

motivate us to serving and enjoying the will of God and that is why I have put together commitment and the resultant blessing that always follows commitment. Our biblical passage centers on Paul's defense of the ministry he had been given...a ministry that went beyond the ideals of some of the traditional members of the community. We can understand their perplexity, of course, as that which comes when a new order is instituted....it always reforms some ideas and that is often not comfortable to all parties. Peter speaks in this section after verse 7 and explains how the Holy Ghost enabled him to see how God was dealing with all men and that the uncircumcised Gentiles were receiving the gift of God as well as were the circumcised Jews. In other words, the resurrection life had overcome an ethnic identification and established instead a spiritual unity that was marked with the blessing of God. When Paul finished speaking, James would take the chair and show how this was the fulfilling of the Old Testament Scriptures and the community could have joy in committing itself to God and sharing His blessing wherever possible. And that is just what this life is, among the other things we discuss, a life of commitment to the Lord and a life enjoying the blessing of His fellowship as well as that with other believers.

II. Discussion:

A. It is built on the assured knowledge of the Lord...you will see how this is stressed in verse 9-10 of this chapter and you may wish to read the particulars in Paul's testimony in chapter 26:12-15. One might go back to the Apostolic call in chapter 9 and for a stronger reference, maybe, the testimony of Stephen the martyr in chapter 7. Throughout history the testimony of martyrs is striking: they could face any sort of trial knowing the Lord and relying on Him. This is a commitment that delivers us from fear and even guilt. But without this sure knowledge we are left with no support and no strengthening factors. The challenge, I suppose, is to see the assurance that faith in the Lord Jesus gives and allow that to give us steadiness in the press of life.

B. It is expressed in the will of God.

Remember that the will of God, before it descends to individual particulars, is that we should be holy, thankful, witnessing people. There should be no yoke or burden added to the work of grace (v. 10) and we can see Paul's attitude towards this in