

1

**(Theme slide for this message)**



2

**Perhaps we've seen it in children, the anxiety of separation.**  
**-- Their insecurity to let go of mom can be pretty strong, can't it?**  
**-- Even as adults, most of us still find insecurity hanging on to us.**  
**-- We wonder if we are sufficient for the task at hand.**  
**-- We look at others and marvel at their confidence and even boldness, especially for Christ.**

**TR: But even those who come across as secure, often still have a quiet battle with the affliction of anxious insecurity.**



**BUILT**  
**UP** through suffering?!

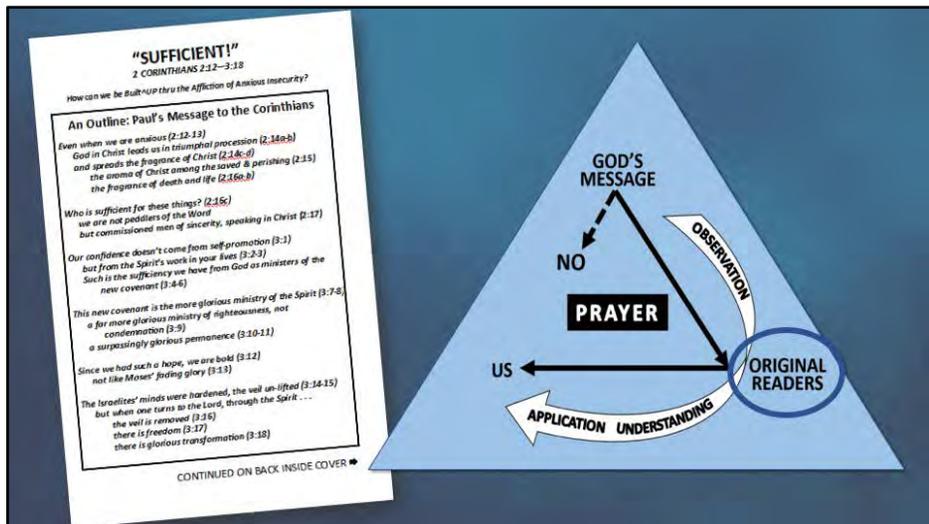
3

***How can we be  
Built^UP thru Anxious Insecurity?***

As we look at 2 Corinthians 2 and 3 today, we want to ask . . . READ SLIDE

- The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, in chapter 1 of this letter, that the afflictions he and his fellow missionaries had faced were allowed by God . . . to teach them not to rely on themselves, but on God.
- Could it be that Paul's anxiety, wondering how his friend Titus had been received by the Corinthians after receiving the painful letter . . .
- . . . and the insecurity he may have confronted as some in the church said he didn't have the resume to be a minister of the gospel . . .
- . . . could it be that we can learn something about being Built^UP through such emotional suffering?

TR: Our study, and the notes in the worship flier, follow the Pathways Bible Study Method.



4

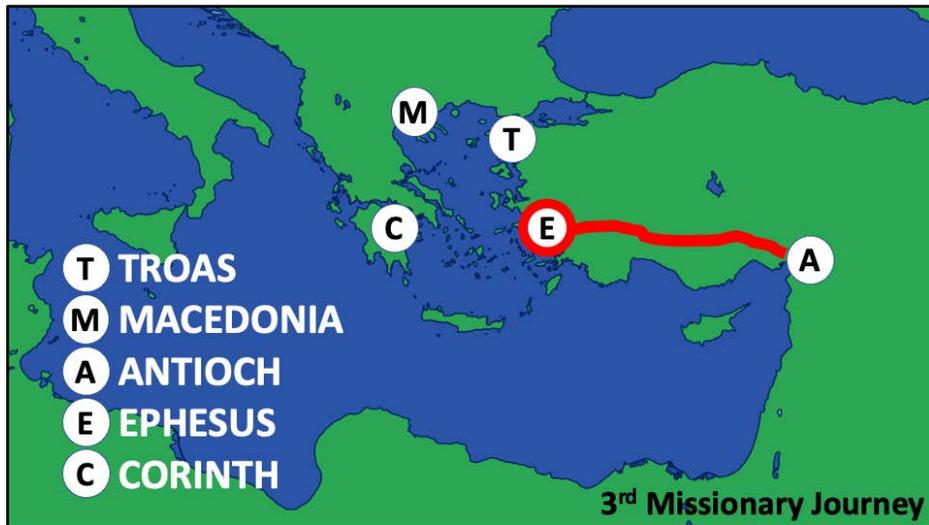
**The first page of notes capture my outline of our passage.  
-- We want to briefly read through and review the text, making observations and seeking understanding of the message God had for the Corinthians, the original readers, through Paul's words.**

