

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS 2

The apostle, in this chapter, goes on to give reasons of his not coming, as yet, to Corinth; and removes the charge of severity, which some might think him guilty of, in what he had written in his former epistle concerning the incestuous person, who having repented of his sin, he would now have comforted, and the censure laid on him by the church taken off; after which he gives an account of the success of the Gospel in several parts, of its power and purity, and of the faithful dispensation of it by himself and others: in ([2 Corinthians 2:1](#)), he assigns this as a reason why he had determined with himself not to come to Corinth as yet, and why he deferred his coming, that when he came he might not be sorrowful himself, nor make others sorrowful, which necessarily involve each other; for if he made others sorrowful by his sharp rebukes, which as things had been he could not but in faithfulness give, he must be in sorrow himself, since there would be none to make him cheerful, but such whom he made sorrowful, ([2 Corinthians 2:2](#)), wherefore to meet together under such circumstances must be uncomfortable; and hence he chose to put off his coming until things took another turn; and this was the reason of his writing with so much seeming severity concerning the incestuous person, in the former epistle, to bring him and them to repentance, and so prevent that sorrow which he otherwise must have had, had he in person come to them whilst they were unconcerned about that affair; and that he might have that joy, which he was confident of everyone was desirous he should have, ([2 Corinthians 2:3](#)), and he was so far from being of a cruel and uncompassionate disposition, that it was with an aching heart, and with flowing eyes, that he wrote that letter to them; nor was it written with that view merely to grieve them, but to let them know the tender and affectionate concern he had for their welfare, ([2 Corinthians 2:4](#)). Besides, this affair of the incestuous person was not only matter of grief to the apostle, but to them all; or he was not the only person he was grieved with, but with them all, and therefore it was necessary to use greater severity and roughness, ([2 Corinthians 2:5](#)). However, inasmuch as the end he had in view was answered, the humbling of the delinquent, and

bringing him to repentance, nothing more was to be done, the punishment of excommunication was sufficient, (~~4016~~2 Corinthians 2:6), and that ought now to be removed, and the man forgiven, and comforted, lest he should be overwhelmed with sorrow, and be reduced to despair, (~~4017~~2 Corinthians 2:7). Wherefore the apostle entreats them to give some fresh assurances of their love to the repenting brother, and signify it by their hearty reception of him into communion again, (~~4018~~2 Corinthians 2:8), in doing which they would give proof of their obedience to him the apostle, which was an end he had in writing to them before, concerning the excommunication of the same person, (~~4019~~2 Corinthians 2:9), and which he urges them to from his own example, who was ready to join with them in forgiving him, out of love to them, and in the name of Christ, (~~4020~~2 Corinthians 2:10), and the rather it became them to do so, lest Satan should get an advantage of them, and establish a bad principle and practice among them, that such as fall into sin, though they repent, should not be restored to the communion of the church, of whose devices in different forms and shapes, to do mischief to the churches of Christ, and particular believers, the apostle and others were not ignorant, (~~4021~~2 Corinthians 2:11). Moreover, what had took up his time, and had prevented him from coming to Corinth as yet, was his being called to, and employed in the preaching of the Gospel elsewhere, particularly at Troas, where he was the rather inclined to stay, and there was a necessity of it, because there was a door opened for it, (~~4022~~2 Corinthians 2:12), and yet not finding Titus, there, as he expected, he was uneasy, and departed thence into Macedonia, in quest of him, (~~4023~~2 Corinthians 2:13), where, as in other places, he preached the Gospel with success, which he ascribes to God, and gives him thanks for it, (~~4024~~2 Corinthians 2:14), which success he illustrates by dividing the persons to whom he preached the Gospel, into two classes, they that are saved, and they that perish, (~~4025~~2 Corinthians 2:15), on whom it had different effects, diffusing death, and adding death to death in the one, and communicating life, and adding life to life in the other: and lest he should be thought to arrogate too much to himself, and other ministers of the word, of whom he speaks, he acknowledges his and their insufficiency to preach the Gospel, and make it effectual; and that all fitness for it, and all the virtue and efficacy of it, were from the Lord, (~~4026~~2 Corinthians 2:16), and then gives the reason why he, and the rest of the faithful ministers of the Gospel, were a sweet savour to Christ, as he had asserted, because they did not, as others, corrupt this box of ointment, but faithfully and sincerely poured it out, without mixing and adulterating it; and this they did as being in the

view of the omniscient God, to whom they could appeal for their integrity and honesty, (~~4021~~2 Corinthians 2:17).

