



# 2 CORINTHIANS

INSTRUCTOR: **RUSSELL HAFFNER**

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<b>INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>OUTLINE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>EXPOSITION</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>SALUTATION</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>EXPLANATION OF PERSONAL CONDUCT 1:3-2:13</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>THE DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY 2:14-7:4</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>THE DEFENSE IF HIS MINISTRY 2:12-7:4</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<i>The Nature of his Ministry 2:14-3:18</i> .....	<i>30</i>
<i>The Sincerity of His Ministry 4:1-6</i> .....	<i>40</i>
<i>The Perseverance of His Ministry 4:7-15</i> .....	<i>43</i>
<i>The Prospect of His Ministry 4:16-5:10</i> .....	<i>46</i>
<i>The Sanctions of His Ministry 5:11-19</i> .....	<i>53</i>
<i>The Example of His Ministry 5:20-6:10</i> .....	<i>58</i>
<i>The Appeal of His Ministry 6:11-7:4</i> .....	<i>65</i>
<b>COMMENTS ON THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST LETTER 7:5-16</b> .....	<b>70</b>
<b>THE GRACE OF GIVING 8:1-9:15</b> .....	<b>76</b>
<b>PERSONAL DEFENSE 10:1-12:13</b> .....	<b>89</b>
<b>PREPARATION FOR A VISIT 12:14-13:10</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<b>CONCLUSION 13:11-14</b> .....	<b>120</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>123</b>
<b>FAITH AND WORKS</b> .....	<b>123</b>
<b>ARE THERE MODERN-DAY APOSTLES?</b> .....	<b>127</b>

## INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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**Biography:**

Russell Haffner currently serves as the director of the WVBS Online Bible School. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1993. He is also an alumnus of Texas A&M University where he majored in Architecture. He has served as a minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He has spoken on various lectureships and has held several gospel meetings. He has also published articles in numerous lectureship books.

Russell and his wife Dee are blessed with three children - Ross, John and Kati. Ross and John are both graduates of the Southwest School of Bible Studies and currently serve as ministers in the Lord's church. Kati is married to Tony Lopez who is also currently serving as a minister in the Lord's church.

These Course Notes were developed from the original WVBS Course Notes.

## BACKGROUND

### I. CORINTH - THE CITY:

- A. The city of Corinth was originally founded about 1350 B.C. and is one of the oldest cities of Greece.
- B. The Romans conquered it in 146 B.C. completely destroying it.
- C. It was then rebuilt from its ruins in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. He repopulated it with veterans and freedmen.
- D. It was later made the capital of the region of Achaia by Augustus Caesar.
- E. In less than 100 years it had grown to a population of approximately 600,000.
  - 1. Its demographic soon became multicultural being comprised of Romans, Greeks, Jews and those from eastern Asia. These were adventurous men from all over the world.
  - 2. This made it a very strategic center from which to spread the gospel.
- F. Corinth was located near the isthmus of Corinth that connects the Peloponnese peninsula with mainland Greece. An isthmus is a narrow strip of land with sea on either side, forming a link between two larger areas of land.
  - 1. The narrowest point of the isthmus is four miles wide.
  - 2. It separates the Saronic Gulf (on the east) and the Corinthian Gulf (on the west).
  - 3. There were two good harbors on the Saronic Gulf:
    - a. Cenchrea
    - b. Schoenus
  - 4. There was one good harbor on the Corinthian Gulf called Lechaem.

5. The harbors at Corinth were safe while the waters around Cape Malea to the south were very dangerous.
    - a. The common sayings of the Greek sailors about sailing around Malea were:
      - 1) "Let him who sails around Malea forget his home."
      - 2) "Let him who sails around Malea make his will."
    - b. How did they handle this problem?
      - 1) They would sail to Corinth and if the boat was small enough it was pulled across the four-mile isthmus on rollers.
      - 2) If the boat was too big it was unloaded and the cargo was transported to a waiting boat on the other side.
      - 3) The Corinthians, being very enterprising, had built a wooden tramway to serve until a canal could be built. The canal was started but was never finished.
  6. This isthmus was of great military importance in that it formed the only line of march for either an invading or a retreating army.
  7. The isthmus was known by several names:
    - a. "The eye of Greece."
    - b. "The bridge of the sea."
    - c. "The gate of the Peloponnesus."
    - d. "The bridge of Greece."
  8. The isthmus had been fortified with one hundred and fifty towers. The citadel rose two thousand feet above sea level on a rock with steep sides.
- G. Luxury soon came to Corinth through trade.
1. The markets of Corinth had representatives from all over the world. They had Arabian balsam, Phoenician dates, Libyan ivory, Persian carpets, Cilician goat's hair, Lycaonian wool and Phrygian slaves.

2. Since Corinth lacked an aristocracy based on the ownership of land, it soon developed an aristocracy of money, along with a fiercely independent spirit.
- H. Recreation in Corinth included the Isthmian Games that was a festival of horse races, athletic contests and musical competitions in honor of the Greek mythological god of the sea (Poseidon). The competitions were held on the Isthmus of Corinth. The Isthmian Games were one of the Panhellenic Games of Ancient Greece. The Panhellenic Games included the Olympic and Pythian games that were held every four years, and the Nemean and Isthmian games that were held every two years.

## II. CORINTH - THE CULTURE:

- A. To call someone a "Corinthian" was actually an insult. To "Corinthianize" meant to defile, to bring to the lowest moral level possible.
- B. The Corinthians were known as being:
1. Intellectually alert,
  2. Materially prosperous and
  3. Morally corrupt.
- C. The Corinthians were as lascivious as they were scholarly. This tells us two things about education:
1. Education, by itself, is not enough.
  2. Education not built upon God's word can be as evil as anything can be.
- D. One of Corinth's largest problems was prostitution.
1. The temple of Aphrodite, which was the goddess of love, was here in Corinth. The temple had a thousand female "priests" (priestesses) who sold their sexual favors to the men of the city.
  2. Many other sins were brought to Corinth by the soldiers and sailors who travelled to the city. Corinth was sought out by worldly people because it was so sinful (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- E. The problem of worldliness.

1. Worldliness crept into the church in Corinth. Proper efforts to keep the church pure had not been made. An attitude of indulgent "open-mindedness" led to the toleration of immorality. Consider these things:
    - a. It was bad when Lot moved his house to Sodom; it was worse when Sodom moved into his house.
    - b. It is good for a boat to be in the water, but it is a bad for water to be in the boat.
    - c. It was good for the church to be in Corinth, but it was bad for the worldliness of Corinth to be in the church.
    - d. In the past God had a temple for His people. Now, He has a people as His temple.
  2. May God help us not to be fashioned according to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2).
- F. What a challenge Corinth presented to Paul! He desired to establish a church of the Lord in one of the most wicked cities of the world.

### **III. THE LETTERS TO CORINTH:**

- A. First Corinthians is the most business-like of all of Paul's epistles. He had a number of subjects he dealt with and he presented them in a very orderly fashion.
- B. First Corinthians was a letter of rebuke written by an apostle to correct an imperfect church.
- C. As a result of the two letters Corinth became the recipient of more direct teaching than any other church of which we have a record.
- D. Paul went to Corinth alone and soon made friends with Aquilla and Priscilla who had recently been driven from Rome (all Jews were being expelled from Rome). They were tent makers just like Paul. He needed money so he went to work making tents with them while still preaching the gospel.
  1. Soon Timothy and Titus joined him in his efforts to evangelize giving him much needed support and encouragement.
  2. First, Paul preached to the Jews until they rejected him.

3. Then he spent more of his time with the Gentiles and did not return to the synagogue any more.
- E. Corinth was politically Roman, socially Greek but religiously it was Roman, Greek and eastern Asian, all in one. So, when the gospel came to Corinth it was virtually made available to the whole world.
  - F. These epistles give us a good picture of the life and problems of the first century local congregation. They show that factions (divisions), moral carelessness, lack of reverence, abuse of their spiritual gifts and other doctrinal problems had already set in. Paul's letters to Corinth give us inspired instructions on how to deal with these problems.
  - G. Despite the fact that the congregation was filled with faults, division was never recommended as the solution. The Corinthian Christians were told to reconcile and end their divisions.
  - H. Paul mentions several major faults in First and Second Corinthians but still calls them the "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1). Not once did He say they were no longer God's people.
  - I. Having Paul's second letter to Corinth is very helpful for our understanding of his first letter to Corinth. The main motive for Paul's second letter seems to be to express his relief at the good news Titus had brought to him about the improved attitude and actions of the Corinthians.

## INTRODUCTION

### Writer

We should make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The writer whom God used to reveal this epistle was the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 1:1).

### Language

This letter was originally written in Koiné Greek. The word "Koiné" means "common." This is a fitting name because it was the common language used by the people in that day.

### Date and Place of Writing

The dates of First and Second Corinthians:

First Corinthians - somewhere between 52 and 57 A.D.

Second Corinthians - within one year after First Corinthians was written.

Paul was anxious to get a report concerning the effect his first epistle had on the situation at Corinth. From Ephesus he journeyed to the coast at Troas, where he hoped to meet Titus. However, when Titus did not come he crossed over the sea into Macedonia to learn the condition of the Lord's church in that region. It was here, possibly at Philippi, he met with Titus and learned of the good response his first letter had received (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-7). This meeting prompted his second letter to Corinth perhaps written from Macedonia or when he returned to Ephesus.