**TR: I think it would be most helpful if you pull out the worship flier and have the outline in front of you as we take this critical first step.**



**Before we read, a brief look at the map  
-- The third missionary journey, during the 50's of the first  
century, started in Antioch,**

**TR: And then made its way across what is modern-day Turkey.**



**While in Ephesus, Paul hears things have deteriorated in Corinth.**

**TR: So he decides to make an emergency visit to them, sometimes called the painful visit.**



**This painful visit seems to have been very short and Paul heads back to Ephesus.**

**-- It is from there that he writes the PAINFUL LETTER.**

**TR: Later, Paul continues the missionary journey, moving up to Troas**



8

**TR: and then from there he moves to somewhere in Macedonia**



9

**TR: And this is where we pick up our story.**

**2 Corinthians 2:12-13** *page 1067 in handout Bibles*

When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup>**my spirit was not at rest** because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

*ESV*

10

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 14**

**2 Corinthians 2:14-16b**

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. <sup>15</sup>For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, <sup>16</sup>to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

*ESV*

11

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: My outline reads . . .**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

*Even when we are anxious (2:12-13)*

- *God in Christ leads us in triumphal procession (2:14a-b)*
- *and spreads the fragrance of Christ (2:14c-d)*
  - \* *the aroma of Christ among the saved & perishing (2:15)*
  - \* *the fragrance of death and life (2:16a-b)*

12

### **READ SLIDE**

-- [triumphal procession] – cf. parade welcoming Super Bowl Champs back to their city.

**TR: The joy of being led in triumphal procession AND the responsibility of spreading the fragrance of Christ leads to Paul's question at the end of verse 16 . . .**

**2 Corinthians 2:16c-17**

**Who is sufficient for these things?** <sup>17</sup>For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

*ESV*

13

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: This is the first time we run into the idea of sufficiency, but we will see it again.**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

***Who is sufficient for these things? (2:16c)***

***- we are not peddlers of the Word***

***- but commissioned men of sincerity, speaking in Christ (2:17)***

14

**Paul is contrasting himself as someone commissioned, sincere, and speaking in Christ . . .**

**-- . . . as opposed to [peddlers of the Word]**

**-- Cf. Paul's practice not to take money from those he was sharing the Gospel with (at least not for working with them)**

**TR: These "peddlers of the Word" liked to flaunt their resumes or CVs. Paul makes clear he is not doing that . . .**

**2 Corinthians 3:1-2**

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? <sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.

*ESV*

15

**READ SLIDE**

-- What is Paul's letter of reference? It is those who have trusted Christ through his ministry.

**TR: Verse 3**

**2 Corinthians 3:3**

**And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

*ESV*

16

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Because he has seen God at work in his ministry, Paul has a confidence. Verse 4**

**2 Corinthians 3:4-6**

Such is the **confidence** that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, **but our sufficiency is from God**, <sup>6</sup>who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

*ESV*

17

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Was Paul sufficient to spread the aroma of Christ? NO . . . and YES.**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

*Our confidence doesn't come from self-promotion  
(3:1)*

*- but from the Spirit's work in your lives (3:2-3)*

*- Such is the sufficiency we have from God as  
ministers of the new covenant (3:4-6)*

18

**NO, he was not sufficient in himself, no matter how many nice pictures he posted of himself on social media.**

**-- But YES, because he was given a sufficiency from God.**

**-- In verse 3 Paul had contrasted letters written by INK vs. by THE SPIRIT; and TABLETS OF STONE vs. TABLETS OF HUMAN HEARTS. He picks up on that in verse 7.**

**TR: It seems that the peddlers of the Word liked to focus on the Law of Moses, the Mosaic Law.**

**2 Corinthians 3:7-8**

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, <sup>8</sup>will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

*ESV*

19

**So Paul contrasts the Gospel he preaches, the aroma of Christ, with the legalism of the peddlers . . .**

**-- READ SLIDE**

**-- He is referring back to Exodus 32-34.**

**TR: The contrast between the glory of the Mosaic Law and the glory of the ministry of the Holy Spirit continues in verse 9 . . .**

**2 Corinthians 3:9-11**

**For** if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. <sup>10</sup>Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup>**For** if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

ESV

20

**READ SLIDE**

- Cf. using a powerful headlamp but then taking outside in the bright sun
- When we ask about the role of the Mosaic Law in our lives, while there is much to learn from it . . .
- . . . we are no longer UNDER it.
- It came to an end.