Ver. 1. *But I determined with myself*, etc..] The apostle having removed the charge of levity and inconstancy brought against him, goes on to excuse his delay in coming to them, and to soften the severity, which some thought too much, he had used in his former epistle: he determined with himself, he took up a resolution within his own breast some time ago, says he,

that I would not come again to you in heaviness; that he would not come with sorrow and heaviness, bewailing their sins not repented of, and by sharp reproofs and censures, which in such a case would be necessary, be the cause of grief and trouble to them; wherefore he determined to wait their repentance and amendment before he came again. The word “again”, may be connected with the phrase “in heaviness”; and the sense be, that in his former epistle, which was a sort of coming to them, he made them heavy and sorry, by sharply rebuking them for some disorders that were among them; and since it has been a settled point with him, that he would not come in heaviness again: or with the word “come”; and then the meaning is, as his first coming among them was to the joy of their souls, so it was a determined case with him, that his second coming should not be with grief, either to them or himself, or both; and this is the true reason why he had deferred it so long.

Ver. 2. *For if I make you sorry*, etc..] That is, should he come among them, and be the means of fresh grief and sorrow:

who is he then that maketh me glad? such was his love and affection for them, and sympathy with them, that should they be grieved, he should grieve also; they were the only persons he could take any delight in at Corinth; wherefore should they be in heaviness, he would be so too, and then what pleasure would he have in being among them? since not a man of them would be in a condition and capacity to make him cheerful:

but the same which is made sorry by me. The Ethiopic version without any authority reads this clause, “except he whom I have made glad”; but the apostle is to be understood either of some particular man, the incestuous person, who had been made sorry, by that awful punishment of being delivered up to Satan, inflicted on him; or else the singular number being put for the plural collectively, is to be understood of all the members of the

church at Corinth, who had been greatly grieved by the sharp reproofs he had given them; and therefore unless this trouble was removed, he could not expect to have much comfort and pleasure with them.

Ver. 3. *And I wrote this same unto you*, etc..] Not what he had written in the preceding verse, or in (⁴⁰⁰²³2 Corinthians 1:23), where he says, that his not coming to them as yet was to spare them; but what he had written to them in his former epistle, concerning the excommunication of the incestuous man, which had so much grieved both him and them; and this the apostle chose rather to order by writing, than in person; hoping to hear of their repentance and amendment, before he came among them:

lest, says he,

when I came, or should come,

I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; some copies and the Complutensian edition read, “sorrow upon sorrow”; and so does the Vulgate Latin version, which seems to be transcribed from (³⁸⁰⁷³Philippians 2:27), that is, he took this method of sending a reproofing letter, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of sin; lest should he come in person, some would have been a grief and trouble to him, having fallen into sin not repented of; who ought to have been matter of rejoicing to him, as being the seals of his apostleship, and his work in the Lord: and this step he was the more encouraged to take, through the confidence he had of them,

having confidence in you all; being fully persuaded of their affection for him, and opinion of him:

that my joy is the joy of you all; that their joy and grief were mutual and common; that what he rejoiced in, they did likewise; and what was displeasing to him was displeasing to them; and therefore upon the first hint given, he took care to remove the occasion of such displeasure, that their mutual comfort might take place; assuring them, and of which they might be assured, that it was no joy to him to grieve them; he could have none when theirs was gone; his ultimate view in writing to them in the manner he had, was not to grieve, but to bring them to repentance and reformation, which issued in the mutual joy of him and them.

Ver. 4. *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart*, etc..] Being greatly pressed in his spirit, and grieved at his heart, for the abominable

iniquities among them, which they seemed to take no notice of, and to be unconcerned about, yea, rather to be puffed up with:

I wrote to you with many tears; as signs and expressions of, and by which were vented, the inward anguish and distress of his soul; and the letter he sent to them in some measure bore witness to it: which was written,

not that you should be grieved; that is, not merely for the sake of grieving of them, in which he took no pleasure; not but that the apostle designed and desired to affect their minds with a holy grief and godly sorrow for sin, and hereby their amendment; but his chief view was, next to their spiritual good, and God's glory, to express the greatness of his love to them: as he says,

that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you; as his love was very vehement towards them, he was desirous they should know it, and how exceeding abundant it was; and that it was even greater towards them, than to others; and he thought he could not give a greater proof and evidence of it, than by reprovng them faithfully, and that sharply too, as the necessity of the case required.