### Key Verses

2 Corinthians 4:3-5  
2 Corinthians 4:16-18  
2 Corinthians 5:1  
2 Corinthians 5:10  
2 Corinthians 9:6-7  
2 Corinthians 11:13-15

### Key Word

The key word is "comfort" (in some form) found 13 times in this epistle (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 6; 2:7; 7:4, 6-7, 13; 13:11).

## Key Verse

2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

## The Purposes of the Letter

1. To express the joy and encouragement Paul felt at their favorable response to his previous letter (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 7:8-9,12-13).
2. To let them know about the persecution he faced while preaching in Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).
3. To explain the reason for his inability to visit them (2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4).
4. To explain to them the joys, sufferings and rewards of being an apostle of the Lord and minister of the gospel (2 Corinthians 2:14; 7:4).
5. To express to them their responsibility to forgive the one who was guilty of sexual immorality, mentioned in the previous epistle, who had since repented (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).
6. To command them to not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).
7. To teach the Corinthians the right attitude concerning giving. Encouraging them to complete the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians chapters 8-9).
8. To deal with those few individuals who continued to stand in opposition to his apostleship and teaching (2 Corinthians chapters 10-13).
9. To prepare the Corinthians for his upcoming visit (2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1-3, 10).

## SECOND CORINTHIANS OUTLINE

Salutation .....	1:1-2
I. Explanation of Personal Conduct .....	1:3-2:13
II. The Defense of his Ministry .....	2:14-7:4
A. The Nature of his Ministry .....	2:14-3:18
B. The Sincerity of his Ministry .....	4:1-6
C. The Perseverance of his Ministry .....	4:7-15
D. The Prospect of his Ministry .....	4:16-5:10
E. The Sanctions of his Ministry .....	5:11-19
F. The Example of his Ministry .....	5:20-6:10
G. The Appeal of his Ministry .....	6:11-7:4
III. Comments on the Effects of the First Letter .....	7:5-16
IV. The Grace of Giving .....	8:1-9:15
V. Personal Defense .....	10:1-12:13
VI. Preparation for a Visit .....	12:14-13:10
Conclusion .....	13:11-14

## SECOND CORINTHIANS EXPOSITION

### SALUTATION ..... 1:1-2

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia:*

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God - This is Paul's usual opening but here it could carry an additional aspect of defense, since some in Corinth were questioning his right to be an apostle. Paul makes it clear in this opening statement that he did not take the office to himself (Acts 9:1-9; 26:14-18; Galatians 1:1, 11-16).

Those who claim to be apostles today do so without Bible authority. The Apostles we read about in the New Testament were men sent to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. The word "apostle" literally means one sent as a messenger. This is not mere testimony, but the ability to give an eye-witness account (Acts 1:21-22; 10:39-41; 1 John 1:1-3). These men were not self-appointed witnesses. They were sent by Jesus Himself, hence the name apostle (Acts 1:8). Today, sometimes people will claim they are witnessing for Christ. However, they cannot actually be witnesses. They were not present when Christ walked this earth. They did not see Jesus die and they did not witness His resurrection. The apostles offered personal testimony concerning the things they saw and experienced. Those who claim to be apostles or witnesses today do not have the requirements necessary to make such a claim.

And Timothy our brother - Paul is not saying that Timothy was a co-writer of this letter. He is simply sending greetings from Timothy as well.

Timothy was a young man of Lystra, who accompanied Paul on the apostle's second and third missionary journeys and was the recipient of two epistles from the apostle. The name "Timothy" is the English form of the Greek name "Timotheus."

Timothy was of both Jewish and Greek ancestry. He was the son of Eunice, a Jewess, by a Greek father who may have been dead when Paul first visited their home (Acts 16:1).

To the church of God which is at Corinth - The English word "church" is a translation of the Greek word (EKKLĒSIA) which is defined as "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly." The word can have a religious significance when associated with a religious context. Therefore, the phrase found here means those who have been "called out" by

God to "assemble in His name."

Please note the following descriptions for the church:

1. The church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2)
2. The church of Christ (Romans 16:16)
3. The house of God (1 Timothy 3:15)
4. The church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15)
5. The church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)

The devil has deceived many people into believe that there is nothing in a name. If this is true, why did God change Abram's name to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Sarai's name to Sarah (Genesis 17:15) and Jacob's name to Israel (Genesis 35:10)? The name someone or something wears is important.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome he said, "The churches of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16). The congregations who were sending their greetings to their fellow Christians in Rome were called "churches of Christ." Therefore, one congregation would be called a church of Christ. **This should not be thought of as an official name, but a description. It is the church belonging to Christ.**

The church you read about in the New Testament did not wear any man-made name or names of men. The names in the Bible for the Lord's church are not denominational names. They do not refer to different churches, only to God's one true church. In each name we can see God and His Son being glorified. **However, it should be understood that having the right name does not guarantee it is a true New Testament church.**

With all the saints - The Corinthian brethren are called "saints." The word "saints" is an English translation of the Greek word (HAGIOS) that means "holy, sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated." All Christians are saints (Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Philemon 1:5).

1 Peter 1:15-16, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

Who are in all Achaia - Under Roman power Greece was divided into two main parts. Macedonia was the region to the north and Achaia was the region to the south. Paul writing to "all" Achaia may indicate that there were more congregations in this area.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace to you and peace - Paul wishes both "grace" and "peace" to these brethren at Corinth. "Grace" is the standard opening of a Greek letter and "Peace" is the standard greeting of a Hebrew letter.

Grace literally means "unmerited favor." Grace is unearned but not unconditional. It means blessings from God that the sinner does not deserve or merit. Salvation is thus conceived as something given to man, not as a matter of debt, but as an undeserved gift. In short, man cannot achieve heaven by works of merit, but works of obedience are required (Ephesians 2:8-9; James 2:20-26; Titus 2:11-14). [For additional information please see the appendices - FAITH AND WORKS]

"Peace" is the state of life for the Christian - peace with God. This is not talking about physical peace (Matthew 10:34; Romans 12:18), but spiritual peace brought to mankind through Christ (Luke 2:14).

God's law shows to man his sin, accuses his conscience, declares the wrath of God and leaves man in depression and guilt. However, obedience to God's plan of salvation cleanses his sins and places him in Christ (Galatians 3:27) that brings both grace and peace to his life.

## I. EXPLANATION OF PERSONAL CONDUCT .....1:3-2:13

**Important Note: The context (vs. 4-14) shows that the words "us, our, ours, we and ourselves" refers to Paul and Timothy in each verse.**

1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - The Greek word translated as "blessed" in this verse literally means, "good words." The word is used to show gratitude and adoration to God. The phrase, "blessed be" is equivalent to, "praise be to God." It shows thanksgiving, confidence and joy in God.

Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

The Father of mercies - From the Greek phrase (PATĒR TON OIKTIRMOS) that literally means, "the Father, the merciful one." The word "mercies" also carries

the idea of pity or compassion. We desperately need God's mercy (cf. Psalm 103:13).

And God of all comfort - 2 Corinthians 7:6 describes God as the One who "comforts the downcast."

The English word "comfort" is a translation of the Greek word PARAKLĒSIS. This is a form of the Greek word (PARAKALEŌ) that is a compound word meaning, "to call to one's side." This is the key word for the entire book. It is used ten times in these five verses (verse 3 - once; verse 4 - four times; verse 5 - once; verse 6 - three times and verse 7 - once). It is used a total of twelve times in chapter one.

Who comforts us in all our tribulation - Literally, this is "the one comforting." The Greek word translated as "tribulation" (THLIPSIS) is defined as "a pressing, a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, distress, straits, anxiety, burdens." The idea is of grapes placed in a winepress and all the pressure applied that is needed in order to remove the juice.

This same Greek word is used to describe:

1. War - Matthew 24:21.
2. Being in want - 2 Corinthians 8:13.
3. Childbirth - John 16:21.
4. Being in prison - Philippians 1:16.
5. Persecution - Acts 11:19.
6. The affliction of widows - James 1:27.

That we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God - The word "trouble" is the same Greek word for tribulation (THLIPSEI) found in the previous phrase.

Paul is saying, God comforts us (Paul and Timothy) so that we can comfort others:

1. God comforted Paul and Timothy so they could comfort the brethren.
2. When we are strong we can help the weak.
3. When we partake of God's comfort, we can comfort others.

If you are going to be a comforter:

1. You must be a sympathizer.
2. To be a sympathizer you have to love others.
3. Christians are tools in the hands of God to bring comfort to those in afflictions.

1:5 *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.*

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds - Notice, once again that "consolation" (PARAKLĒSIS) is tied directly to affliction.

Through Christ - Sufferings and consolation are both connected to Christ:

a. Sufferings - connected to Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

b. Consolation - connected to Christ, or more correctly "comes through" (DIA) Christ. The word "consolation" is the same Greek word translated as comfort in the previous two verses.

1:6 *Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation - Notice the word "your" in this verse. Paul is now addressing the Corinthian brethren. Paul and Timothy are their examples and comforters, for they bear all things for the salvation of the Corinthians.

Which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer - The Greek word (HYPOMONĒ) translated as "enduring" is defined as a patient endurance, perseverance. Literally, it is "a standing under" (cf. Luke 8:15; 21:19; Romans 5:3; Hebrews 12:1; James 1:3-4; 5:11; Revelation 13:10; 14:12).