**TR: In my outline . . .**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

*This new covenant is the more glorious ministry of the Spirit (3:7-8)*

*- a far more glorious ministry of righteousness, not condemnation (3:9)*

*- a surpassingly glorious permanence (3:10-11)*

21

**. . . I refer us back to verse 6 where it said Paul and his companions were made competent to be ministers of a new covenant.**

**-- This is taking us back to the prophecy of Jeremiah.**

**-- In the midst of the Babylonians taking into captivity what was left of Israel, that is the southern kingdom of Judah . . .**

**-- . . . Jeremiah foretells of a coming new covenant not written on tablets of stone but on the tablets of our hearts.**

**-- Our text here tells us that this new covenant, the Gospel, the aroma of Christ, is more glorious because it brings righteousness, not condemnation.**

**-- The new covenant's glory is permanent, not fading.**

**TR: Because Paul has sufficiency from God, having been made competent as a minister of the new covenant . . .**

**2 Corinthians 3:12-13**

Since we have such a hope, **we are very bold**, <sup>13</sup>not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

*ESV*

22

**Verse 12 continues . . .**

**TR: Paul applies the understanding that many Jews had of what was going on in Exodus . . .**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

*Since we had such a hope, we are bold (3:12)  
- not like Moses' fading glory (3:13)*

23

**. . . the surpassing, permanent glory of the Gospel makes for a bold minister.**

**TR: Paul also applies his interpretation of Exodus to the question of why he has far more effective in reaching Gentiles for Jesus, but with limited results among his fellow Israelites. Verse 14 . . .**

**2 Corinthians 3:14-15**

But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because **only through Christ is it taken away.** <sup>15</sup>Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.

*ESV*

24

**READ SLIDE**

-- The minds of the people in Moses' day were hardened, even as they still are.

TR: Only through Christ is this veil of hardness taken away. This happens when . . .

**2 Corinthians 3:16-18**

**But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

*ESV*

25

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: What another powerful contrast.**

## **An Outline: Paul's Message to the Corinthians**

*The Israelites' minds were hardened, the veil unlifted (3:14-15)*

*- but when one turns to the Lord, through the Spirit . . .*

*\* the veil is removed (3:16)*

*\* there is freedom (3:17)*

*\* there is glorious transformation (3:18)*

26

**Between hardened minds . . . contrasted with the work of the Holy Spirit in removing the veil and bringing freedom . . .**

**-- . . . and glorious transformation.**

**-- The glorious Gospel of Jesus, the Gospel of the Spirit, the fragrance of the Christ . . . the surpassing and permanent glory of the New Covenant changes us . . .**

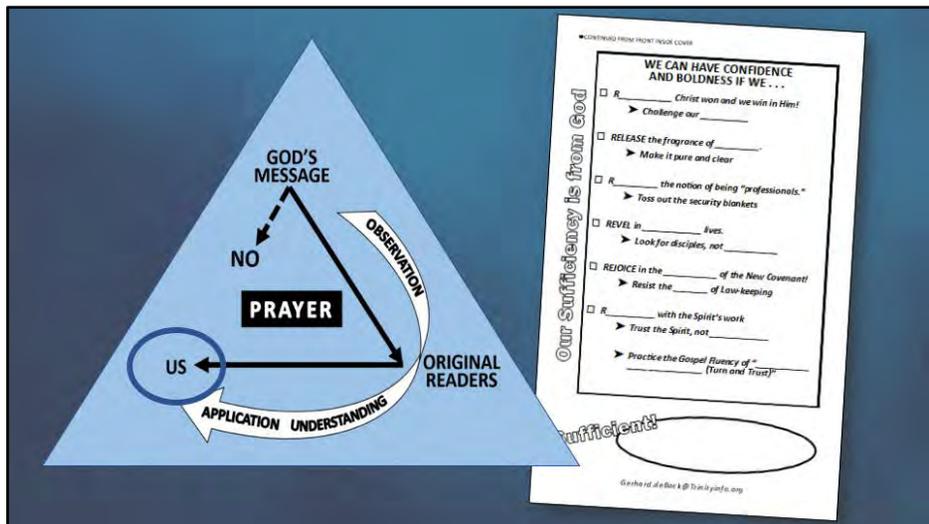
**-- . . . giving us freedom from condemnation, a position of righteousness before God, and the practical transformation of our lives from one degree of glory to another.**

