant ministering against the grain—specifically, against a culture obsessed with power, status, and self-promotion. Paul modeled a Spirit-dependent, sacrificial, and authentic ministry that looked weak by worldly standards but pointed to the glory of Christ.—T-BSG* 133.†‡§ [Would you accept a tentmaker as your pastor?][‡]

Spiritual Transformation—Fruits of an Authentic Christian Ministry

3. *What is the best evidence of an authentic ministry?*

[BSG:] Paul did not bear ... letters [of recommendation]. The Spirit’s transformative power in the lives of the Corinthians was proof of his

authentic ministry. Yet, Paul was sure that it was not through his intelligence or efforts that the church in Corinth came into being (2 Cor. 3:4–6). He was not involved in self-promotion (2 Cor. 3:5, 1 Cor. 2:2).—BSG* for Sunday.†§

4. What do you think of Paul's description of his ministry as found in 2 Corinthians 3-7?

5. Read **2 Corinthians 3:1-9** which contrasts the ministry of Moses with Paul's in Corinth.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **The conversion of sinners and their sanctification through the truth is the strongest proof a minister can have that God has called him to the ministry.** The evidence of his apostleship is written upon the hearts of those converted, and is witnessed to by their renewed lives. Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. A minister is greatly strengthened by these seals of his ministry.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 328.1.††

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6. **Considering what you know about Paul's interaction with the Corinthians and the growth of that church, do you think Paul made a wise choice in talking about Jesus Christ, especially His death on the cross? (1 Corinthians 2:2; compare John 13:35)**

7. **How do you think the people of Corinth viewed the Corinthian Christians?**

8. Read **2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6**. How different from other Corinthians were the members?

9. Did Paul need letters of recommendation from someone else, maybe the church at Antioch, in order to begin his ministry at Corinth? Or, was the transformation brought about in the lives of the Corinthian believers all the recommendation that he needed? Paul, of course, recognized that this was not his work, but **really the Holy Spirit's work**. And that discussion by Paul ends with this marvelous verse.

2 Corinthians 3:18: All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition (2 Corinthians 3:18). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].‡ [How does that work?]*

[EGW:] **It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence.** Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 555.1.†† [How could we implement that?]*

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10. So, what is required to demonstrate that someone's ministry is valid? First of all, it requires **evidence of spiritual transformation in the lives of those who are "converted."**

[T-BSG:] In 2 Corinthians 3:7–9, Paul contrasts two ministries: the ministry

of death versus the ministry of the Spirit.

Old Covenant (Law) [Promised by the people]	New Covenant (Spirit) [Promised by God]
Written on stone	Written on hearts
Brings condemnation	Brings righteousness
Glory that fades	Glory that increases
Leads to death [Shows sin!]	Gives life

Paul is not downplaying the law or calling it bad. Indeed, the law isn't bad (how could it be, when it is given by God!); rather, **it reveals sin and condemns evil**. The Spirit, through Christ, transforms and justifies. The glory of the Spirit's ministry surpasses even the glory of Moses' face on Sinai. All ministry must be Christ-centered to draw people into the life, righteousness, and glory of Christ (*expanded further in 2 Corinthians 3:18* [as quoted just above]). Strategy without the Spirit is just noise.—*T-BSG** 134.^{†‡§} [Review the story of Moses at Sinai as recorded in Exodus 19-24.][‡] [BSG:] Paul is talking about two different responses, by believers and unbelievers, to the gospel. He is not talking about different gospels, one in the Old Testament and a different one in the New—for there is only one gospel, offered by God, “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (*2 Tim. 1:9, NKJV*).—*BSG** for Sunday.^{‡§} [How do we respond to the gospel?][‡]

11. Paul was challenging his new believers in Corinth to contrast what happened with Moses and the children of Israel, who disbelieved and rebelled, with what happened with the Corinthian Christians in their acceptance of the message he carried from Christ. It was a ministry of the Spirit who gives life.
12. ***How do you feel about Paul's comparison between the laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai and disregarded by the children of Israel versus the Spirit-given laws in the New Testament? Do we need to know more about the Corinthian members?***
13. ***We need to notice very clearly that the old covenant failed because it was the people who promised to keep it! See Exodus 19:8; 24:3,7. Didn't God know that the people's promises would be useless? Why do you think God allowed them to make those promises? Did they think that those promises would give them salvation?***
14. **The Holy Spirit makes His changes in the lives of individuals.** It is not a matter of writing on stone or on paper. This was true even in the times of the Old Testament.
15. Read **Jeremiah 31:33-34** and **Ezekiel 36:26-27**. What evidence do you think Paul saw in the lives of the Corinthians that showed him that they had new hearts or new minds?
16. Do you agree with the words in Ezekiel 36 that the law alone kills (**through exposing sin**)? The Spirit gives life (through regeneration and grace). The competence for ministry is something God imparts, not something we earn or inherit. Did Paul see John 13:35?

