

Through the Bible

# 2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS-II

Zac Poonen



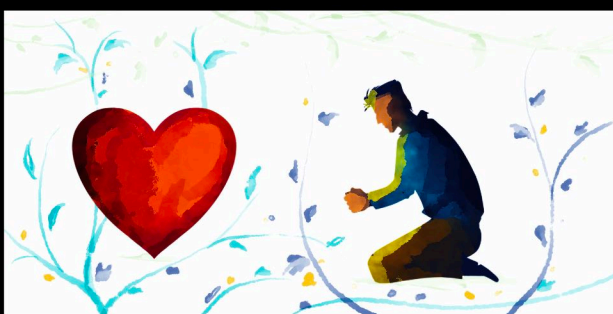
Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH**

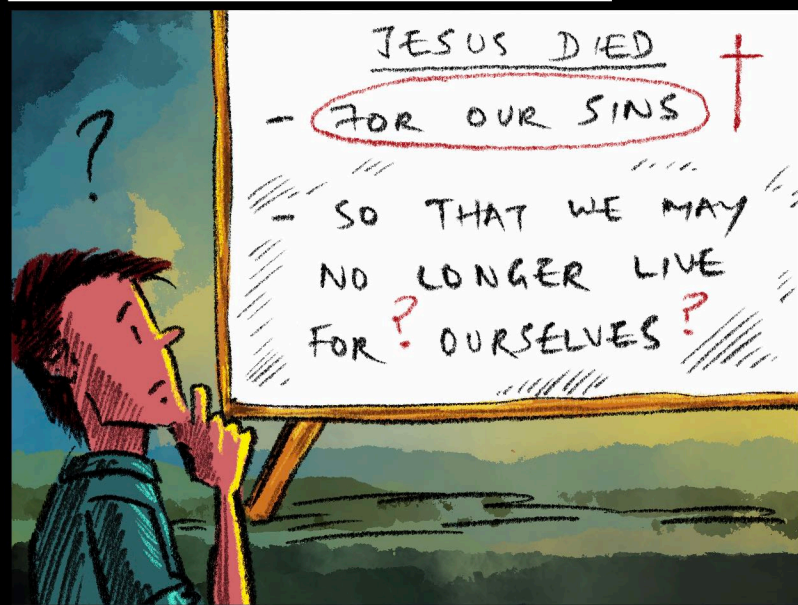
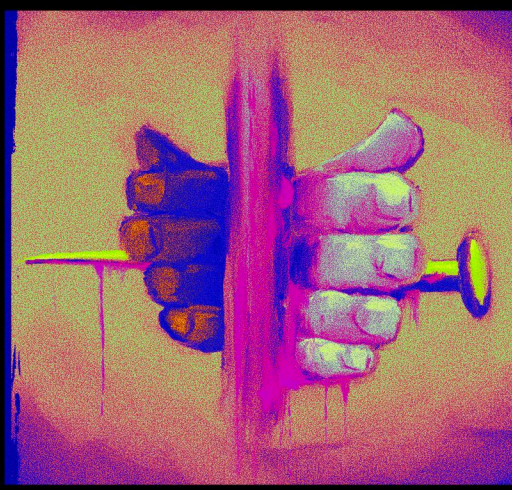
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THEN PAUL SAYS, "IT IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT **CONTROLS US**" (5:14). THESE **TWO THINGS** MENTIONED HERE SHOULD BE THE **MOTIVATING FORCES** IN OUR LIFE -- A **REVERENTIAL FEAR** OF THE LORD AND THE **LOVE OF CHRIST**.

THEN PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT THE GREAT TRUTH THAT **WE ALL DIED WITH CHRIST** WHEN HE DIED ON THE **CROSS** (5:14). HE SPEAKS ABOUT THIS TRUTH IN **ROMANS, CORINTHIANS AND GALATIANS**. THEREFORE, WE CAN **NO LONGER LIVE FOR OURSELVES**, BUT FOR **HIM ALONE** (5:15).



ANY BELIEVER WHO LIVES FOR HIMSELF HAS NOT REALLY UNDERSTOOD THE FULL PURPOSE FOR WHICH CHRIST DIED. SATAN'S AIM IS TO **BLIND OUR EYES** TO THE FULL TRUTH OF GOD.



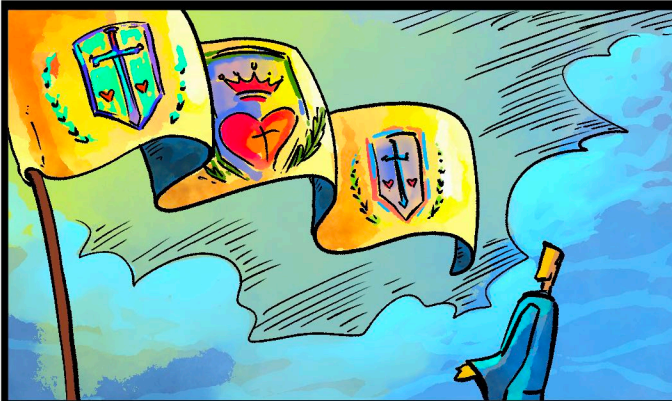
WHEN WE PUT THESE **TWO VERSES** TOGETHER -- 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 5:15 -- WE SEE THAT THE **ROOT OF ALL SIN IS SELF-CENTREDNESS**. A MAN LIVES IN **SIN** BECAUSE HE LIVES FOR **HIMSELF**.