**Christians are partakers of sufferings.** The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that suffering is a part of every Christian's life (cf. Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:1-4, 16; Revelation 1:9-10).

1:7 *And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.*

And our hope for you is steadfast - The Greek word for "hope" (ELPIS) means, "desire, expectation and patient waiting." "Steadfast" comes from the Greek word (BEBAIA) that means, "stable, firm, sure, unshaken and constant."

We know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation - This is a promise made by Paul to the Corinthians. If they

endure they will receive comfort!

- 1:8 *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia - The phrase "came to us" would be better translated as "befell us" - the nature of trouble is so uncertain.

We were burdened beyond measure above strength, so that we despaired even of life - In the original Greek this phrase literally means, "we were completely over cast with burdens." The idea is of being "weighted down."

Paul may well be referring to the trouble with Demetrius in Acts chapter 19. Paul thought he would be killed so he left the city, because it was too much to bear (Acts 20:1).

- 1:9 *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,*

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves - The Greek phrase used here (TO APOKRIMA), is a technical judicial term and is not used anywhere else in the Scriptures.

That we should not trust in ourselves but in God - All that Paul endured was for a purpose. He learned to more fully trust God and not himself or indeed any man. We all need to learn this kind of full and complete trust in God (cf. Psalm 23:1-6; 34:19; 55:22; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

Who raises the dead - The Greek phrase (TŌ EGEIRONTI TOUS NEKROUS) is literally, "The one raising the dead." The phrase is present tense which means this process was begun when God raised Jesus from the dead, but it continues. Paul's situation was so close to death that it was like a resurrection.

- 1:10 *who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,*

Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us - Paul uses this word ("deliver") three times in this verse. Since God did deliver Paul, he says to the Christians at Corinth He will continue to deliver us both now and in the future. Nothing is too great for God. God's purposes will be done.

- 1:11 *you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.*

You also helping together in prayer for us - The word for "prayer" in this verse is defined as "to be in want, to need, to ask, to request, to beseech."

- a. Many had helped and would help by adding their prayers for Paul and Timothy.
- b. This involved many in their deliverance.
- c. It leads to much thanksgiving.

Concerning the importance of thanksgiving compare 2 Corinthians 9:12; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7; 4:2 and 1 Timothy 4:3-4.

That thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many - The Greek word (PROSŌPŌN) translated as "thanks" literally means, "faces" or "presence." The word paints a picture of thanksgiving expressed from many cheerful faces. Their happy faces being an offering of thanks to God.

The word "gift" comes from the Greek word (CHARISMA) that can be translated as "deliverance." Therefore, the gift granted to Paul and Timothy in this context is deliverance from persecution.

1:12 *For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*

For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity - Paul and Timothy could say with confidence and a clear conscience that they had conducted themselves in simplicity and godly sincerity in all of their actions.

Not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you - Paul and Timothy did not depend on their own wisdom or the wisdom of men, but on God's grace. This is how they behaved themselves before the world and especially before the Christians at Corinth.

1:13 *For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end*

For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand - The message here is that **God's word is understandable**. What Paul is in essence saying is, "I am writing this message so that you can read it and understand it."

Notice some marks of God's word:

- 1) God's word has no covert (secret) meanings.
- 2) God's word has no ambiguities.
- 3) God's word is not evasive.
- 4) God's word does not use tricks of language.

Those who were ignorant and unstable twisted Paul's words to mean what they wanted them to mean.

2 Peter 3:15-16, "And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."

1:14 *(as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

(as also you have understood us in part) - The Corinthian brethren had partial understanding of the work of Timothy and Paul:

- a. When they were with them the brethren had only partially understood.
- b. If the Christians at Corinth had understood completely, the divisions would not have occurred.

That we are your boast as you also are ours - The apostle is saying the Corinthians would be rejoicing in Timothy and Paul in the same way that Timothy and Paul would be rejoicing in them. When?

In the day of the Lord Jesus - This refers to the return of Jesus. This seems to indicate that there will be recognition of each other in the judgment.

1:15 *And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit —*

And in this confidence - "Confidence" (PEPOITHĒSIS ) literally means, "in full trust and assurance."

- a. There are four Greek words that are translated as "confidence."
  - 1) HUPOSTASIS - Confidence founded in reality, knowledge of reality (2 Corinthians 11:17).
  - 2) PEPOITHESIS - Full trust and assurance (in God). It is an attitude of trust, faith or conviction in that reality (2 Corinthians 8:22).
  - 3) THARRHEŌ - Hope (in the promises of God). It is a spirit of courageousness in the full assurance of the dependability of God (Hebrews 13:6).
  - 4) PARRHESIA - A bold outward expression of confidence. The exuberant expression of God's word in our lives (Acts 4:13; Hebrews 10:13).
  
- b. There seems to be a progression from 1 to 4:
  - 1) Knowledge of God's word.
  - 2) Faith in the Bible's teaching to the extent of obedience.
  - 3) Hope in receiving the blessings promised in God's word.
  - 4) Bold outward expression of faith based on the knowledge of God's will in the Scriptures and hope of eternal life.

I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit - Literally, "that you might have a second grace." Grace is from the Greek word (CHARIS) that is defined as "benefit, favor or gift."

The first grace ("benefit") was his previous 18 month stay (Acts 18:11). The second benefit would be another extended stay. As an apostle of Christ, Paul could provide much benefit to the Corinthian brethren (Romans 1:11).

Paul had intended to come for a visit sooner, but was forced to change his plans. This provided his enemies with an opportunity to use his change of plans as an excuse to discredit him. Paul probably learned of this attack from Titus.

1:16 *to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea.*

to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and

be helped by you on my way to Judea - This decision was made prior to First Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 16:5-8 presents his new plans. There was also an interval of six months to one year between these two letters.

1:17 *Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?*

Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? - A better translation of this phrase would be, "did I show fickleness when I made this plan?" It could be that his enemies charged him with fickleness (not being reliable) because his plans changed. They may have been saying Paul's word could not be trusted. This had already been answered by Paul in his first letter to them.

1 Corinthians 4:18-19, "Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power."

Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? - He is asking, "Do I say 'yes' at one time and 'no' at another time?" This would show a double mindedness (James 1:6-8). Paul did not make his plans carelessly and he is not like the people in the world who sometimes say "yes" when they mean "no." Paul's word does not waver between "yes" and "no."

1:18 *But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No.*

But as God is faithful - Paul explains that God, who is faithful, would answer for him against any foolish charge of fickleness. The enemies would see that God was with him by the power and blessings (benefits) that would be a result of his visit.

1:19 *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us - by me, Silvanus and Timothy - was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.*

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us - by me, Silvanus and Timothy - was not Yes and No - In other words, Jesus Christ did not prove to be fickle (untrustworthy).

Silvanus is the longer form of the name Silas. He first appears as one of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) who had been given the gift of prophecy (Acts 15:32). Like Paul, he appears to have been a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). He was selected by Paul as a companion for his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40; 17:10). At Berea, Silas was left behind with Timothy, while Paul proceeded to Athens (Acts 17:14). He rejoined Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5). His presence at Corinth is mentioned several times in the Scriptures (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1

Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

But in Him was Yes - Jesus has shown Himself to be the absolute truth (cf. Jn 14:6; Revelation 3:7,14).

- a. Jesus is always one way - positive (constructive).
- b. He is always faithful.
- c. Christ would not choose an apostle to preach His gospel who was untrustworthy and fickle.
- d. Preachers may change, but one thing does not change - the true gospel of Christ. It is always the same (Galatians 1:6-9).
- e. Christ is always the "Yes," He is always dependable.

1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen - There are many promises of God through Christ and they are all faithful and trustworthy, not unreliable.

- a. Whatever promise the Lord makes is sure, you can depend on it.
- b. They are stamped with the divine "amen" (truly, verily).
- c. Truth is His name (John 14:6).

To the glory of God through us - Paul was rejoicing that his preaching and the work of his fellow laborers contributed to the glory of God.

1:21 *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,*

Now He who establishes us with you - God is the one who confirmed the work of Paul and his fellow workers to the Corinthians (Acts 2:1-4; 9:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13). Paul is saying, "Put your faith and trust in God who established (confirmed) my work with you."

And has anointed us - Anointing is the act by which a person or instrument is consecrated to God for His exclusive use. Paul, his fellow workers, the Christians at Corinth and indeed all Christians are set apart by God for His use.

In the Old Testament, Prophets (1 Kings 19:16; 1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15), Priests (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 3:3; Exodus 29:29; Leviticus

4:3; 16:32), Kings (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 1 Kings 1:34, 39) and even inanimate objects like temple furnishings (Genesis 31:13; Exodus 30:26-28; 40:9; Numbers 7:1) were "anointed" to show that they were set aside for God's use.

In the New Testament we see two passages that relate to the anointing of believers that makes it clear that all Christians are "anointed" (2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27). Christians belong to God exclusively and are consecrated for His use.

Today many in the religious world use the term "anointing" to refer to a high emotion, strong feeling or to identify some person who they believe has special powers from God or the Holy Spirit. However, this is not how the Bible uses the word. We must be careful to use religious terms in the same way they are used in God's word.

1:22 *who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit.*

Who has also sealed us - The Greek word for "sealed" is used to signify a stamp as with a signet. A seal was used for letters to proclaim ownership, to guarantee genuineness and to assure secrecy and security.

The Spirit in our hearts as a deposit - The Greek word for "deposit" means "a pledge, earnest or down payment." It is deposited by a purchaser in pledge of full payment (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). This giving of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a Christian is the seal of God's promise of everlasting life, and a pledge concerning the fulfillment of that promise.