Spiritual Treasure in Pots of Clay

17. What do you think Paul meant when he said that he had **spiritual treasure in clay pots**?

2 Corinthians 4:1-6: ¹God in his mercy has given us this work to do, and so we do not become discouraged. ²We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's good conscience. ³For if the gospel we preach is hidden, it is hidden only from those who are being lost. ⁴They do not believe, because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. He [Satan] keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of **Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.** ⁵For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†} [How many evil angels opposed Paul?][‡]

18. Paul recognized that he was fighting in the midst of the great controversy over God's character and government. The god of this world, Satan himself, is doing everything he can to prevent the spread of the gospel. **The truth being carried by Paul in his "clay pot" was the truth about Jesus Christ who was the exact likeness of God.**

19. Paul felt that he was nothing more than a clay pot which he carried on his body—visible to those who interacted with him—evidence of what he had been through in order to stand up for the truth about Jesus Christ. (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.)

20. One of the results of recognizing that we are simply clay pots, trying to present the truth about God, is that the glory goes to God Himself.

21. ***How can we, living in the 21st century, know if our ministers are doing what Paul did? What proof can we see that their ministry is authentic? Know "by their fruit!"***

Suffering for Christ with the Resultant Glory

22. Paul suffered in order to present the truth to the Corinthians and later to the Ephesians.

23. Read **2 Corinthians 4:7-18**. Would you be willing to go through the experiences that Paul went through to try to spread the gospel to other people? Paul concluded by saying:

2 Corinthians 4:18b: What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever.—*GNB-TEV*.^{*} [Is that an idea that came from Plato?][‡]
[EGW:] [Regarding Martin Luther:] In a letter addressed to his friends at Prague he said: "My brethren, ... I am departing with a safe-conduct from the king to meet my numerous and mortal enemies.... I confide altogether in the all-powerful God, in my Saviour [*sic*-British spelling]; I trust that He will listen to your ardent prayers, that He will infuse His prudence and His wisdom into my mouth, in order that I may resist them; and that He will accord me His Holy Spirit to fortify me in His truth, so that I may face with courage, temptations, prison, and, if necessary, a cruel death. Jesus Christ suffered for His well-beloved; and therefore ought we to be astonished that He has left us His example, in order that we may ourselves endure with patience all things for our own salvation? He is God, and we are His

creatures; He is the Lord, and we are His servants; **He is Master of the world, and we are contemptible mortals—yet He suffered! Why, then, should we not suffer also, particularly when suffering is for us a purification?** Therefore, beloved, if my death ought to contribute to His glory, pray that it may come quickly, and that He may enable me to support all my calamities with constancy. But if it be better that I return amongst you, let us pray to God that I may return without stain—that is, that I may not suppress one tittle of the truth of the gospel, in order to leave my brethren an excellent example to follow. Probably, therefore, you will nevermore behold my face at Prague; but should the will of the all-powerful God deign [stoop beneath His dignity] to restore me to you, let us then advance with a firmer heart in the knowledge and the love of His law.”—Bonnechose, vol. 1, pp. 147, 148.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 105.1.[†] [Luther was “kidnapped” by friends to save him from sure death at the hands of his enemies!][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.454&index=0>][‡]

24. Paul recognized that at any time he could die for his effort of preaching the truth. Eventually, of course, he was beheaded in Rome at the order of Nero. However, Paul knew that death, and the world of the dead, would eventually come to an end. See Revelation 20:14 and Revelation 21:4.
25. Paul continually reminded the Corinthians that while things may be difficult in this life, a glorious future is ahead for those who are faithful to God.

A “Tent” for Us on This Earth? Or, a House in Heaven?

2 Corinthians 5:1-10: ¹For we know that when this tent we live in—our body here on earth—is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever. ²And now we sigh, so great is our desire that our home which comes from heaven should be put on over us; ³by being clothed with it we shall not be without a body. ⁴While we live in this earthly tent, we groan with a feeling of oppression; it is not that we want to get rid of our earthly body, but that we want to have the heavenly one put on over us, so that what is mortal will be transformed by life. ⁵God is the one who has prepared us for this change, and he gave us his Spirit as the guarantee of all that he has in store for us....