AS LONG AS THE **ROOT OF THE TREE** HAS NOT BEEN **CHOPPED OFF**, IT WILL **KEEP ON PRODUCING FRUIT**. IF YOU LAY THE **AXE TO THE ROOT (SELF-CENTREDNESS)**, THEN YOU **WON'T HAVE TO KEEP CUTTING OFF** THE **EVIL FRUIT (SIN)** THAT COMES FORTH.



THE **VAST MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS** HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD THAT WE ARE **NOT TO LIVE FOR OURSELVES** ANY MORE. THEY **SKIP OVER VERSES** LIKE 5:15 AND JUMP TO 5:17, "**OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY AND ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW** -- A **NEW CREATION**." BUT LET ME ASK YOU, "**WHAT ARE THE OLD THINGS** THAT HAVE PASSED AWAY, OR THAT **SHOULD HAVE PASSED AWAY?**" HAS "**LIVING FOR SELF**" PASSED AWAY? HAVE OUR **AMBITIONS AND OUR GOALS** BECOME **NEW?**





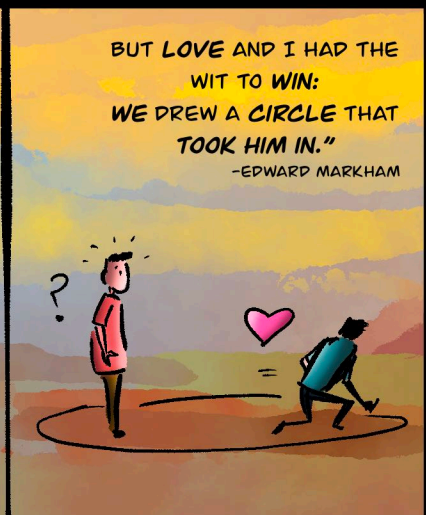
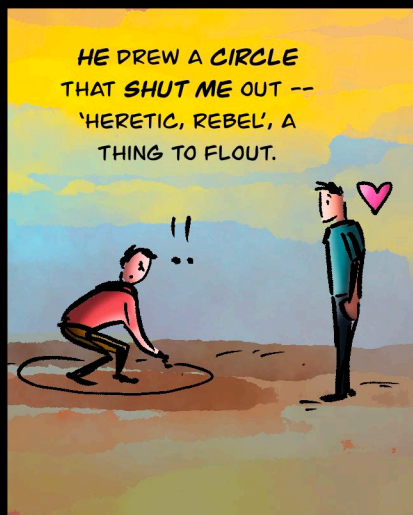
IN 5:20, WE READ, "WE ARE **AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST**, AND WE ARE **ENTREATING YOU**." IT IS A **TREMENDOUS** CALLING TO BE AN **AMBASSADOR FOR JESUS CHRIST**. THERE IS A **DIGNITY** ABOUT A **TRUE CHILD OF GOD**.



WHILE **EARTHLY AMBASSADORS OF RICH COUNTRIES** WOULD NEVER **BEG**, IT **GRIEVES MY HEART** WHEN I SEE THE NAME OF **JESUS CHRIST DISHONOURED** BY THE **UNDIGNIFIED, CHEAP** WAY IN WHICH **CHRISTIAN WORKERS BEG FOR MONEY ON TV**



IN **PSALM 50:12**, THE **LORD SAYS**, "IF I WERE **HUNGRY** I WOULD NOT TELL YOU, FOR THE **WORLD IS MINE**, AND **ALL IT CONTAINS**." THAT'S WHAT A **TRUE SERVANT OF GOD BELIEVES**. HE TELLS HIS **NEEDS TO GOD**. IN 6:3--10, PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT HOW HE CONDUCTED HIMSELF AS AN **AMBASSADOR OF CHRIST**



THE **CORINTHIANS WERE NARROW HEARTED** TOWARDS PAUL. BUT PAUL'S HEART WAS **WIDE OPEN** TO THEM (6:11). WHEN **OTHERS EXCLUDE US FROM THEIR CIRCLE**, LET US HAVE THE **WISDOM** TO DRAW A **BIGGER CIRCLE** THAT **INCLUDES ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE**.



IN 6:14, WE ARE GIVEN A WARNING **NOT TO BE UNEQUALLY YOKED** TOGETHER WITH **UNBELIEVERS**. THERE WAS A LAW IN THE **OLD TESTAMENT** THAT AN **OX AND A DONKEY SHOULD NOT BE YOKED TOGETHER** (DEUTERONOMY 22:10).



WE MUST NOT BE **PARTNERS IN BUSINESS** WITH **UNBELIEVERS** -- BECAUSE **THEY MAY WANT TO CHEAT** OR DO SOME OTHER **UNRIGHTEOUS** THINGS THAT YOU **CAN'T AGREE WITH**.