1:23 *Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you, I came no more to Corinth.*

I call God as witness against my soul - Paul calls for God to be his witness that he did not come directly from Ephesus to Corinth, so that he might spare them. He delayed his trip to give them time to change their ways. He was hoping his first letter (1 Corinthians) and the messengers he sent to deliver the letter might convince them to change their ways before his arrival.

To spare you I came no more to Corinth - Paul gives the reason for his change in plans. Notice, it was not as his enemies charged that He was afraid to come (1 Corinthians 4:18) or unreliable (2 Corinthians 1:17), but as a result of his desire to give them time to change (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:21).

1:24 *Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.*

Not that we have dominion over your faith - The enemies could have twisted his phrase, "spare you" as an indication that Paul felt he was a lord over them. Paul clearly teaches that one Christian (even an apostle) does not have lordship over another Christian or Christians. Any religious group that violates this principle is not following the Scriptures.

God's word is the rule and standard and it is not to be tampered with (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). The phrase "your faith" does not indicate a freedom to create one's own system of salvation.

Jude 1:3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

By faith you stand - A better translation of the Greek here would be, "for by **the** faith you stand."

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain."

2:1 *But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.*

I would not come again to you in sorrow - This seems to indicate he had been with them before in sorrow (1 Corinthians 2:3).

- a. Paul felt his ministry was to bring joy (2 Corinthians 1:24).
- b. Paul wanted to give them time to repent and change.
- c. Paul had his heart and soul in his work. Compare this with the work of Jesus (Luke 19:41-44).

2:2 *For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?*

For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? - Truth must always be presented, especially when sin raises its ugly head (Galatians 4:16; Ephesians 4:15). Paul was grieved because of their problems:

- a. To improve their problems, he had to cause them to be sorry.

- b. However, he could only be made happy by the Corinthians when those who caused the grief had repented.
- c. The only way for all to be happy was for them to change and go back to following God's way.

2:3 *And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.*

And I wrote this very thing to you - This refers to another letter. Probably 1 Corinthians, but perhaps even another letter (1 Corinthians 5:9).

Lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy - That is why Paul wrote to them the way he did. So, that when he came for a visit, he wouldn't be sorrowed by the ones who should have given him the greatest joy. He should get joy from them (cf. John 4:36).

Having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all - Paul had confidence they understood that his joy came from their joy.

2:4 *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.*

For out of much affliction - The Greek word translated as "affliction" (THLIPSIS) is defined as "a pressing, a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, distress, straits, anxiety, burdens." The idea is of grapes placed in a winepress and all the pressure applied that is needed in order to remove the juice. Paul wants the Christians at Corinth to understand the depth of his emotions for them.

Anguish of heart - This the English translation of the Greek word (SYNOCHĒS) that means, "a holding together, containing, constraining, compressing, such as choking or throttling."

I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved - There is no doubt that Paul wept often for his brethren (Acts 20:19,31; Philippians 3:18).

But that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you - The Greek word (AGAPĒ) translated as "love" was the highest form of love.

- a. This is the kind of love that seeks the best for others.
- b. It is a love that is willing to help a person come out of their sin.
- c. Sometimes Christians will not say anything about a person's sinful

condition because they don't want to hurt their feelings or jeopardize their friendship with them.

- d. They claim their silence shows how much they love them, but it is actually cruel to remain silent. It is closer to hate. It is not loving to remain silent concerning their lost condition.
- e. If we truly love others we will want to help them to recognize their lost condition.
- f. Yes, it will cause them to sorrow, but godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2:5 *But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent - not to be too severe.*

But if anyone has caused grief - Here Paul begins to address the individual mentioned in his previous letter who was guilty of "sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). From this it appears that:

- a. The Corinthian brethren obeyed Paul's instructions expelling this person who was guilty of incest from their fellowship.
- b. Titus had brought him this news (2 Corinthians 7:5-10).

He has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent - Paul emphasizes the fact that the injury caused by the sin was not to him, but to the church.

- a. It was the church that had delivered him to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5), so now that he had repented it must be the church that restores him.
- b. Paul is teaching them congregational responsibility.

Not to be too severe - The phrase "all of you" was not used by Paul to be "too severe." He was saying "to some extent" all had been affected by this sin. Paul is only here concerned with the grief this incestuous individual had caused the congregation.

2:6 *This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man,*

This punishment which was inflicted by the majority - Paul is here speaking of the majority of the congregation.

- a. It could be that some were against such discipline, while others may have been holding out for "more severe punishment."

- b. Or this could just be an idiom standing for the whole church.

Is sufficient for such a man - "Sufficient" comes from the Greek word (HIKANON) that means, "enough, adequate, fully sufficient."

- a. Paul is saying the punishment produced the proper response in the sinner. It was now time, since he had repented, to welcome him back into the fellowship of the church.
- b. The punishment spoken of is found in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.
- c. Evidently, this man had not been received back after his repentance.

2:7 *so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.*

So that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him - The phrase, "on the contrary" means, "Stop doing what you are doing and do what I am instructing you to do now." In other words, "receive him with gentleness" that requires two things to be done:

- a. Forgive (Matthew 18:21-35; 6:14).
- b. Comfort (Galatians 6:1-2).

Lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow - They should be aware that excessive grief can cause harm with such an abundance of sorrow and despair (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

2:8 *Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*

I urge you - Paul is saying, "I beseech you." The word "urge" comes from the compound Greek word (PARAKALEŌ) that means, "to call to one's side."

To reaffirm your love to him - "Reaffirm" comes from the Greek word (KUROŌ) that means "to make valid, to confirm publicly."

Love - It is important that we love both the individual and the church (1 Peter 2:17). What is good for the individual soul will also be good for the church.

2:9 *For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.*

That I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things - Paul was also testing them:

- a. We never know how an individual or a congregation will react.
- b. Some individuals or congregations will not allow themselves to be cleansed (Revelation 2:5 – congregation at Ephesus).
- c. But, there must always be obedience in all things!

2:10 *Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,*

Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive - Paul is showing confidence in them. Corinth (or any congregation of that day) did not need to submit each case of discipline to an apostle. Also, the church did not need to wait to welcome a fallen brother or sister back into fellowship once repentance is shown.

For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ - All congregations operate under Christ's authority.

2:11 *lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

Lest Satan should take advantage of us - Satan was seeking greater gain than that one sinner. He would have loved to alienate the Christians at Corinth from Paul. (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:11).

For we are not ignorant of his devices - To be "ignorant of his devices" is to not understand, or be aware of, Satan's thoughts and purposes.

2:12 *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,*

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel - Notice it is Christ's gospel. It is the good news **from** Christ and **about** Christ.

And a door was opened to me by the Lord - Paul found an opportunity there for the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

- a. Christians should pray for open doors (Colossians 4:3).
- b. When Jesus opens the door, no one can close it (Revelation 3:8), but if we are not looking we can pass by an open door.

2:13 *I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.*

I had no rest in my spirit -

- a. Paul is not portrayed as one who is detached, cold and self-consumed.
- b. His love and concern for the church was always with him (2 Corinthians 11:28).
- c. Paul had deep concern for the churches. We must also show this same deep concern for congregations of the Lord's church.

Because I did not find Titus my brother - This indicates that this was a prearranged meeting place. Paul may have been thinking the worst without news from Titus. Paul had a planned trip and so, he continued to Macedonia (1 Corinthians 16:5; Acts 20).

I departed for Macedonia - Under Roman power Greece was divided into two main parts. Macedonia was the region to the north and Achaia was the region to the south.

**II. THE DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY .....2:14-7:4**

**A. THE NATURE OF HIS MINISTRY.....2:14-3:18**

2:14 *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

Now thanks be to God - Just as Paul had declared his concern for the churches, he now declares his gratefulness. Titus had returned with the good news of the victory of truth in Corinth.

Who always leads us in triumph in Christ - The idea expressed here in the Greek word for "triumph" is of a triumphal entry into Rome by victorious troops.

And through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place - In a Roman triumphal entry into the city of Rome the streets were lined with flowers and the idolatrous shrines in the city burned perfumes so that the victorious troops were surrounded with pleasant aromas when they returned.

The knowledge of Christ is symbolized as a pleasant aroma communicating its nature and value through the apostle's work. It was permeating the world as a cloud of perfume. Christ through the apostles gave the knowledge of Himself to mankind (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

2:15 *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and*

*among those who are perishing.*

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ - Paul continues his illustration of the fragrance.

- a. Here the apostles (and by extension all preachers) are the fragrance of Christ.
- b. Christ Himself is a sweet-smelling aroma (Ephesians 5:2).
- c. Other sacrifices are a sweet-smelling aroma (Philippians 4:18).

Among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing - The message and the messengers are the same to all people. The difference comes within the individuals as they either accept or reject the gospel.

2:16 *To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

To the one we are the aroma of death to death - The Greek phrase here is literally, "out of death into death."

- a. The imagery is perfect - To the vanquished it is death on the victor's triumphal return home at the end of the march.
- b. However, this death is due to their own rejection of the gospel.
- c. Death leads to death.

Revelation 21:8, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

- d. The condemned can smell death in the gospel message, but the saved smell the sweetness of salvation.

And to the other the aroma of life to life - In the original Greek this phrase it literally, "out of life into life."

- a. This life is due to their own acceptance of the gospel.
- b. Life leads to life.