**TR: I challenge you to look for the contrasts in this passage.**

perishing	saved
death	life
peddlers of the Word	sincerity, in Christ
tablets of stone	tablets of human hearts
self-promotion	changed lives
ministry of death	ministry of Spirit
condemnation	righteousness
fading glory	glorious permanence
hardened minds	freedom & transformation

**I've noted some of them . . . READ SLIDE  
-- Hallelujah . . . what Good News!**

**TR: And we haven't even gone to much around the corner of the  
Pathways Triangle . . .**



that's where the second page of our notes kicks in.

-- Why don't I just start here? That would give us more time for more stories, right?

-- I want you to learn how to feed yourself from the Bible . . . how to handle correctly the Word of Truth.

-- I want you to know when a teacher is UNDER THE WORD . . . so that when you have to find another church after graduation that you find a good one . . . and if one is not available, that you help plant a good one.

TR: How can we have confidence and boldness since we are all "ministers of the gospels" (cleverly disguised) . . . I find my heart stirred by at least 6 potential applications.

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***REMEMBER Christ won and we win in Him!***



29

**First . . . READ SLIDE**

- We are in Christ always led in triumphal procession.
- Jesus has won! The resurrection declares it.
- We are more than conquerors through Him, as Paul writes the Romans.

**TR: This truth remembered stirs our confidence and boldness, so we must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

❑ ***REMEMBER Christ won and  
we win in Him!***

➤ ***Challenge our feelings***



30

**. . . READ SLIDE**

- Cf. the songs that stir us . . . that kick our anxieties and insecurities in the rear . . . we must remember**
- We must stir up one another, as it says in Hebrews.**

**TR: We also must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***RELEASE the fragrance of  
Jesus.***



**READ SLIDE**

**TR: And we must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

□ ***RELEASE the fragrance of  
Jesus.***

➤ ***Make it pure and clear***



32

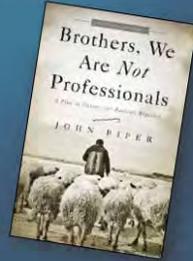
## READ SLIDE

- The aroma of Christ forces a response . . . it is either the smell of death or of life . . . of perishing or of salvation.
- We do not control other people's response.
- But we must make sure that we don't communicate that we are saved by our works of obedience.
- We are not saved by keeping the Mosaic Law, nor any other set of religious rules.
- cf. Kathy Bearden about pastor in Utah, "simple" – a person who doesn't clutter up the fragrance of Jesus.
- EX: loosely woven cloth bag with all sorts of smells in it . . . not what we want.

**TR: We can have confidence and boldness if we . . . 32**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ❑ ***REJECT the notion of being  
“professionals.”***



33

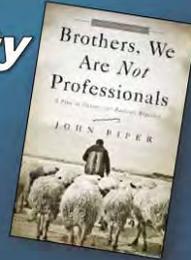
## **READ SLIDE**

- Cf. John Piper's book to pastors.
- Those in vocational ministry have not chosen a "career path."
- Nor must we allow ourselves to leave "all ministry to the professionals"

**TR: So we must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ❑ ***REJECT the notion of being  
“professionals.”***
- ***Toss out the security  
blankets***



34

## READ SLIDE

-- Cf. a pastor friend who was going after a doctorate . . . when I asked him why, he said he thought it would help him feel more secure in his ministry.

-- God meant for us to feel insufficient . . . in ourselves . . . so that we would learn to rely on the sufficiency He gives us through the Spirit.

TR: Over time, as we live out being ministers of the New Covenant, we must grow in confidence because we . . .

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

□ ***REVEL in changed lives.***

A CV (short for the Latin phrase curriculum vitae, which means "course of life") is a detailed document highlighting your professional and academic history.