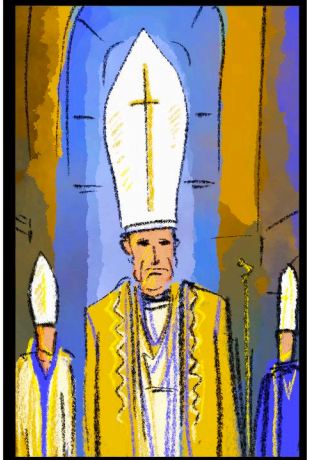
AND IF YOU **MARRY SOMEONE WHO IS NOT A BELIEVER** AND WHO DOES NOT HAVE YOUR **SENSE OF VALUES**, AND YOUR **VISION** AND YOUR **AMBITIONS**, IT WILL BE AN **UNEQUAL YOKE**.





SO WE ARE COMMANDED TO **SEPARATE** FROM ALL SUCH **ALLIANCES**. "THEREFORE, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE**" (6:17). WE MINGLE WITH **UNBELIEVERS** IN THE **WORLD** BUT WE CANNOT BECOME **PARTNERS** WITH THEM.

THERE ARE **BELIEVERS** IN **SOME DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES** WHO KNOW THAT THEIR **LEADERS AND BISHOPS** ARE **UNCONVERTED**. WHY DO THEY STAY IN SUCH A **CHURCH** THEN? IF THE **LEADER IS NOT BORN AGAIN**, THE **BIBLE** CALLS HIM "A **CHILD OF THE DEVIL**" (1 JOHN 3:10) -- EVEN IF HE IS AN **ARCH-BISHOP!**



JESUS SAID, "WHEN A **BLIND MAN LEADS BLIND PEOPLE**, THEY WILL **BOTH FALL INTO A PIT**" (MATTHEW 15:14). IF YOU WANT TO **AVOID THE PIT**, THEN **DON'T FOLLOW A BLIND LEADER**.



IN 7:1, PAUL GOES ON TO SAY, "THEREFORE, HAVING THESE **PROMISES**, BELOVED, LET US **CLEANSE OURSELVES** FROM ALL **DEFILEMENT OF FLESH AND SPIRIT**, PERFECTING **HOLINESS** IN THE **FEAR OF GOD**". THERE IS **EXTERNAL FILTHINESS OF ASSOCIATIONS** , AND **INTERNAL FILTHINESS OF MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES** .. AND WE MUST DO THIS IN THE **FEAR OF GOD** AND NOT IN THE **FEAR OF MEN**.



IN 7:2, PAUL SAYS, "I HAVE A **LOT OF ROOM** IN MY **HEART** FOR YOU. PLEASE MAKE SOME ROOM IN **YOUR HEART** FOR **ME** AS WELL. I HAVE **NEVER TAKEN ADVANTAGE** OF YOU. I HAVE **NEVER WRONGED** YOU. I HAVE **NEVER CORRUPTED** ANY OF YOU." THIS IS THE **TESTIMONY** THAT **EVERY SERVANT OF THE LORD** SHOULD HAVE.



IN 7:10, 11, PAUL REFERS TO THE VERY **STRONG REBUKE** THAT HE HAD GIVEN THEM IN HIS **FIRST LETTER**. HE HAD ASKED THEM TO **PUT A MAN OUT OF THE CHURCH** (WHO WAS **LIVING IN SIN**). THE CHURCH AT CORINTH **TOOK THAT LETTER VERY SERIOUSLY**.



PAUL CAUSED THEM **SORROW** BY HIS LETTER (VERSE 8). SOMETIMES **GOD'S SERVANTS** HAVE TO SPEAK SO **STRONGLY** TO US THAT IT WILL CAUSE US **SORROW**. BUT SUCH **SORROW** WILL LAST ONLY FOR A **LITTLE WHILE**. **SORROW** THAT IS ACCORDING TO THE **WILL OF GOD** WILL PRODUCE A **REPENTANCE** THAT WILL LEAD TO **SALVATION** (VERSE 10).

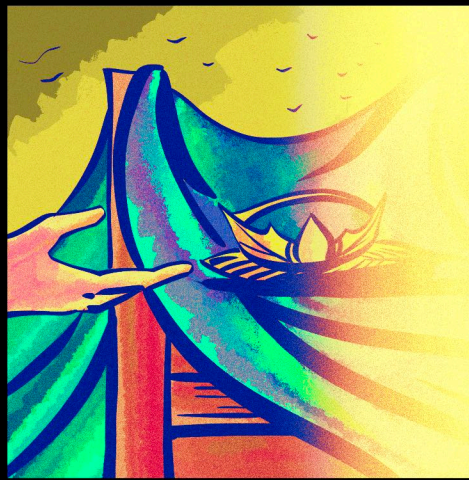




IN CHAPTERS 8 AND 9, PAUL WRITES TO THEM TO COLLECT SOME MONEY FOR THE **POOR SAINTS** IN **JERUSALEM**. HE WAS **NOT** GOING TO TOUCH **ONE CENT** OF THAT **MONEY** HIMSELF. IT IS **PERFECTLY** IN ORDER TO ASK **RICH** BELIEVERS TO GIVE MONEY TO HELP **POOR** BELIEVERS, SO LONG AS **WE DON'T** TAKE ANY PART OF THAT MONEY **OURSELVES**.