1 Timothy 6:18-19, "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for

themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

And who is sufficient for these things? - Every true preacher of the gospel considers the tremendous responsibility in proclaiming the message of truth that brings life or death to the hearers depending on their response. The preacher is sufficient only if he preaches the truth as revealed in God's word.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

2:17 *For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God - "Peddling" is from the Greek word (ΚΑΡΕΛΕΥΩ) that means, "to be a retailer, to make money by selling anything."

But as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ - Paul and his helpers were sufficient for these things because their message was from God. They were preaching God's message in all sincerity and truth.

3:1 *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?*

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? - Paul and Timothy had a close relationship with the church at Corinth. They did not need letters of recommendation.

Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? - The word "epistles" means "letters." Letters of recommendation were not needed, because they knew Paul and Timothy just as well as Paul and Timothy knew them.

3:2 *You are our epistle written in our hearts known and read by all men;*

You are our epistle written in our hearts known and read by all men - It should be remembered that Paul established the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1-11). His efforts were done through great trials and afflictions. It is not surprising that those who obeyed the gospel were very dear to him, having a prominent place in his heart.

Known and read by all men - The Christians at Corinth were known as a work of Paul. Their story naturally spread throughout the congregations of the Lord's

church. Also, the brethren at Corinth were so close to his heart that Paul often made mention of them to others (2 Corinthians 9:2).

3:3 *you are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*

You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us - They are seen as a light unto the world, an epistle of Christ (cf. Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:15-16). They are cherished in the heart of Paul and those with him, but they are observed by the world.

Written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God - Paul is saying that people are reading the epistle of Christ in your conduct. The implication being, if people cannot see Christ in your conduct they will not be interested in your teaching.

- a. It was not ink, but the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), which was written on their hearts. The Holy Spirit works through the revealed truth (John 17:17) to sanctify (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).
- b. The revealed teachings of God through the Spirit had been written on their hearts by their acceptance of and obedience to those things.
- c. They had obeyed Paul's teaching because they had witnessed the miracles of the Spirit that had confirmed the word (Mark 16:20).

Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart - This was not like the law of Moses that was written on tables of stone. The new law of Christ is written on the hearts of men when it is accepted, obeyed and lived.

3:4 *And we have such trust through Christ toward God.*

And we have such trust through Christ toward God - Paul had great confidence in what had been accomplished because his confidence was based entirely in Christ.

- a. His work as an apostle came through Christ (2 Corinthians 1:1).
- b. His sufficiency was from God (2 Corinthians 3:5).
- c. Paul has confidence that this letter will have the desired effect.

3:5 *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,*

Our sufficiency is from God - Paul explains that God is the source. It was God who made Paul sufficient as a minister.

- a. Sufficiency is not of self but of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- b. And God supplies it through Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

3:6 *who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Who also made us sufficient - Once again it is God who made them sufficient as ministers (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1).

As ministers of the new covenant - Clearly there is a new covenant, and since there is a new covenant it is implied there is an old covenant. We no longer live under the old covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Hebrews 8:7-13, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming

obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Colossians 2:14, "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Hebrews 8:6, "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."

Not of the letter but of the Spirit - The "letter" refers to the old covenant as it was written and engraved on stones (cf. Exodus 28:11-12; Deuteronomy 27:8; Joshua 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:7). The "Spirit" refers to the gospel, the new covenant, for it was given by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:4; 1 Pet 1:12). How does Paul describe the new covenant?

- a. It is the "ministry of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:8).
- b. It is the "ministry of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 3:9).
- c. It is "that which remains" (2 Corinthians 3:11).
- d. It is "the gospel" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
- e. It is the "treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

For the letter kills - The "letter" refers to the old covenant because it brought the knowledge of sin and death, but it could not give life, because no one could keep its requirements perfectly (except Jesus). Since the Jews could not keep the law of Moses perfectly it could only lead to death (Romans 7: 9-11).

But the Spirit gives life - This refers to the new covenant (Romans 1:16; 8:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:2). The Spirit is the author of all true spiritual life.

Jesus said in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."

3:7 *But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,*

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones - The "ministry of death" (old law) was weak through the flesh (Romans 7:10; 8:3) though it was holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12 cf. Romans 3:7; 8-12; Galatians 3:10).

Was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of

Moses because of the glory of his countenance - This refers to an event that took place when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the old law.

Exodus 34:29-30, "Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So, when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him."

Exodus 34:33-35, "And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him."

Which glory was passing away - The Greek word (KATARGEŌ) for "passing away" means "abolish, destroy, do away, vanish away, make void" (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:11, 13-14 and 1 Corinthians 13:8). The old law was short lived. The law of Moses appears to be without glory when compared to the law of Christ. In a similar way, the stars in the night shine brightly until the rising of the sun.

Matthew 17:1-5, "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

3:8 *how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?*

How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? - The "ministry of the Spirit" refers to the gospel (new covenant). What can we say about the gospel?

- a. It is for all nations (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 3:16).
- b. It is for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).
- c. It brings mercy (2 Corinthians 4:1).

- d. It brings life (Romans 8:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:2).
- e. It is a better covenant with better promises (Hebrews 8:6).
- f. It requires a greater sacrifice (Christ vs. animals) (Hebrews 9:12-15).

3:9 *For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.*

For if the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory - It was not that the old law was without glory, but that its glory was far exceeded by the glory of the gospel.

3:10 *For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.*

For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels - The law of Moses appears to be without glory due to the overwhelming glory of the Law of Christ.

3:11 *For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.*

For if what is passing away - The King James Version has the better translation here - "that which is done away." The thing that was done away in this context is the old law.

This context serves as an undeniable rebuke of a prominent false doctrine. Certain individuals teach the Sabbath law is still binding on Christians. In an attempt to answer obvious inconsistencies in their theory they claim there is a difference between the "law of Moses" and the "law of God." They say the "law of God" was only the 10 commandments and the "law of Moses" was the ceremonial laws. They say the "law of Moses" was done away with being nailed to the cross, but the "law of God" was not.

However, we know Paul is including the ten commandments in this chapter because he says they were written on "tables of stone" (2 Corinthians 3:3) and "engraved on stones" (2 Corinthians 3:7). Also, the current verse plainly teaches the covenant that was written on the stones "is done away" (KJV). Therefore, when the Bible says that Jesus abolished the law, it means all of the Old Testament law, including the 10 commandments.

Someone may ask, "If the 4th commandment to keep the Sabbath has been done away does that mean the other nine commandments are also not binding today? Can we murder, steal, lie, commit adultery and covet?"

Certainly not! We cannot do these things, but NOT because they are a part of the law of Moses, but rather, because these things are condemned in the Law of Christ as part of the New Testament (Romans 13:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:1; Ephesians 6:1-2; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:28; Revelation 21:8; Colossians 3:5).

What remains is much more glorious - This refers to the new covenant being much more glorious.

- a. Death gives way to life (Romans 7:9-10; 8:1-2).
- b. Condemnation gives way to justification (Romans 3:20-24).

3:12 *Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech —*

Since we have such hope - The law of Moses made nothing perfect, but the bringing of a better hope did (Hebrews 7:19). The better hope brought by Christ is the hope found in freedom from sin, and everlasting life in heaven.

We use great boldness of speech - "Boldness of speech" is frank, open and courageous. It is based on a firm conviction of the truth and glory of the gospel.

3:13 *unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.*

The children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away - Their eyes were not allowed to see this symbolic figure that represented the fading and eventual end of the old law (Ephesians 3:5).

3:14 *But their minds were hardened. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.*

But their minds were hardened for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament - This was a figurative veil on their hardened hearts. Many Jews simply could not comprehend the end of the old covenant. They refused to accept Christ's law and authority. This veil remained even in Paul's day. Therefore, there was persecution by the Jews against the Lord's church (Acts 8:1). Even some of the Jews who converted to Christianity tried to bind the old law on the Gentile converts (Acts 15:5; Galatians 5:1-7).

Because the veil is taken away in Christ - Note that the old covenant was done away in Christ (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:17; 10:9).

3:15 *But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart - Instead of

seeing and understanding clearly their hearts were veiled by their prejudice. Therefore, they could not see Christ as they should have and, thus, they rejected Him (cf. Romans 9:31-33; 3:21-22).

- a. Moses predicted Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).
- b. However, many Jews would not accept Him (John 5:39-47).

3:16 *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

When one turns to the Lord - This refers to a Jew being converted to Christ. When they understand the truth the "veil" is removed. This is not anything miraculous.

Psalms 119:104, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore, I hate every false way."

Psalms 119:130, "The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple."

Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

3:17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

Now the Lord is the Spirit - Some say this is the Holy Spirit and others say it is Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45). However, the message is the same. Jesus writes on the Christian's heart the new law and has taken away the old law. He does this by the Holy Spirit inspired word.

In his *Bible Commentary*, E.M. Zerr states, "That Spirit means the one referred to in verse 3 and others in the chapter. The Lord is that Spirit in the sense that He gave the new covenant to the world through the inspired apostles, and whoever receives that covenant enters into a state of liberty— freedom from the old law."

In *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, J.W. Shepherd explains it this way - "Now Moses is 'the letter' and where the 'letter' of Moses is there is bondage (Galatians 4: 24-25); but 'the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'"

3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord - We

see Christ in the gospel (cf. James 1:25).

Are being transformed into the same image - The Greek word translated as "transformed" is METAMORPHOŌ. This is the same Greek word found in Romans 12:2.

Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed (*METAMORPHOŌ*) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

From glory to glory - This is a progression. Sanctification is a progressive process (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Just as by the Spirit of the Lord - This can also be translated as, "even as from the Lord who is spirit."

- a. Sanctification is from the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- b. Sanctification is through the truth (John 17:17).

**B. THE SINCERITY OF HIS MINISTRY.....4:1-6**

4:1 *Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.*

Therefore, since we have this ministry - This is the "ministry of the Spirit" and the "ministry of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 3:8-9) that is the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

As we have received mercy - Paul is thinking about the mercy he had received from the Lord.

1 Timothy 1:12-14, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."

We do not lose heart - To "lose heart" means to be discouraged or experience despair. Paul and those preaching the truth will not falter in their service for Christ even in the face of extreme persecution.

4:2 *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame - The English word "renounced" is a translation of the Greek word (APEIPOMĒN) that means, "to declare off-limits or forbid for oneself." The "hidden things of shame" are those things that bring shame when exposed (cf. Ephesians 5:12; Jude 1:11-13).

Not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully - "Craftiness" is using trickery or underhanded methods. The Greek word here can also be used in a non-sinful way to describe being skillful or clever (2 Corinthians 12:16; cf. Matthew 10:16). The word "deceitfully" is defined as to act in such a way to ensnare or corrupt. The idea here is of not adding or corrupting the pure "word of God" in order to "catch" the crowd. Why do some intentionally corrupt the pure word of God?

- a. To gain earthly things (Philippians 3:18-19).
- b. To gain power and a following by telling people what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3-4).
- c. To cause divisions (Romans 16:17).
- d. To satisfy their covetousness (2 Peter 2:2-3).

But by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God - Paul used an honest and complete preaching of the truth to convert those who were sincerely seeking the word of God. The preaching of God's word impacts man's conscience by revealing to him his sin, and showing him the results to come because of his guilt.

4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,*

But even if our gospel is veiled - Why is the gospel "veiled" to them? The next verse explains that it is because they "do not believe."

To those who are perishing - This phrase in the Greek is present tense and literally means the ones perishing themselves.

4:4 *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe - The "god of this age" is Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 14:30; Ephesians 2:2). These are those who refuse to believe the preaching of the gospel because their minds are

blinded to truth by the evil of this world. How does the devil blind the minds of people?

Ephesians 4:17-19, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them - The gospel provides light. It illuminates so the truth can be seen.

John 1:4, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

John 3:19-21, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

John 8:12, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

Christ, who is the image of God - We should not misread this to think that Christ the Son is merely the image of God the Father. Jesus should be thought of as Deity in the form (image) of human flesh (Philippians 2:6). Seeing Christ is seeing Deity (John 14:9; 12:45; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus shares fully in the divine nature. He became flesh to live as a man (John 1:1-3, 14).

Each of the three Persons in the Godhead is called God. The three Persons in the Godhead are not attributes of God, but they each have ALL the attributes of God. **The Bible tells us there is only one God, and yet there is distinctly God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.** There are several verses where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all mentioned in one passage (Matthew 28:19; John 6:62-65; 1 Peter 1:2). What can we conclude from these verses? **There is only one essence of God (Deity), but there are three Persons within that essence.** The Godhead means three distinct Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one distinct God.

4:5 *For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

For we do not preach ourselves - Paul, and the other preachers of truth, did not preach their own doctrines, and they did not preach to exalt themselves for their own honor and glory (1 Corinthians 2:1-4; 3:6-7).

But Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake - A better translation of "Christ Jesus the Lord" would be "Christ Jesus as Lord." Paul, and the other preachers of truth, taught they were servants (slaves) of both Christ and the brethren (Romans 1:1; Ephesians 6:6; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 2:16; 1 Corinthians 9:19).

4:6 *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness - Genesis 1:3 records for us, "Then God said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light."

Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ - How? All of this occurs when the heart believes the gospel. The source of this light is the divine face of Jesus Christ and it is communicated to those who will open their hearts to receive the truth. Notice, the process Paul describes. The light was shined from the face of Christ to him, and by him it was reflected to the world (consider the light in Paul's conversion). He taught the world those things revealed to him by the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus.

Luke 1:78-79, "Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."

**C. THE PERSEVERANCE OF HIS MINISTRY .....4:7-15**

4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels - The "treasure" is the gospel with all of its power to bring light to a dark world of sin. Man is described as being an "earthen" vessel (a pot or jar made from clay). It was a common vessel of the day. Man is **of** the earth (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; 1 Corinthians 15:47; 2 Timothy 2:20).

For the "treasure in earthen vessels" consider the story of Gideon and the events of Judges 7. It was by the breaking of the earthen vessels that the light was revealed (Judges 7:16).

That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us - Literally, this means the power is God's. The power is not the vessel, but what is in the vessel!

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

1 Corinthians 2:3, "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."

1 Corinthians 3:7, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."

4:8-9 *We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed —*

Hard pressed - To squeeze, press upon, distress, trouble.

Not crushed - To be in a narrow place, straiten, to be in straits, to be cooped up, to be cramped from action.

Perplexed - To be in difficulties, perplexed, without direction, unable to find a way out.

Not in despair - To be in the utmost perplexity or despair.

Persecuted - To be pursued, followed.

Not forsaken - To be abandoned, left behind, forsaken. They would not be forsaken even in death.

Struck down - Cast down, or thrown to the ground.

Not destroyed - To utterly destroy, to bring to nothing, to make void.

4:10 *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus - What the enemies once did to Jesus they now do to his disciples and ministers (John 15:17-21; Colossians 1:24).

That the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body - Paul is saying that through persecution and suffering, their bodies continued to share in the life and death of Jesus. In this way the life of Jesus was seen by their example.

4:11 *For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake - This verse is an explanation of verse 10.

That the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh - The life of Jesus is manifested in this sense:

- a. Jesus' disregard for physical suffering and death is duplicated in Paul's (and the other preachers') disregard for their physical bodies.
- b. They showed by their lives that Jesus truly is the resurrection and life.

John 11:25, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'"

- c. In their disregard for life, the life which is life indeed is visible.

4:12 *So then death is working in us, but life in you.*

So then death is working in us, but life in you - Their constant threat of death for preaching the truth, accomplished life in their converts. It was the threat of death in Paul and his associates, but eternal life in their converts.

4:13 *But since we have the same spirit of faith according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,*

But since we have the same spirit of faith - They had the same spirit of faith that David wrote about in Psalm 116:10 when he stated, "I believed, therefore I spoke, 'I am greatly afflicted.'"

- a. Nothing could deter Paul from proclaiming the gospel. Even, if it cost him his life he would still preach the truth.

- b. Peter also serves as an excellent example of this courageous attitude (Acts 4:5-22).

4:14 *knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.*

Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus - The resurrection from the dead removes all fear (1 Corinthians 15:20, 51-57).

And will present us with you - The Christians at Corinth would be Paul's crown of rejoicing in the judgment day. Here he reveals his confidence that God, who had raised up Jesus, would raise him up with all other believers on that great day. This is what encouraged him through all the trials of affliction and provided him with the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

4:15 *For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.*

For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many - All that God had done for Paul and all the suffering he had endured and work he had done for the Corinthians was for their benefit.

May cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God - The more Paul suffered and labored, the more God's grace was made known and received. The more it was received the more thanksgiving would be shown to God's glory. It was worth the cost because of the value of thanksgiving being given to God.

**D. THE PROSPECT OF HIS MINISTRY .....4:16-5:10**

4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

Therefore, we do not lose heart - Paul did not get discouraged, because his sufferings brought glory to God and salvation to those he converted, like the Corinthians.

Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day - The word "perishing" implies destruction, but the idea here is that of progressive decay. The process of renewal and decay is going on each and every day in the Christian's life.

- a. The inward man grows stronger (1 Peter 3:4; Hebrews 5:12-14).
- b. The inward man is perfected in sanctification (2 Corinthians 7:1).

- c. The inward man is accumulating spiritual riches (Philippians 4:17; Luke 12:33; Matthew 6:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 3:14).

This verse emphasizes the distinction between the physical and spiritual natures of man. It is the difference between the mortal and immortal. Only the physical part of man decays. The spiritual part of man will spend an eternity in either heaven or hell.

- 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory - The present sufferings of Christians cannot be compared to eternal glory (Romans 8:17-18). Notice the word "light" in this verse is used in the sense of weight. The phrase "working for us" should be thought of literally as, "is working out or achieving."

- 4:18 *while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen - Notice the use of the word "look" from the Greek word (SKOPEŌ) meaning, "to view attentively, watch, observe, take care, beware, to mark, note, consider." The lesson is not to keep our eyes (attention) occupied with matters of this life while neglecting to consider the matters of the next life.

For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal - What should we learn from this?

- a. We are to, "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).
- b. We should consider the example of Abraham.

Hebrews 11:10, "For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Hebrews 11:14-16, "For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

- c. We should consider the example of Moses.

Hebrews 11:24-26, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

5:1 *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent is destroyed - This description of a temporary dwelling place (tent) is used for our fleshly bodies in which we dwell. This connects to the preceding chapter in that it is the fleshly body that suffers the trials and persecutions. Our fleshly bodies are perishable (mortal) and will return to the dust.

Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it."