Ver. 5. *But if any have caused grief*, etc..] The incestuous person is here manifestly designed, though he is not named, who had been the cause and occasion of much grief and sorrow, both to himself and others; for the apostle is not to be understood, as though he doubted whether he had caused grief or not, but rather takes it for granted, as a certain point; “if”, seeing, or although he has caused grief:

he hath not grieved me but in part; or in some measure; as it has reflected dishonour on God and his ways, truths and ordinances; and has brought trouble upon himself, and the church of which he is a member; for the apostle now rejoiced, that he was truly humbled for his sin, and sincerely, and in an evangelical manner, repented of it; his grief was over, and it was as if it was not; and the offence he took was now wholly removed: besides, though this man did grieve him, it was but in part; he was not the sole cause of his grief: they also greatly added to it by their unconcernedness of him, and negligence in reprovng him, though he takes notice only of this single man:

that I may not overcharge you all; bear hard upon them, aggravate their sin, and increase their trouble: or thus, that man has not grieved me only, but in some measure all of you; for the phrase “all you”, may be

considered, not in connection with the word “overcharge”, but with the word “grieved”; and the reading and sense of the whole be this, “he hath not grieved me, but in part, or in some measure”; or as the Syriac reads it, **ʿwkl kl l yl q ryxb**, “almost all of you”: but this, as if he should say, I do but just mention, would not dwell upon it, “that I may not overcharge” him, or be thought to be overbearing, or should aggravate his sin and sorrow: for,

Ver. 6. *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment*, etc..] By this punishment is meant, the excommunication of the incestuous person, or the censure that was laid upon him by the church: for this

was inflicted by many; not by the pastor only, or by the elders or more eminent persons in the church, but by the multitude, by the whole congregation, at least **υπο των πλειονων**, “by the more”; the greater, or major part; and not by one, or a few only: in inflicting this punishment, or laying on this censure in the public manner they did, they were certainly right, and to be commended; but inasmuch as there appeared signs of true repentance, it was sufficient, it had answered the purpose for which it was inflicted, and therefore it was high time to remove it: from whence we learn, that in case of gross enormities, there ought to be a public excommunication; and that this is to be done by the vote, and with the consent of the whole church, or the major part of it; and that in process of time, when the person thus dealt with has given the church satisfaction as to the truth and genuineness of his repentance, the censure ought to be taken off and he be cordially received into the communion of the church again. This “punishment”, or “rebuke”, **επιτιμια**, “by many”, is the same which the Jews call ^{fs} **mybrb hj kwth**, “a reproof by many”; which is given by many, or in the presence of many.

Ver. 7. *So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him*, etc..] On the other hand, so far the apostle suggests they should be from inflicting any other punishment on him, or by any means adding to, and increasing what was inflicted, that they ought to forgive him his offence, by taking off the censure from him, which had been sufficient for the purpose, and had continued on him a sufficient time:

and comfort him; by restoring him to the communion of the church, and to an enjoyment of all the privileges and ordinances of the house of God: and this was necessary to be done,

lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow: be overwhelmed with trouble, engulfed in despair, and so become unfit for the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; to prevent therefore such dangerous and pernicious consequences, it is incumbent on the churches of Christ, as soon as ever they observe that censures have answered the end in bringing persons to a sense and acknowledgment of sin and amendment of life, to remove them, and restore such to fellowship.

Ver. 8. *Wherefore I beseech you,* etc..] Or exhort you:

that ye would confirm your love towards him: express your love to him in the most kind and tender manner, show the same, and as strong love to him as you did before, and as if he had never offended; receive him as a brother in the most affectionate manner, and embrace him with the most endearing expressions of respect and friendship; and let your reception of him in this kind and friendly way be with the full consent, and by the joint vote and suffrage of the whole church, for so the word translated “confirm” signifies; for as the ejection of a person out of a church must be done by the decree and vote of the church, or it is not authentic, so the reception of a person into it must be in like manner; and since this was to be done by the suffrage of the church, the apostle beseeches and exhorts them to do it.