WHEN HE **DIDN'T** HAVE ENOUGH MONEY, HE **STITCHED TENTS** AND **EARNED SOMETHING**. SOMETIMES HE WENT **WITHOUT FOOD**. BUT HE WOULD **NOT LOWER** HIS **STANDARDS**.



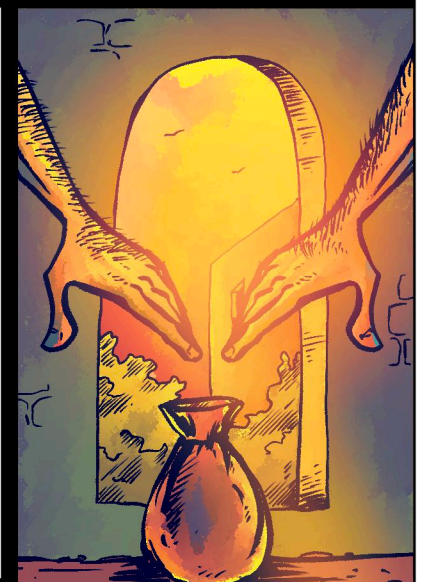
PAUL THEN GIVES THE EXAMPLE OF **JESUS** "YOU KNOW THE **GRACE** OF OUR **LORD JESUS CHRIST** THAT THOUGH HE WAS **RICH**, YET FOR **YOUR SAKE** HE BECAME **POOR**, SO THAT **YOU** THROUGH HIS **POVERTY** MIGHT BECOME **RICH**" (8:9). OUR LORD HAD **EVERYTHING** IN HEAVEN. BUT HE CAME DOWN TO EARTH AND BECAME **POOR**. HE HUNG ON THE **CROSS**, **STRIPPED** OF EVERYTHING, SO THAT **WE** COULD BECOME **RICH**.

WE HAVE BECOME **SPIRITUALLY WEALTHY** THROUGH WHAT **JESUS** DID FOR US. MANY **MONEY-LOVING** PREACHERS HAVE **MISINTERPRETED** THIS VERSE AND ENCOURAGED OTHER EQUALLY **COVETOUS** BELIEVERS TO **PURSU**E AFTER **WEALTH**.



IT IS **EASY** TO TAKE A VERSE OF **SCRIPTURE** AND **MISQUOTE** IT FOR ONE'S OWN **BENEFIT**.

IN 8:20, 21, PAUL SAYS THAT IN DISTRIBUTING THIS **MONEY** TO THE **POOR**, HE WANTS TO BE **CAREFUL** THAT HE DOES IT IN A **TRANSPARENT** WAY, SO THAT **NO-ONE** CAN **ACCUSE** HIM OR **COWORKERS** OF BEING **UNRIGHTEOUS**. SO PAUL SENT **TITUS** AND **ANOTHER BROTHER** TO TRANSPORT THE MONEY TO THE **CHURCH** IN **JERUSALEM** (VERSE 18). IT IS IMPORTANT WHEN DEALING WITH **MONEY** IN THE **CHURCH** THAT AT LEAST **TWO** BELIEVERS WHO HAVE A **GOOD TESTIMONY** HANDLE IT.



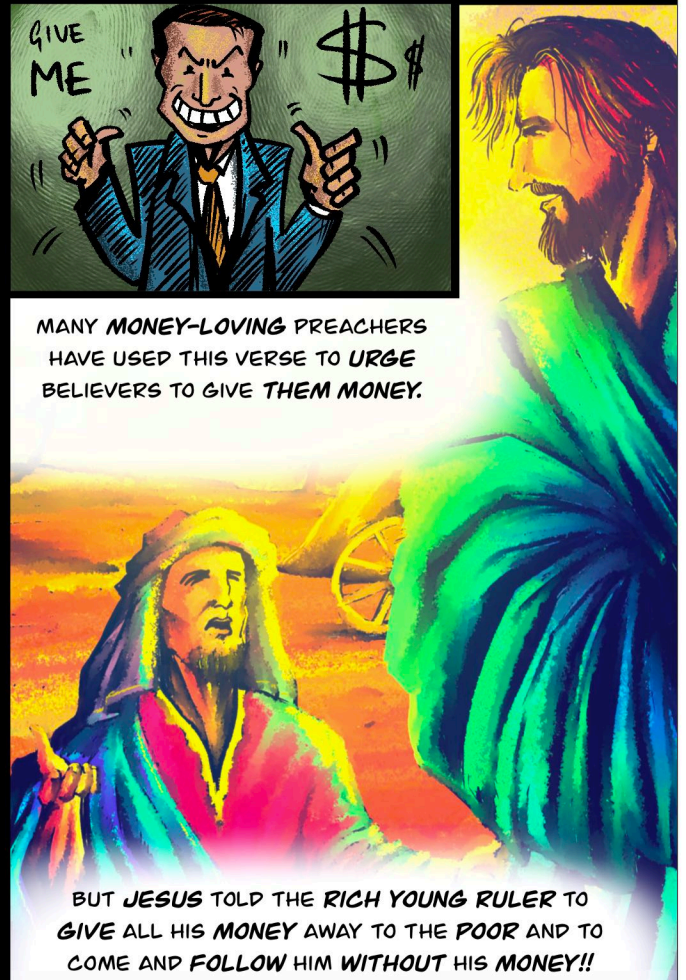




IN 9:6, PAUL AGAIN TALKS ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF **GIVING**. HE SAYS THAT IF WE ARE **MISERLY** IN OUR GIVING, WE WILL **REAP PROPORTIONATELY** TOO. IF YOU SOW JUST A **LITTLE BIT OF SEED**, YOU WILL GET ONLY A **SMALL HARVEST**. IF YOU SOW **PLENTY OF SEED** THEN YOU WILL GET A **BIG HARVEST**.