James 2:26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens - This will be a permanent building as opposed to a tent. Christians will be given a spiritual body from God that will endure forever in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:38). Notice in the language Paul is using that he has no doubt concerning these things.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44. "So also, is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

5:2 *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,*

For in this we groan - The phrase "in this" refers to our physical bodies. In our current flesh we groan. This groaning is due to our life here and our longing for the life beyond in heaven.

Earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven - "Earnestly desiring" means to desire greatly or to long for something. In this case, we long for our spiritual bodies so that we will be in heaven and be free from physical pain and suffering (Revelation 21:4).

5:3 *if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.*

If indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked - The word "naked" is used to describe the loss of our fleshly body. If we are stripped of our fleshly body before our spiritual body is ready, we shall be "naked" (in an unprotected and ruined condition).

When the caterpillar is in its cocoon it seems to be burdened by it, but it is actually a protective shield. While it is in this shell it is developing itself for a better life. When the time is right it leaves this old shell behind and emerges with its new glorious body as a butterfly. The butterfly rises upwards to the sky for its new life. The cocoon (shell) had served its purpose to protect the caterpillar as it was developing. While it is required for the butterfly's new life to leave the old shell, it would be certain destruction for the caterpillar to strip off the old shell before the new butterfly's body was fully developed. Like the caterpillar, a man is encased here for a time with a fleshly body or covering, while his spiritual body is being developed. When ready, the fleshly body is laid aside so that the spiritual body may rise to the home above prepared by the Savior (John 14:1-3). God prepares man's spiritual body while man is developing spiritually in his fleshly body. This is his time to prepare himself for his spiritual body from heaven. However, if one is stripped of their mortal body before they are fully developed spiritually they are ruined and fit for destruction.

5:4 *For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened - Once again, this groaning is due to our life here and our longing for the life beyond in heaven.

Not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed - It is not that we do not want a body, but we want a spiritual body.

That mortality may be swallowed up by life - The Greek word translated as "is swallowed up" (KATAPINŌ) is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 15:54 that says, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" There is nothing left of mortal life; it is completely swallowed up.

We look forward to the spiritual body that will not be bothered by decaying flesh, but that will swallow up that old decaying body that we inherited from the first Adam and take on the body of the second Adam (Christ), the life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).

5:5 *Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God - God's aim and goal is that we might have spiritual life. He prepares us for immortality by the instructions He provides to us in His word. Through the obedience and conforming to His word we are disciplined and trained to grow spiritually.

Who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee - The word "guarantee" is also translated as "earnest." An earnest is money that is given as a down payment or pledge that the full amount will be paid later. In the context of this verse it is a foretaste of a more complete favor yet to come.

Paul is speaking of the new, spiritual bodies that faithful Christians will receive the day the Lord returns. How do we know God the Father will give Christians a new body when the Lord returns? He has guaranteed in His word, revealed by the Holy Spirit, and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

It is also possible that the Holy Spirit Himself is the "guarantee" of the inheritance. Such an assurance was given and seen in the miracles done by the apostle and Christians in the first century who had been given miraculous abilities by the laying on of the apostle's hands, and in a lesser measure upon all Christians who receive all spiritual blessings provided to faithful disciples of Christ.

5:6 *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*

Therefore, we are always confident - The word "therefore" connects this verse with the previous verses. Paul had great confidence in the promises made by the Lord concerning the future blessings to be found in heaven.

Knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - Paul did not fear any persecution that might come his way. If his earthly body were killed he had a spiritual body that was far better. While on this earth he was "absent from the Lord," so his death would only bring greater blessings.

5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

For we walk by faith - This continues the thought of 2 Corinthians 4:18.

2 Corinthians 4:18, "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

This is faith in the eternal promises of God. It is by faith that we know the promises are true (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1). Faith is believing fully and completely in God's promises based on the evidence of the Scriptures. **Faith is not "a blind leap into the dark" without evidence.** Walking by faith requires obedience. It is taking every step based on the commands of God. We have no hope for the good things God has promised if we refuse to obey those conditions on which His promises are based.

Not by sight - To walk by "sight" is to walk after the temporary things of this world. What does a man who walks by sight do?

- a. He makes material things his god.
- b. He cannot control his fleshly desires or passions.
- c. He seeks the praises of men.

1 John 2:15-16, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."

5:8 *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

We are confident, yes - The confidence spoken of in this verse is courage born of a walk of faith.

- b. We long for heaven; the things not seen.

Well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord - Additional information concerning this is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:21-26, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again."

5:9 *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*

Therefore, we make it our aim - The phrase "make it our aim" comes from a compound Greek word (PHILOTIMEOMAI) that means "to exert one's self, use one's utmost efforts, to endeavor earnestly." The King James Version translates this as "labour."

Whether present or absent - Please compare this phrase with verses 6 and 8.

2 Corinthians 5:6b, "...knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8b, "...well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

To be well pleasing to Him -

- a. It is the hope of heaven that motivates one to be purified from sin (1 John 3:3).
- b. The Christian belongs to the Lord (Romans 14:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:10).
- c. The chief concern is to be pleasing to God!

5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ - The theme of the previous verses naturally calls to mind the judgment. So, we are not surprised to see Paul now begin a discussion concerning everyone's appearance before the judgment seat of Christ.

Several verses in the New Testament address the day of judgment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; Romans 2:5; 14:10-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:15). The word "appear" is a translation of the Greek word that means, "to be manifested or to be made known." Did we obey the commands of Christ or not? Our spiritual condition will be made known on that day. It cannot be hidden.

Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

That each one may receive the things done in the body - We will be judged according to our actions. God has given us free will to decide for ourselves what we will do with our life; and we will be held accountable for the choices we made.

According to what he has done, whether good or bad - The judgment we receive will be completely fair, based on our actions.

Romans 2:5-11, "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who 'will render to each one according to his deeds': eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."

**E. THE SANCTIONS OF HIS MINISTRY.....5:11-19**

5:11 *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men - Paul explains that one of the motivating factors for the work he was doing in preaching the gospel was a perfect understanding of the coming judgment. His desire was to help as many as possible to become Christians so as to avoid facing the "terror" of the Lord. Fear of the Lord can keep one from sin (cf. Joseph - Genesis 39:9). Therefore, Paul preached the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

But we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences - Paul was governed by the fear of the Lord. He was honest and sincere in his desire to save souls, that the false teachers in Corinth had called into question. Both his honesty and sincerity were "well known" to God and he trusted (hoped) the Corinthians would also see the genuineness of his actions.

5:12 *For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer those who glory in appearance and not in heart.*

For we do not commend ourselves again to you but give you opportunity to glory on our behalf - What he has been saying is not intended as self-praise or self-commendation. His words were meant to stop the mouths of the false teachers who had gained influence over the Corinthian brethren.

- a. Paul is giving the good brethren evidence to use against his critics.
- b. That they might value Paul's message (and ultimately follow Christ).

that you may have something to answer those who glory in appearance and not in heart - These false teachers glorified in appearance and were not true in heart. They gloried in the outward appearance of things, such as:

- a. Letters of commendation (2 Corinthians 3:1),
- b. Eloquence (2 Corinthians 10:10),
- c. and Jewish birth (2 Corinthians 11:22).

5:13 *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.*

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God - This may have been a criticism made against Paul by his enemies. The phrase "we are beside ourselves" comes from the Greek word EXISTĒMI, defined as "out of position or displaced." It is true that EXISTĒMI can be used to mean that one is out of their mind (Mark 3:21). However, it is the Greek word MAINOMAI that is defined as "mad or insane" (Acts 26:24). In this verse the word EXISTĒMI is probably being used in the sense of Paul and Timothy being "carried away" in their zeal. If they were beside themselves it was to promote God's message of salvation.

Or if we are of sound mind, it is for you - Though his character might be seen by some as being carried away in zeal, he could not be charged with exalting himself. His zeal was for God. Paul's characteristics of sound judgment, patience and love were for the benefit of the congregation.

5:14 *For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died*

For the love of Christ constrains us - The Greek word for "constrains" (SUNECHŌ) means "to hold fast, to be in the grasp of." Christ's love is the supreme source of a Christian's motivation. It is the mainspring of a Christian servant's energy.

Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead - This is proof of His love.

It is important to note the phrase "one died for all" in this verse. "All" has a universal effect. This clearly teaches against the Calvinistic notion of the "elect" being the only ones for whom Christ died. The assurance that Christ died for me is that He died for all. This includes those who are lost today (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). Why? Because all die. This was the need for Christ's death, one must die because all die. Christ's love persuades Christians and motivates them to share His message of

salvation with others. Christians are embraced by the love of Christ in order to share the benefits of His death with others, because He died, because all die.

5:15 *and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves - Christians should no longer live for the gratification of the fleshly desires.

But for Him who died for them and rose again - We should live for Christ because we owe our redemption to Him. His death paid the price for our sins. In the resurrection, He overcame death so that we can overcome death. No grave could hold the Master and Creator of all things (cf. Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 2:4-10). All who are saved owe their salvation to Him.

5:16 *Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh - No consideration should be given to a man's ancestry. It makes no difference if a man is a prominent Jew or a lowly Gentile. Such distinctions are meaningless in Christ.

Galatians 6:15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."

