

INTRODUCTION

- * In his second epistle to the church of Corinth, Paul has been seeking to encourage the Corinthian believers regarding their position in Christ and the purpose of God as they face afflictions. Through afflictions, we have the opportunity to receive the encouragement of God and, subsequently, to dispense that same encouragement to others who are experiencing afflictions. Afflictions are a means by which we can give testimony to the greatness of our God!
- * With this in mind, Paul transitions his exhortation to the testimony of the believers in Macedonia and how they handled the afflictions with which they were faced. Paul's goal is to inspire the believers of Corinth to prove themselves faithful regarding the commitments that they made - in spite of the circumstances which they found themselves.
- * Afflictions test our resolve. In Jesus' parable of the sower, the seed and the soil, we are told of four different types of soil: the hard soil, the rocky soil, the thorny soil and the prepared soil. Only the prepared soil produced fruit; each of the others did not. The "hard soil" heart rejects the Word immediately. The "rocky" soil heart seemed to accept the Word but when trials and afflictions came it moved away. The "thorny soil" heart, as well, seemed to receive the Word but was choked out by temptations of the flesh and world. Paul began this string of sub-thought in verse one of chapter 6 with the comment, "We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."
- * In this section, we see again the tender balance between faith and works. As James states, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:17-19,26)

INSTRUCTION**I. PAUL'S C _____ IN THE CORINTHIANS (7:13-16)**

A. As a Result of their H _____ (cf. 7:13-14)

B. As a Result of their O _____ (cf. 7:15-16)

II. PAUL'S C _____ TO THE CORINTHIANS (8:1-24)**A. The Testimony of the Macedonians (8:1-5)**

1. THEIR S _____ (v. 1-2)

2. THEIR P _____ (v. 3-4)

3. THEIR M _____ (v. 5; Romans 12:1)

B. The Testing of the Corinthians (8:6-24)

1. S _____ IS EVIDENCED BY DILIGENCE (v. 6-21)

a. The Ex _____ of Christ (v. 8-9)

b. The Ex _____ of Paul (v. 10-21; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 3:6,14; 12:1-2; Philippians 1:6)

2. D _____ IS EVIDENCED BY DEEDS (v. 22-24)

INTROSPECTION

- * Are you truly a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- * What evidence, or proof, is there in your life that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?
- * How do you respond to trials and afflictions?
- * Have you honestly given yourself whole-heartedly to the Lord?
- * Is there a need to change the way you think ... and therefore act?

INTERACTION ... Thoughts & Questions to ponder for later discussion

It may be helpful to re-read the passage before the discussion.

- * Read Ephesians 2:8-10; John 8:31-32; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:18-20. What do these passages teach regarding discerning true believers?
- * What are some other passages that need to be added to the discussion?