MANY **MONEY-LOVING** PREACHERS HAVE USED THIS VERSE TO **URGE** BELIEVERS TO GIVE **THEM MONEY**.



BUT **JESUS** TOLD THE **RICH YOUNG RULER** TO **GIVE** ALL HIS **MONEY** AWAY TO THE **POOR** AND TO **COME** AND **FOLLOW** HIM **WITHOUT** HIS **MONEY!!**

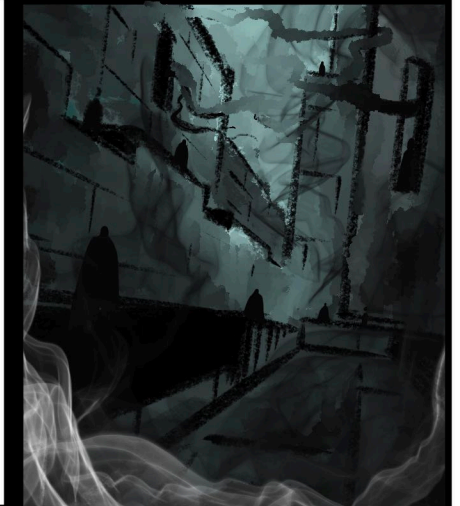


IN 9:7, WE READ THAT "**GOD LOVES** A **CHEERFUL GIVER**." UNDER THE **OLD COVENANT**, THE **EMPHASIS** WAS ON **HOW MUCH** ONE GAVE. UNDER THE **NEW COVENANT** HOWEVER, THE **EMPHASIS** IS ON **HOW** ONE GAVE -- **CHEERFULLY** OR **RELUCTANTLY**.



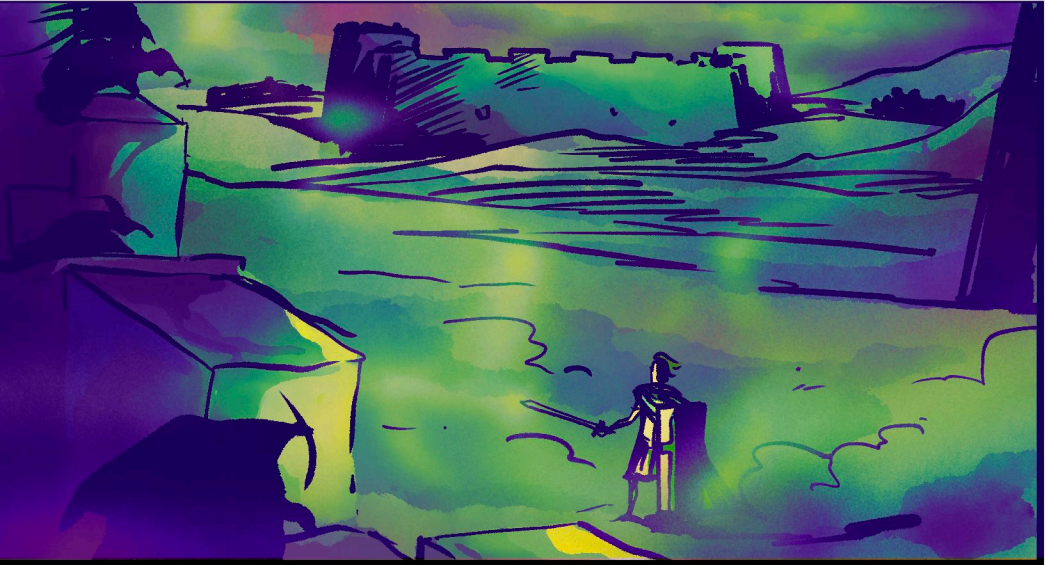
PAUL WAS A **GREAT APOSTLE** AND THESE **CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS** WERE **YOUNG BELIEVERS**. YET HE **HUMBL**ED HIMSELF BEFORE THEM WHEN HE WROTE THESE WORDS TO THEM IN 10:1, "**I URGE** YOU BY THE **MEEKNESS** AND **GENTLENESS** OF **CHRIST**."

HE GOES ON TO SPEAK ABOUT THE "**FORTRESSES** THAT THERE ARE IN OUR **THOUGHT LIFE**" (VERSE 5). THE **LUSTS** IN OUR FLESH HAVE BUILT **DIRTY** AND **SELFISH THOUGHT-PATTERN**, WHICH ARE LIKE **STRONG FORTRESSES**. THEY MAKE US **LIVE SELFISHLY** DURING THE DAY, **SATISFYING** OUR **OWN LUSTS**.