¹⁰For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life.—Good News Bible-TEV.*[†]

26. It is important for us to realize that whatever we may be going through, we need to keep in mind that before us is the marvelous resurrection and eternal life with God.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: ⁵¹⁻⁵²Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed.—*Good News Bible-TEV.*[†]*

A Christ-Centered Ministry and Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:11-15: ¹¹We know what it means to fear the Lord, and so we try to persuade others. God knows us completely, and I hope that in your hearts you know me as well. ¹²We are not trying again to recommend ourselves to you; rather, we are trying to give you a good reason to be proud of us, so that you will be able to answer those who boast about people's appearance and not about their character. ¹³Are we really insane? It is for God's sake. Or are we sane? Then it is for your sake. ¹⁴**We are ruled by the love of Christ, now that we recognize that one man died for everyone, which means that all share in his death.** ¹⁵**He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for him who died and was raised to life for their sake.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

27. ***What is your understanding of the idea that one Man died for everyone? Does that mean that, somehow, we all share in His death?***

28. Paul wanted to make it very clear that his ministry was Christ-centered as opposed to the self-focused ministry of his "opponents."

29. ***Paul said that he boasted about the cross. What do you think that meant as far as the Corinthians were concerned?***

2 Corinthians 5:16-21: ¹⁶No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so. ¹⁷Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. ¹⁹**Our message is that God was making all human beings his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.** [Compare Jeremiah 31:34.]

²⁰**Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!** ²¹**Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.**—*GNB-TEV*.*††
[Underlining of text is added for emphasis.]‡

30. ***Notice in this passage the idea which was originally clearly spelled out in Jeremiah 31:34 that God did not keep an account of their sins. Is it really true that God does not keep an account of our sins? What does that mean? He "counts" our "hair"!***

31. Is it really possible for Christ to share our sin? Or, for us to share His righteousness? See 2 Corinthians 5:21 as quoted just above.

Colossians 1:19-23: ¹⁹**For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God.** ²⁰**Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.**

²¹At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. ²²But now, **by means of the physical**

death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence. ²³You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and must not allow yourselves to be shaken from the hope you gained when you heard the gospel. It is of this gospel that I, Paul, became a servant—this gospel which has been preached to everybody in the [Mediterranean] world.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†‡} [Underlining of text is added for emphasis.][‡]

32. Notice very clearly in this passage that God used the experience of **Christ's life and death on this earth to bring the whole universe back to Himself**. Paul went on to say that "by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence." (Colossians 1:22, *GNB-TEV**) What is the mechanism for that? How does the cross make us "holy, pure and faultless"?
33. It is important to notice in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 that the emphasis is on reconciliation. It concludes again with the idea that God did not keep an account of their sins (or our sins), and He has given us a message which tells us how He makes us His friends.
34. ***What does knowledge of the life and death of Christ do for you personally? Does it pay for your sins? If so, how does that work? Does that knowledge change us?***
35. The life and death of Jesus give us a clear choice: (1) We can choose to follow Him and ask the Holy Spirit to help us live lives following the example of His life, or (2) We will die the kind of death He died, separated from God the only Source of life. **On the cross, Jesus demonstrated what sin does to people** and how the wicked will die in the end!

[EGW:] **As a church, we have received great light. This light the Lord has entrusted to us for the benefit and blessing of the world. To us has been given the ministry of reconciliation. With power from on high we are to beseech men to be reconciled to God.** We are encouraged to pray for success, with the divine assurance that our prayers will be heard and answered. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." [Matthew 18:19, 20.] "Ask of Me, and I will answer your requests."—Ellen G. White, *Letter 32, 1903*, par. 15, *Letters and Manuscripts*,* vol. 18 (1903), 1.474.^{†‡Ω}

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Emotional Honesty—A Call to Holiness

36. Paul had a definite goal in mind when he was writing to the Corinthians.
37. Read **2 Corinthians 6:3-10**.

[EGW:] **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.** Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 177.1.[‡] **[How many today have a correct picture of God? Do we?]**[‡]

38. In 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1, Paul pointed out very insightfully what happens if we allow our lives to be influenced by the pagan, unchristian influences that surround us. Paul went on to say that if you have been reconciled to God as a Christian, you will end up being reconciled to your neighbors as well. To what kind of influences are we exposed?