Ver. 9. *For to this end also did I write,* etc..] Or “I have written”, both in this and in his former epistle to them, and in both with this view,

that I might know the proof of you; that he might try, prove, and know them:

whether ye be obedient in all things; he wrote unto them in his former epistle, to put away that wicked man from them; which he did not do, merely to reproach the man, and fix a brand of infamy on him; nor merely to grieve and afflict their minds; nor only to show his own power and authority, which he as an apostle had received from Christ, but to make trial of their obedience; and he had had a proof of it in their rejection of him; and now he writes unto them, that since this man was truly humbled for his sin, and had repentance unto life not to be repented of, that they would as cheerfully receive him, and restore him to his place; that as the apostle had a proof of their obedience in the one, he might also have in the other, and so in all things: hence it appears, that though it belongs to the whole church, and that only, to reject or receive members, yet as ministers of the Gospel are set over the churches, to govern, guide, direct, and go

before in matters of discipline; so whatever they propose, according to the rule of God's word, ought to be carefully attended to and obeyed.

Ver. 10. *To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also,* etc..] This may extend to the forgiveness of any person, in any case; either in time past, or at the present time, or in time to come; though it has a particular respect to the forgiveness of the incestuous man, which the apostle had determined in his own mind, and was very ready to come into, and very desirous to join with the church in, as they had joined with him in the excommunication of him; and in order to engage them in such a temper and disposition, he tells them it was on their account he did it:

for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it; which is as if he should say, whenever I have forgiven any offender, as I now do forgive this man, I always do it for your sake; either at your request, or in confidence of this, that you yourselves have forgiven; or for your good, peace, and welfare: and besides, what I do of this kind, I do it

in the person of Christ; in his sight and presence, who knows that what I do this way, I do it sincerely, and with my whole heart and soul; or rather I do it in his name, and by his authority; and since I forgive this man for your sakes, and in the name of Christ, you ought to do so likewise.

Ver. 11. *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us,* etc..] Or make gain of us, or we should be circumvented by him; a metaphor taken from covetous persons, who take every occasion, and make use of every advantage to circumvent and deceive persons in trading with them: Satan gets an advantage of the churches, when church discipline is brought into neglect and contempt, or turned into tyranny; or when he can draw off any person from a church, or keep him out of it: wherefore the apostle's argument is, that since the incestuous person had true repentance for his sin, he ought to be forgiven, comforted, and received into the church; lest by too great severity, and a too long continuance of the censure on him, he should be either plunged into despair, or be drawn into a denial of the faith, or into an open scandalous course of wickedness; and so the church entirely lose a member, that might, by the proper use of discipline, have been an useful one, and Satan gain one:

for we are not ignorant of his devices; and cunning stratagems; some of his crafty contrivances and designs are known, though not all of them; and this particularly, that he sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light,

and under pretence of showing a just indignation against sin, and keeping up a strict and righteous discipline, destroys souls, ruins churches, and brings religion into contempt. This was one of his devices in former times, that persons who fell into any gross sin after baptism, and a profession of religion, were never to be restored and received into the communion of the church again, let their repentance be ever so sincere. This cruel and inexorable spirit, under the show of strict religion and discipline, is what the apostle here would caution against, as one of the wiles of Satan.

Ver. 12. *Furthermore, when I came to Troas*, etc..] The apostle proceeds, in this latter part of the chapter, to take notice of and remove the charge of ostentation and insincerity in preaching the Gospel, and hints at other reasons of his not coming to Corinth; particularly that he took a journey to Troas, expecting to meet with Titus there, who was to give him an account of the affairs of the church at Corinth, which he was desirous of knowing before he went thither; but missing of Titus, is uneasy, and goes for Macedonia; though he was first detained awhile at Troas, having a good opportunity of preaching the Gospel there, with a prospect of success. Troas was a city of the lesser Asia near the Hellespont, formerly called Troy; of Paul's being at this place more than once, (see ² Timothy 4:13 ~~Acts~~ Acts 16:7,8 20:6), and of this place (see Gill on "~~Acts~~ Acts 16:8"), and of the church there, (see Gill on "~~Acts~~ Acts 20:7"). Hither he came,

to preach Christ's Gospel; that Gospel, of which Christ is both the author and subject; and is no other than the good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation, by a crucified Jesus; this was his work and business; his heart was in it, he took delight in this service, and it was what he pursued in every place wherever he came; and in this place he had much encouragement; for he adds,

and a door was opened unto me of the Lord; such an one as was opened to him at Ephesus, (¹ Corinthians 16:9); he had a good opportunity of preaching the Gospel to many souls, many were inclined to attend his ministry, from whence he conceived great hopes of doing good; a door of utterance was given to him to preach the Gospel boldly and freely, and a door of entrance for the Gospel to pass into their hearts: all which was not of men, "but of the Lord"; who has the key of David, who opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens.