WITH SPIRITUAL WEAPONS GIVEN TO US BY GOD, WE CAN DESTROY THESE FORTRESSES. ONE OF THOSE GREAT WEAPONS IS THE WORD OF GOD WHICH IS POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE FORTRESSES (VERSE 4). AS WE FILL OUR MINDS MORE AND MORE WITH THE WORD OF GOD, WE WILL FIND THAT THESE FORTRESSES GET DEMOLISHED ONE BY ONE -- AND THE SOLDIERS (THOUGHTS) INSIDE THESE FORTRESSES ALSO GET DESTROYED..



THUS WE CAN BRING "EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST."



OUR MIND IS LIKE A BOWL FULL OF DIRTY WATER, BECAUSE WE HAVE PUT A LOT OF MUCK AND RUBBISH INTO IT IN OUR UNCONVERTED DAYS.

BUT IF WE POUR A JUG OF CLEAN WATER INTO THAT BOWL, GRADUALLY THAT WATER OVERFLOWS AND GETS DILUTED. THUS THE WATER IN THE BOWL BECOMES CLEARER AND CLEARER. POURING GOD'S WORD INTO OUR MIND CAN CLEAN UP OUR MINDS SLOWLY, OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS.



BUT IF EVERY NOW AND THEN WE THROW A LITTLE MUCK INTO THAT BOWL AGAIN, THEN THE CLEANING PROCESS GETS DELAYED. WE CAN ASK GOD TO GIVE US GRACE TO BRING EVERY THOUGHT OF OURS CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.



IN 10:13, PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT "NOT BOASTING BEYOND OUR MEASURE." HE SAYS, "GOD HAS APPOINTED A CERTAIN SPHERE FOR MY MINISTRY, AND I DON'T HAVE ANY DESIRE TO GO OUTSIDE THAT SPHERE." JESUS WAS MOSTLY IN ISRAEL. PAUL ALSO UNDERSTOOD HIS SPHERE. MANY PREACHERS TODAY, HOWEVER, DON'T HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR BOUNDARIES. THAT IS WHY THEY CLASH AND COMPETE WITH OTHER PREACHERS.



IN 11:2, 3, PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT HOW HE WANTS TO **PRESENT** THOSE **CORINTHIAN** CHRISTIANS AS A **PURE VIRGIN** TO THE **LORD** ON THE DAY OF "THE **MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB**"

CONSIDER THE STORY OF ABRAHAM'S SERVANT **ELIEZER**, TAKING **REBECCA** ON A **LONG JOURNEY** (OF ABOUT **1500** KILOMETRES FROM UR TO CANAAN) TO **PRESENT HER** TO **ISAAC**. ON THAT JOURNEY, IF ANY **HANDSOME** YOUNG MEN HAD COME AND TRIED TO **WIN** REBECCA'S AFFECTION, ELIEZER WOULD HAVE WARNED REBEKAH SAYING, "**DON'T BE ATTRACTED** BY THESE MEN. I HAVE TO **PRESENT YOU** AS A **PURE VIRGIN** TO **ISAAC**."



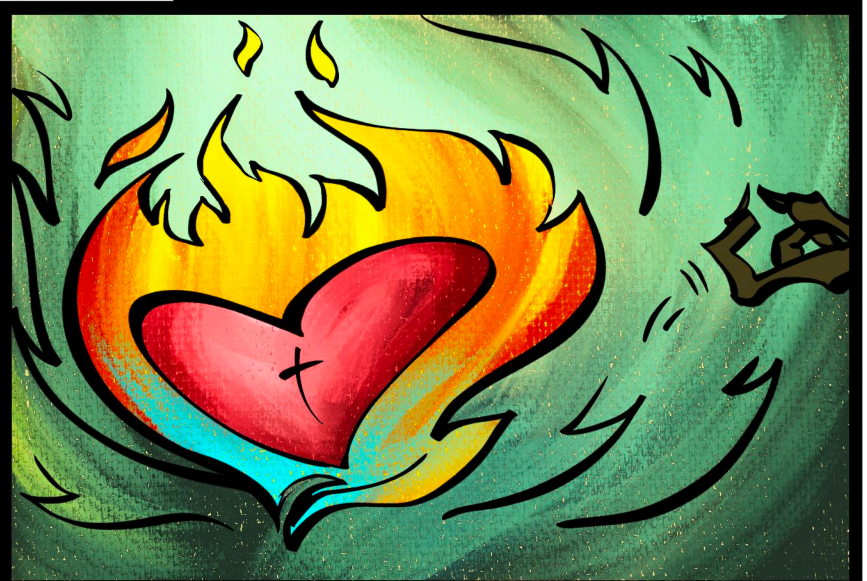
PAUL WANTED TO **PRESERVE** THE **CHURCH** IN CORINTH IN THE **SAME WAY** FOR **JESUS**. THAT IS THE **HOLY JEALOUSY** THAT EVERY **SERVANT OF GOD** MUST HAVE FOR HIS **FLOCK**.