[BSG:] Paul emphasizes in this passage the importance of affection and love within the church (1 Cor. 6:11–13). **The evidence that people have been reconciled to God is that they seek reconciliation with one another. Indeed, they become, as it were, agents of horizontal reconciliation.**

Next, the call to holiness is given by means of six appeals, namely, (1) “*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers*” (2 Cor. 6:14, NKJV); (2) “*‘Come out from among them’*” (2 Cor. 6:17, NKJV); (3) “*‘Be separate’*” (2 Cor. 6:17, NKJV); (4) “*‘Do not touch what is unclean’*” (2 Cor. 6:17, NKJV); (5) “*Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit*” (2 Cor. 7:1, ESV); (6) “*Make holiness perfect in the fear of God*” (2 Cor. 7:1, RSV; *emphasis supplied*). **These exhortations show that a holy God requires a holy life and separation from idolatry.**

On the other hand, the passage also brings seven promises that highlight the role of the Christian church as a holy temple: (1) “*‘I will dwell in them’*”; (2) “*‘[I will] walk among them’*”; (3) “*‘I will be their God’*”; (4) “*‘They shall be My people’*”; (5) “*‘I will receive you’*”; (6) “*‘I will be a Father to you’*”; (7) “*‘You shall be My sons and daughters’*” (2 Cor. 6:16, 17, 18, NKJV).

Notice that the four promises in 2 Corinthians 6:16 are the basis for the three imperatives in 2 Corinthians 6:17 (see the word “*therefore*” at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 6:17). This demonstrates that **holiness is not the result of one’s efforts but the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart.**

Although holiness results from God, **believers must do their part and reject idolatry and every impure practice.**—BSG* for Wednesday.^{†‡Ω§}

39. Paul then went on to describe in intimate detail his appeal to the Corinthians. He opened up his heart to them. Paul did not hide his feelings for the Corinthians; he wanted them to understand what it meant to be a real Christian. Furthermore, such ministry requires moral integrity from the ministers of Christ, not only to preach the truth, but also to live the truth.
40. That involves relational reconciliation. **True ministers of Christ will seek to reestablish broken relationships not only between humans and God, but also between humans and their neighbors.**

God Provides Comfort and Joy

41. Read **2 Corinthians 7**. In this chapter we see Paul’s response when he received the word from Titus which he brought from the Corinthians that they had accepted Paul’s message of reproof and were anxious to have Paul come back to them. Paul must have felt an incredible relief when he heard that message. It was a kind of comfort and joy that maybe only a minister of Christ can experience.
42. **As a Christian who seeks to share the gospel with others, have you ever**

experienced something like what happened to Paul?

43. Read *The Acts of the Apostles* 323-334, “The Message Heeded.”

(<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p127.1427&index=0>)

[EGW:] Christ suffered in order that through faith in him our sins might be pardoned. He became man’s substitute and surety, himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free, and return to our allegiance to God through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour [sic-British spelling]. He is our only hope of salvation. Through his sacrifice we who are now on probation are prisoners of hope. **We are to reveal to the universe, to the world fallen and to worlds unfallen, that there is forgiveness with God, that through the love of God we may be reconciled to God. Man repents, becomes contrite in heart, believes in Christ as his atoning sacrifice, and realizes that God is reconciled to him.**—Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies On Education** 223.1 [1897].^{†‡}

(<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p103.894&index=0>)[†]

[EGW:] Both Paul and Barnabas had a tender regard for those who had recently accepted the gospel message under their ministry, and they longed to see them once more. This solicitude Paul never lost. Even when in distant mission fields, far from the scene of his earlier labors, he continued to bear upon his heart the burden of urging these converts to remain faithful, **“perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** 2 Corinthians 7:1. Constantly he tried to help them **to become self-reliant, growing Christians, strong in faith, ardent in zeal, and wholehearted in their consecration to God and to the work of advancing His kingdom.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 201.2.^{†‡}

(<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p127.884&index=0>)[†]

44. Consider and discuss these questions:

[BSG:] 1. **Paul refers to us as “jars of clay” containing the gospel treasure (2 Cor. 4:7, ESV). How can the fact that the human condition is weak, frail, and filled with limitations enhance rather than undermine the proclamation of the gospel?**

2. What does it mean to be a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV)? How does this affect our daily lives? How has Christ made you a new creature?

3. In 2 Corinthians 6:4, 5, Paul provides a long list of hardships for the gospel’s sake. How did he respond to his sufferings (see 2 Cor. 6:6, 7)? How does this help you respond to yours?

4. Paul contrasts godly sorrow with worldly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). In what manner may sorrow relate to repentance? How would you describe godly sorrow in contrast to worldly sorrow?—BSG* for Friday, September 4.^{‡§}

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