Ver. 13. *I had no rest in my spirit*, etc..] Though there was such a door opened to preach the Gospel, and such an opportunity of doing good, yet

he was greatly distressed in his mind; very restless and uneasy in his spirit, and could not be satisfied to stay; which shows, that though he was so great a man, he was but a man, and of like passions with others: and the occasion of this dissatisfaction and uneasiness was,

because, says he,

I found not Titus my brother; whom he so styles, not merely because he was a fellow Christian, but because he was a fellow labourer in the Gospel; and by calling him so, puts an honour upon him, and expresses his affliction for him: now not finding him as he expected, he grew uneasy: not that he wanted him as an interpreter for him, or his assistance in preaching the Gospel at Troas, where so many were inclined to hear the word; but because he was exceedingly desirous of knowing from him the state of affairs in the church at Corinth; so that this whole account is given, to show his affectionate concern for, and care of that church: which he goes on with, saying,

but taking my leave of them; the disciples at Troas, and ordering and prescribing, as the word here used signifies, how things should be managed for the best after his departure; for as there was a door opened for the ministry of the word, it cannot be thought he would leave it thus, without fixing proper persons to go on with the work, and proper directions how to conduct themselves; and very likely he ordained Carpus to be their elder, bishop, or overseer: and having done this, he

went into Macedonia; in quest of Titus, whom he so earnestly desired to see, and by whose coming to him he was greatly refreshed and comforted; (see ~~4006~~ 2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

Ver. 14. *Now thanks be unto God*, etc..] The apostle having mentioned the door that was opened for him at Troas, to preach the Gospel with success, calls to mind the great and manifold appearances of God for him and his fellow ministers, in blessing their labours to the conversion of many souls; which causes him to break forth into thanksgiving to God, on this account: what he takes notice of, and is thankful to God for is, that he

always causeth us to triumph in Christ; not only had done so, but continued to do so: some versions ascribe this act of triumph to God, as his act, reading the passage thus, “now thanks be unto God, who triumphs over us”, or “by us in Christ”; who has conquered us by his grace, and made use of us as instruments for the conversion of sinners; and so first

triumphed over us, having subdued us to himself, and then over others by us, in whose hearts the arrows of his word have been sharp and powerful: so the word is used for the person's own act of triumph spoken of, (Co 2:15), but here it signifies, as words do in the Hebrew conjugation “Hiphil”, which most commonly denotes an effect upon another, or which is caused and produced in another, and is rightly rendered, “which causeth us to triumph”; and refers not to the triumph of faith, common with the apostles to other believers; though this is in Christ, in his righteousness, death, resurrection, ascension, session at God's right hand, and intercession; and is what God causes, and to whom thanks is to be given for it: but this is a triumph peculiar to ministers of the Gospel, who are made to triumph over men and devils, over the world, the reproaches, persecutions, smiles, and flatteries of it; over wicked men, by silencing them, stopping the mouths of gainsayers, refuting false teachers, and preserving the Gospel pure, in spite of all opposition; and by being made useful to the turning of many souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: and this is

in Christ: it is owing to the victory he has got; it is by his strength, it is in his name, for his sake, and because of his glory herein concerned: and

always; wherever the ministers of Christ are called to labour, and wherever the Gospel is purely and powerfully preached by them, some good is done; and they are made to triumph over hell and earth, over sin, Satan, and the world; and for all this, thanks is due to God; for he it is that causes them to triumph, or they never could; as will easily appear, if we consider what poor weak instruments they themselves are; what opposition is made against them; what wonderful things are done by them; by what means they triumph, by the preaching of the cross, and that in the midst of the greatest pressures and afflictions. Thanks are also given to God, that he

maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place; by “his knowledge” is meant, either the knowledge of God, who causes the ministers of the Gospel to triumph; or the knowledge of Christ, in whom they triumph; or rather of both, of the knowledge of God in Christ; and designs the Gospel, which is the means thereof: and which is said to have a “savour” in it, and denotes the acceptableness of it to sensible souls; and the good name, fame, and credit, which Christ has by the faithful ministration of it; and is an allusion to (~~2008~~ Song of Solomon 1:3). Now this, God is said to make manifest; it was hid before, hid in himself, and to

the sons of men; it was like a box of ointment shut, but now opened by the preaching of the word, which diffuses a fragrant smell; and therefore he is said to make it manifest “by us”: the ministers of the Gospel, who openly, boldly, and faithfully preach it; and “by manifestation of the truth”; spread the savour of it, and that “in every place”, where they come; their commission being at large, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Ver. 15. *For we are unto God a sweet savour*, etc..] Here a reason is given, why the savour of the knowledge of God in Christ is made manifest by the ministers of the Gospel, because they themselves are a sweet savour; not that they are so in themselves, for they have the same corrupt hearts and natures, and complain of them as other men; but as having the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, comparable to fragrant and sweet smelling ointments, (²²⁰⁰⁸ Song of Solomon 1:3 4:10), by which they are enabled to preach the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, and to adorn and recommend them by their exemplary lives and conversations: the allusion is to Aaron and the priests under the law, who were anointed with the anointing oil, which was poured upon their heads, ran down upon their beards, and descended to the skirts of their garments, so that they were all over a perfume, a sweet smell and savour; and so are the ministers of the word, being anointed with that, which the other was typical of. They are said to be a sweet savour

of Christ, because they have their gifts, grace, and Gospel from him, and he is the subject of their ministry; so that this sweet savour of theirs, is not properly theirs, but his, whose person, blood, righteousness, sacrifice, grace, and the fulness of it, as held forth in the Gospel ministry, are sweet and savoury to believers. Moreover, it is “unto God” they are such a savour, not unto men, mere carnal men, for with them they are the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; but they are grateful and well pleasing to the Lord, as their ministrations make for, and show forth his honour and glory: and this they are

in them that are saved, who are chosen by God unto salvation, for whom Christ has wrought it out, to whom it is applied by the Spirit of God, who are heirs of it, and are kept unto it, and for it, by the power of God, and shall certainly enjoy it: yea, they are a sweet savour

in them that perish, all mankind are, through sin, in a perishing condition: some of them shall never perish; but are, and shall be saved with an

everlasting salvation: others will perish in their sins, to which they are abandoned; and what sense the ministers of the Gospel are a savour in these is shown in the following verse.

Ver. 16. *To the one we are the savour of death unto death*, etc..] Who are for death, or appointed to it; (see ^{<481>}Jeremiah 43:11). What the apostle says of the Gospel, and Gospel ministers, the Jews his countrymen used frequently to say of the law, and to which he seems to refer;

“saith Rabba ^{f6}, to them that go on the right hand of it, (the law,) it is **yyj d ams**, “the savour of life”; but to them that go on the left hand of it, it is **atwmd ams**, “the savour of death”.”

Again ^{f7},

“everyone that studies in the law for the sake of it, to him it becomes **yyj μs**, “the savour of life”, according to (^{<488>}Proverbs 3:18 8:35), but everyone that studies in the law, not for the sake of it, to him it becomes **twmh μs**, “the savour of death”.”

once more ^{f8},

“if a man is worthy or righteous, to him the law becomes **yyj μs**, “the savour of life”; but if he is not righteous, it becomes to him **htym μs**, “the savour of death”.”

and this they not only say of the written law, but also of their oral law ^{f9}, and are not contented with those general descriptions of persons to whom the law is so, but particularly mention the Gentiles;