HE MUST TELL THEM, "YOU ARE **RESERVED** FOR **JESUS**. **DON'T BE ATTRACTED** BY **MONEY**, **ILLEGITIMATE SEX**, OR **WORLDLY HONOUR**. THESE WILL **TRY TO ATTRACT** YOU. BUT YOU MUST **RESIST** THEIR **ADVANCES** AND **KEEP YOURSELF PURE**."



THEN PAUL GOES ON TO SAY, "I FEAR THAT **SATAN** WILL COME LIKE HE DID TO **EVE** IN **EDEN**, AND **DRAW YOUR HEARTS** AWAY FROM THAT **SIMPLE AND PURE DEVOTION** TO **CHRIST**." EVERY BELIEVER WHO HAS **LOST HIS DEVOTION** TO **CHRIST** HAS **ALREADY GONE ASTRAY**.



THE **DEVIL** **PERPETUALLY** SEEKS TO LEAD BELIEVERS **ASTRAY** FROM **LOVING JESUS FERVENTLY**. IT IS **NO USE** ENGAGING IN **EVANGELISM** OR **TEACHING** OR ANY OTHER **SERVICE** FOR THE **LORD**, IF WE HAVE **LOST OUR FERVENT LOVE** FOR **CHRIST**. THIS WAS THE **LORD'S ONLY COMPLAINT** AGAINST THE **MESSENGER** AND THE **CHURCH** AT **EPHESUS** (REVELATION 2:4).

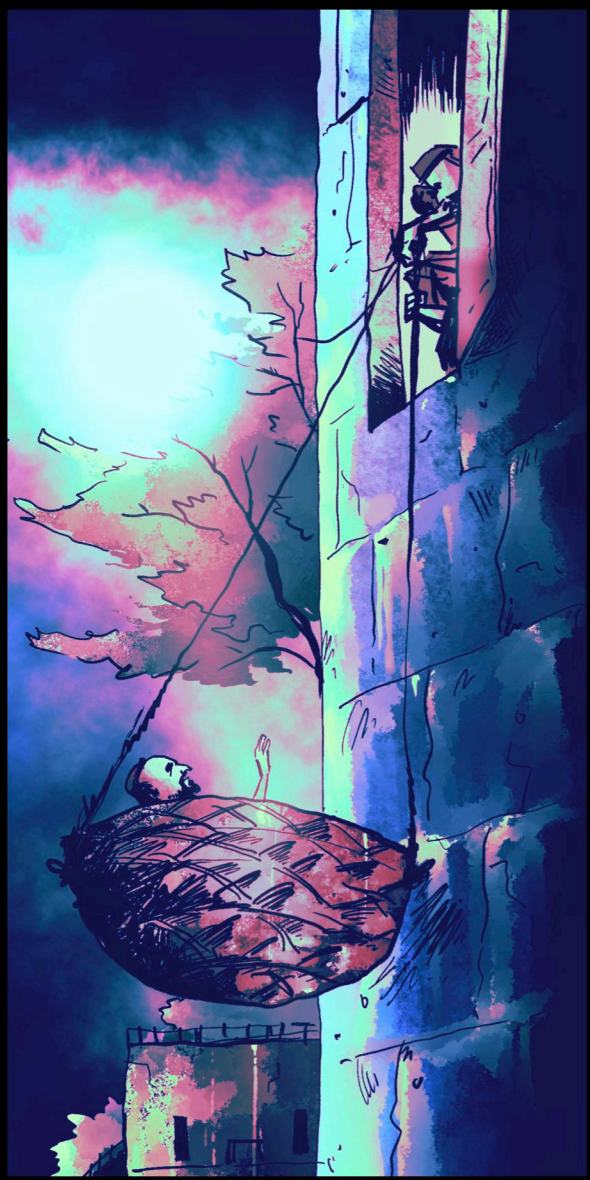




PAUL GOES ON TO SAY "WHEN I WAS PRESENT WITH YOU I WAS NOT A BURDEN TO ANYONE" (11:5--13). HE DID, HOWEVER, OCCASIONALLY, ACCEPT GIFTS FROM THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI (11:8, 9). WHY DID HE MAKE THIS DISTINCTION? BECAUSE MANY BELIEVERS IN CORINTH DID NOT ACCEPT HIS APOSTLESHIP OR HIS MINISTRY.



IN 11:23--33, PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT THE **VARIED TRIALS** THAT HE HAD EXPERIENCED IN HIS **SERVICE** FOR THE LORD -- HIS **IMPRISONMENTS**, THE **BEATINGS** HE HAD RECEIVED BOTH WITH **SCOURGES** AND WITH **RODS**, **SLEEPLESS NIGHTS**, **HUNGER** AND **THIRST**, EXPOSURE TO INCLEMENT **WEATHER**, **DANGERS** FROM **ROBBERS**, ETC. THERE WERE TIMES WHEN HE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH **WARM CLOTHING** TO COVER HIMSELF, OR EVEN ENOUGH **FOOD** TO EAT; AND HE DID **NOT** HAVE THE **MONEY** TO BUY **WARM CLOTHES** AND **FOOD** AT THAT TIME. GOD TOOK HIM THROUGH ALL THIS TO MAKE HIM A **MINI-FORERUNNER** FOR OTHER **CHRISTIANS** WHO WERE **SUFFERING**.