35

## READ SLIDE

- I haven't applied for other positions, so I know little of this.
- But what do we write on our CV?
- The best letters of reference are changed lives.

TR: That's why we are to . . .

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***REVEL in changed lives.***
- ***Look for disciples, not  
attenders***

A CV (short for the Latin phrase curriculum vitae, which means "course of life") is a detailed document highlighting your professional and academic history.

36

**READ SLIDE**

- When I get discouraged, feeling insecure and even anxious, I find my confidence growing when I recall people whose lives have been radically changed by the Gospel.
- EX: File of letters of affirmation from those impacted
- This doesn't help new believers . . . YET . . . but the affliction of anxious insecurity is a life-time battle for most of us.
- Even if we grow in our confidence . . . old age and declining capabilities will often bring it all back again.
  
- Our confidence is never to be in our ability to convince others .  
..
- . . . our confidence, even our boldness, comes from the life-

**changing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**36**

**TR: I find myself standing taller and stronger, when the Good News of the surpassing glory of the New Covenant leads me to . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ❑ ***REJOICE in the glory of the New Covenant!***
- ***Resist the lure of Law-keeping***

37

## **READ SLIDE**

- It is easier to preach “law.”
- But even the glorious Mosaic Law delivered only condemnation and death.
- All legalism ultimately kills.
- The Law was designed to make us see that we need the promised and predicted New Covenant of Jesus.
  
- Guilt may be out, but “law-keeping” and its related misunderstandings still keep us insecure and timid in our faith.
- EX: Even as Parents . . . the false gospel of “Full Potential” in our kids.

**TR: It is easy to focus on things of lesser glory.**

**37**



**When Kathy and I were in Jerusalem, I went up to the wailing wall and took these pictures.**

**-- The folks there seem so religious . . . praying, putting pieces of paper in the cracks . . .**

**-- . . . because this western retaining wall of the temple mount is the closest place to where the Holy of Holies used to be.**

**-- EX: As I sat there praying, I rejoiced in the glory of the New Covenant. I suggested to several pastors who would be leading other trips to give their people a list of the evidences of the surpassing and permanent glory of the New Covenant.**

**-- We must not be impressed by the stones, we must not imagine that it is God's desire that we be baptized in the Jordan, or that taking communion on the Mount of Olives makes us better or more spiritual or something.**

**-- We must REJOICE in the glory of the New Covenant . . . that's where our anxious insecurity becomes confidence and boldness.**

**TR: Finally, we must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***REALIGN with the Spirit's work***

39

**READ SLIDE . . . again and again.**

**-- It is the Spirit Who takes away the veil that hardens hearts.**

**-- It is the Spirit Who brings freedom.**

**-- It is the Spirit Who transforms us, from one degree of glory to another.**

**TR: Realigning with the Spirit's work means . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***REALIGN with the Spirit's work***
  - ***Trust the Spirit, not gimmicks***

40

**READ SLIDE**

- cf. calling everyone who is missing each Sunday?
- Or parental gimmicks? Marital gimmicks?

**TR: For all of us, we must . . .**

**WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE  
AND BOLDNESS IF WE . . .**

- ***REALIGN with the Spirit's work***
  - ***Trust the Spirit, not gimmicks***
  - ***Practice the Gospel Fluency of "Repent and Believe (Turn and Trust)"***

41

**READ SLIDE**

-- Paul's words to the Corinthians capture that his sense of sufficiency from God came from repenting away from things of lesser glory and turning to and trusting in, believing in the things of eternal glory.

--

**TR: For us have more confidence and boldness, we must . . .**

- REMEMBER** *Christ won and we win in Him!*
- RELEASE** *the fragrance of Jesus.*
- REJECT** *the notion of being "professionals."*
- REVEL** *in changed lives.*
- REJOICE** *in the glory of the New Covenant!*
- REALIGN** *with the Spirit's work*

**Review the R-words . . .**

**-- Which one of these possible applications is most critical to your life this week?**

**-- Won't you put a check-mark by the one or two that the Spirit is pointing out to you?**

**TR: You, in Christ, are sufficient to be a minister of the new covenant . . . how is God calling you . . .**



**... to let your anxiety and insecurity push you to rely ever more on Him?**

**-- How is He pushing you to rely on the Gospel, the fragrance of Christ, the glory of the New Covenant, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit . . . in your life, your marriage, your parenting, your job in you being a minister of the Gospel?**