“the words of the law (say they ^{f10}) are **yyj μs**, “the savour of life”, to the Israelites; and **twmh μs**, “the savour of death”, to the nations of the world:”

that the law should be the savour of death, since it is the ministration of it, and cannot give life, (see ^{<812>}Galatians 3:21), is no wonder; but that the Gospel and the ministers of that, should be the savour of death unto death, may seem strange, but so it is. These preach up salvation by the death of Christ, and so are the sweet savour of the death of Christ; but this being despised and rejected by the sons of men, is “unto the death”, and issues in the eternal death of the despisers and rejecters of it; likewise this doctrine

preached by them, strikes with death all a man's wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, and declares that life and salvation are only by Christ and his righteousness; and besides, is attended with persecution and death, and therefore is foolishness to them that perish; and so becomes “the savour of death unto death”; a savour, but not a sweet savour, nor the sweet savour of Christ; a sweet savour indeed to God, whose justice, holiness, power, and wisdom, are displayed in the death and righteous destruction of sinners, but not to them:

to the other, the savour of life unto life; those who are ordained to eternal life. The Gospel preached by Christ's faithful ministers is the means of quickening souls, and giving them “spiritual life”; and of supporting and maintaining that life, and of nourishing them up unto “eternal life”; and so becomes “the savour of life” spiritual, “unto life” eternal. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and so the Ethiopic version, read both clauses, “from death to death, and from life to life”; with which compare (~~ROM~~Romans 1:17 ~~2COR~~2 Corinthians 3:18), and then the meaning may be, either as Grotius observes, that the ill report of the Gospel from men dead in sin, brings death to those who give credit to it; and the good report of it from God, the author of life, to which may be added from ministers, who are alive in a spiritual sense, is the means of life to others: or they are the means of adding death to death, death eternal, to death spiritual, or moral; death for sin, to death in sin, the Gospel being despised; and of increasing spiritual life, the comforts of it; and of adding eternal life to spiritual life: upon the whole of which, the apostle makes this exclamation,

and who is sufficient for these things; the meaning of which is either, who is able to search and find out the reason of this different influence of the Gospel ministry upon the souls of men? no man can do it; it must be ascribed to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who hides the Gospel from some, and reveals it to others; or who is sufficient for the preaching of the Gospel? no man is sufficient of himself, very insufficient in the best sense, and none so but by the grace of God, and gifts of his Spirit; or who is sufficient to give success to the Gospel when preached? none can do this; Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God alone that gives the increase.

Ver. 17. *For we are not as many*, etc..] The apostle here removes from himself, and other ministers of the Gospel, a character which belonged not to them, but to the false apostles; who are described by their number many;

there were great swarms of false teachers in the early times of Christianity; (see ^{<6128>}1 John 2:18 4:1); some copies read, “as the rest”: and so the Syriac and Arabic versions; and also by their quality,

which corrupt the word of God; by “the word of God”, may be meant the Scriptures in general, which are from God, contain his will, and which he uses for the good of men, and his own glory, and may be corrupted by false glosses, and human mixtures, and by adding to them, or taking from them; or the Gospel in particular, which is the word of truth, of faith, righteousness, reconciliation, and salvation, and which was corrupted by these false teachers, by making merchandise of it; they huckstered the word of God, made gain of it, sought merely their own worldly interest and advantage in it, and so mixed it with their own vain philosophy, to please the carnal ears and hearts of men; they blended law and Gospel, grace and works, in the business of salvation; they did, as peddling merchants do, mix good and bad commodities together, and then vend them for sound ware; or as vintners, who mix their wine with water, and sell it for neat wine. The Septuagint interpreters on (^{<2012>}Isaiah 1:22), translate the last clause of that verse thus, **οι καπηλοι σου μισγουσι τον οινον υδατι**, “thy vintners mix wine with water”; which may be understood in a moral or spiritual sense; so did these men mix, and hereby corrupt the Gospel, the word of God; and so the Syriac version reads the words **ʿygzmm̄d**, “who mix the word of God”: now the apostle says, they did not do so; they delivered out the word pure and unmixed, without any corruption or adulteration:

but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, says he, *speaking in Christ*; they spoke “in Christ”, in the name of Christ, of or concerning him, and him only, and freely, fully, and plainly, as God's free gift, and the only way of salvation without the works of men: and they spoke, “as of sincerity”; what they delivered was the sincere milk of the word; the manner in which they did it was sincere, with all integrity and faithfulness; and so were their views, which were not their own profit and applause, but the glory of God and the good of souls; they spoke in Christ, and with all sincerity, “as of God”; by whom they were called and sent forth to speak in his name, and from whom they received the Gospel, and gifts, and abilities to preach it; and all this they did, in the sight of God, as the searcher of hearts, and to whom they knew they must give an account of their ministry another day.