HE SAYS, "ONCE I WAS GOING TO BE **CAPTURED** IN **DAMASCUS** AND THE **BELIEVERS** HAD TO LOWER ME IN A **BASKET** THROUGH A **WINDOW** FOR ME TO **ESCAPE CAPTURE**" (11:32, 33). HE WAS AN **ORDINARY** MAN AND HE **WANTED OTHERS** TO KNOW HIM AS SUCH. "I **DON'T** WANT **ANYONE** TO **THINK MORE HIGHLY** OF ME THAN HE SHOULD", HE SAID (2 CORINTHIANS 12:6 - LIVING).





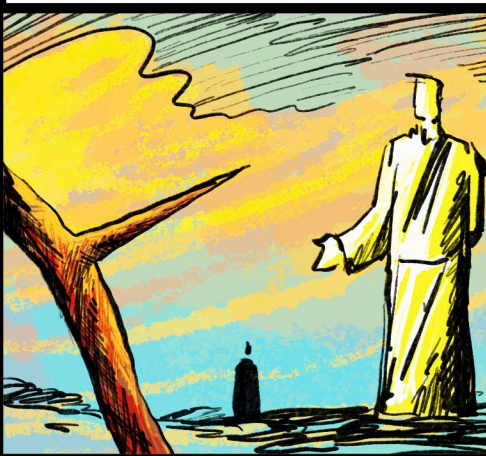
HOW DIFFERENT PAUL WAS FROM MOST SERVANTS OF THE LORD TODAY WHO TRY TO GIVE OTHERS A HIGHER IMPRESSION ABOUT THEMSELVES THAN THEY ACTUALLY ARE.



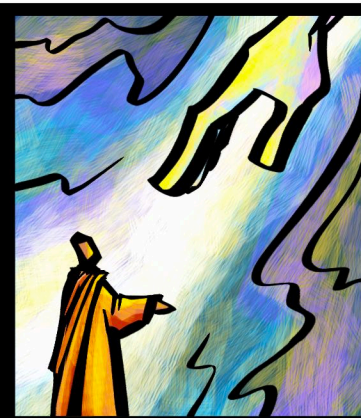
IN 12:1, PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT A TIME WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP BY THE LORD TO THE THIRD HEAVEN. FOR 14 YEARS HE HAD NEVER MENTIONED IT TO ANYONE. THOSE WHO HAVE GENUINE VISIONS WILL FIND THAT THOSE VISIONS ARE (AS PAUL SAID) "SO ASTOUNDING THAT THEY ARE BEYOND A MAN'S POWER TO DESCRIBE OR PUT IN WORDS" AND THEY WILL "NOT BE ALLOWED TO TELL THEM TO OTHERS" (12:4).



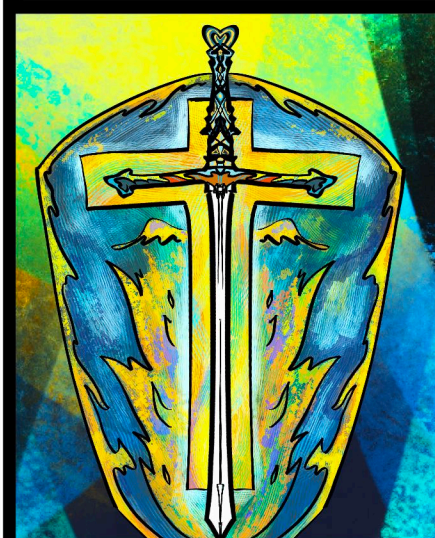
THE VISIONS OF HEAVEN THAT SOME BELIEVERS BOAST ABOUT THESE DAYS ARE FIGMENTS OF THEIR FERTILE IMAGINATION -- SPOKEN IN ORDER TO GET HONOUR FROM OTHERS!



THEN PAUL SPOKE ABOUT A HEAVY TRIAL THAT HE HAD THAT GOD DID NOT REMOVE, EVEN AFTER PERSISTENT PRAYER. PAUL CALLED IT "A THORN IN THE FLESH" AND "A MESSENGER OF SATAN" -- YET IT HAD BEEN "GIVEN BY GOD" (12:7). THE GIFT GOD GAVE PAUL WAS A THORN!!



GOD RESISTS ALL PROUD PEOPLE, SO GOD ALLOWED SATAN'S MESSENGER TO HARASS PAUL AND THUS KEPT HIM CONSTANTLY DEPENDENT ON GOD AND HUMBLE.



GOD DID NOT DELIVER HIM BUT GAVE HIM GRACE INSTEAD, TO BE AN OVERCOMER IN SPITE OF THE THORN. WE CAN BE OVERCOMERS TOO WITH THAT SAME GRACE.



IN 13:4 AND 5, WE READ, "JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED IN WEAKNESS, YET HE LIVES BY THE POWER OF GOD. WE ALSO ARE WEAK IN HIM, YET WE WILL LIVE WITH HIM BECAUSE OF THE POWER OF GOD." A TRUE DISCIPLE IS ONE WHO IS WEAK IN HIMSELF AND WHO LIVES BY GOD'S POWER. AND THAT IS HOW PAUL CONCLUDES THE EPISTLE.