Galatians 3:27-29, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer - No longer is their knowledge of Christ based solely on His fleshly ancestry as the seed of Abraham and the seed of David. The Corinthians were to know Him in a spiritual way. He is to be known as the Savior, Prophet, Priest and King. The Corinthians are not to respect fleshly attainments. Paul is their example:

Philippians 3:3-6, "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews;

concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ - The phrase "in Christ" (EN CHRISTOS) expresses location. We can only be "in" Christ through baptism. In Galatians 3:27 Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In the Scriptures we find that God's plan for salvation has five requirements.

a. The first requirement is to **hear** the saving message of salvation (Romans 10:17). In other words, we must learn the truth before we can obey it.

b. The second requirement is to have **faith** (belief) that Jesus is indeed the Christ the Son of God (John 8:24; Mark 16:15-16).

However, this is not the only requirement. Faith alone will not save (James 2:14, 17, 24).

c. The third requirement of God's plan is **repentance**. The sinner is required to repent, which is composed of sorrow for sin and a change of will that results in a changed life (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

d. The fourth requirement is **confession**. The sinner is required to confess their faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:10).

e. The fifth requirement is **baptism** (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-19; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21). We must be baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of our sins (Acts 2:38).

f. Then the Christian must remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

He is a new creation - Christians are new creatures turning away from their past lives of sin. Christians have been born again (cf. John 3:1-8; Galatians 6:15).

Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new - Christians are no longer tied to, nor cling to, their former lives. This change (new birth) occurs when one obeys God's plan of salvation found in His word.

1 Peter 1:22-25, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another

fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."

5:18 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,*

Now all things are of God - The opportunity to be "in" Christ is of God (John 3:16; Colossians 1:19-22).

Who has reconciled us to Himself - Sin separates us from our God (Isaiah 59:1-2). However, the gift of His Son gives us the opportunity to restore our relationship with the Father.

Through Jesus Christ - The phrase "through Jesus Christ," should be translated literally as, "by the means of Jesus Christ." God has never been the enemy of man. God has never harmed or wronged man in any way. "God is love" (1 John 4:8-16), and always seeks the best for man. When man chose to sin, God in His grace and love provided the way of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is not God who needs to be reconciled. It is man who needs to be reconciled and God is willing and able to save to the uttermost those who come to Him through Christ in faith and obedience (Hebrews 7: 25).

And has given us the ministry of reconciliation - God committed unto the apostles the ministry of reconciliation. He provided them with the conditions by which man could be reconciled to God. The apostles were His ambassadors to make known the terms of reconciliation to mankind. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the miraculous abilities bestowed upon the apostles confirmed them as His ambassadors, and enabled them to show to the world that they had the right (authority) to proclaim the words of reconciliation.

5:19 *that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself - God the Father was the Creator (source) of the system (method, plan) for man's redemption (John 3:16; Luke 22:42; Genesis 3:15; 2 Peter 3:9). The Greek word for "reconciliation" means, "to return to favor." We are thus returned to God's favor through the removing of our sins.

Not imputing their trespasses to them - God does not hold our sins against us in the sense that He is unwilling to offer forgiveness. He forgives the sins of all who obey His plan of salvation through Christ (Hebrews 5:7-9).

And has committed to us the word of reconciliation - Compare the phrase, "ministry of reconciliation" (verse 18) with the phrase "word of reconciliation" found in this verse. The teacher is but a messenger, it is the message that is the reconciliation. Also notice that the "word of reconciliation" is committed to men, not angels (2 Timothy 2:2).

**F. THE EXAMPLE OF HIS MINISTRY .....5:20-6:10**

5:20 *Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us - Paul explains the relationship the apostles had to the church at Corinth. The apostles were ambassadors of God. To scorn (reject) an ambassador is to scorn the One who sent him. God was speaking through Paul and the other apostles (John 14:25-26; 16:7-14). They did not invent or change God's message. The apostles were true ambassadors delivering the message they had been given accurately and completely. Therefore, the Corinthians should treat Paul with honor and respect since he was sent from God. **No man today has this position as an ambassador of Christ.**

In *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, J. W. Shepherd makes the following point:

"No preacher today has any new revelation, nor can he make any valid claim to be a witness of the resurrection. He has no authority to declare the remission of sins, but can only point people to the apostle's declaration on the subject. He may preach the gospel, but he can never reveal it. He has no message that is not already made known. Then he has not the credentials of an ambassador."

We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God - The word "implore" literally means, "we beg." In this Paul demonstrates his deep love and concern for the lost. It was an act of love that provided to man a way of salvation (Romans 5:6-8). Reconciliation is now their responsibility. God has not moved; but man has through sin. God's plan for man's salvation has two parts. Man must do his part!

God's Part:

1. Great love for man (John 3:16)
2. Giving His Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior (Luke 19:10)

3. The Gospel as "the power" unto salvation (Romans 1:16)
4. Providing atonement (forgiveness of sins) by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9)

Man's Part:

1. Hear the Gospel (Romans 10:17, John 8:32)
2. Believe the Gospel - the good news that Jesus is the promised Christ (Hebrews 11:6, John 20:31)
3. Repent of past sins (Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30)
4. Confess faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10, Matthew 10:32)
5. Be Baptized (Galatians 3:27, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38)
6. Be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10)

5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us - Jesus Christ lived a perfect life without ever committing a sin (cf. Hebrews 7:26-27; 4:15; John 8:46). However, God laid upon Jesus all of man's iniquity (Isaiah 53:6,11; 1 Peter 2:22-24; 1 John 3:5). Jesus became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). God charged Him to bear the sins of the world!

That we might become the righteousness of God in Him - The word "righteousness" means "justification, being acceptable to God" (Romans 1:17; 3:21-22). Christians are God's justified, God's righteousness. It is possible for mankind to lead a life of righteousness by being **in** Christ (Galatians 3:27; 1 John 1:7).

6:1 *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

We then, as workers together with Him - The phrase "workers together" is translation of the Greek word (SUNERGEŌ) that means, "to partner in labour together, to put forth power together and thereby to assist."

- a. "with Him" - Christians are working together with God to proclaim the good news of salvation found in obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9).

- b. If we are not working with God in the cause of Christ we are workers together with Satan (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 10:21).

Also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain - To "receive the grace of God in vain" would be in an empty, hollow way, to no purpose. The Corinthians had received it, they did not reject it. However, it can be received in vain if it is not held "fast" (keep firm possession of).

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain."

The Bible teaches the security of the believers in Christ (John 10:22-30; 1 John 5:11-13). However, this security is **conditional** on remaining faithful to Christ (John 8:31-32; Hebrews 3:12-19). The "once saved always saved" doctrine is false.

- a. Scripture makes it clear that some will "depart" from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Paul charged Timothy to keep the faith because some would "fall away" into apostasy (1 Timothy 1:18-20).
- b. The Bible teaches one can be in a saved state and then be lost based upon unfaithfulness to Him (Jude 1:5-6).
- c. God's word states that we have the choice to obey Jesus and have life or disobey Him and have death. The choice is ours (John 3:36; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:38-47).

To enjoy the benefits of salvation we must be in Christ, because in Christ there is salvation (2 Timothy 2:10). It is only in Christ where all spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3). If we are outside of Christ we are lost, that is why Jesus told His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1-6).

6:2 *For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time behold, now is the day of salvation.*

For He says - Here Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:8.

"In an acceptable time, I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." - The application of this verse by Paul is that God is willing to comfort and save those who listen to His call (the gospel - 2 Thessalonians 2:14) and obey Him.

Behold, now is the accepted time behold, now is the day of salvation - We and the Corinthians live in an opportune and accepted time. There is a "now" running through the ages. God is always ready, willing and able to save all who will submit to Him and be saved in the way He has commanded.

6:3 *We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.*

We give no offence in anything - The word "offense" is a translation of the Greek word (PROSKOPĒ) that is translated as "to do something which causes others to stumble, i.e. leads them into error or sin."

That our ministry may not be blamed - Literally this is, "be not blemished." Paul is reminding them how he had conducted himself in matters of liberty (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:13).

6:4 *But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,*

But in all things, we commend ourselves as ministers of God - Paul and his coworkers were seeking to live in such a way that others would commend them, and regard them as true ministers of God. If a minister is not **living** the truth he will not be successful at **preaching** the truth. It is useless and hypocritical for him to tell others, "Do as I say, not as I do." A minister's hypocrisy will do overwhelming damage to the Lord's church.

In much patience - The Greek word for "patience" here is (HUPOMONĒ), defined as "a standing under, endurance, steadfastness, perseverance." The approved conduct of Paul and his co-workers was patiently maintained even in times of persecution and difficulties.

In tribulations - This is the Greek word (THLIPSIS), defined as "pressure, pressed on all sides, many afflictions, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble." Please notice that this is one of many plurals in Paul's list.

In needs - These are those things (ANAGKĒ), imposed by necessity, forced, by compulsions against one's will.

In distresses - This is the Greek word (STENOCHŌRIA) that literally means, "narrowness of room." It is used to express "dire calamity, extreme affliction."

6:5 *in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;*

In stripes - This describes the wound marks left on one's back after being whipped (Acts 16:23; 2 Corinthians 11:24-25).

In imprisonments - This refers to being put in confinement under guards (Acts 5:17-40; 16:16-40).

In tumults - This is a translation of the Greek word (AKATASTASIA) that means, "instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion" (Acts 14:19; 18:12-13; 19:23-41).

In labors - This is from the Greek work word (KOPOS) defined as, "to cause one trouble, make work for him, intense labor united with trouble and toil."

In sleeplessness - This is from the Greek (AGRUPNIA) meaning, "to be sleepless, kept awake, sleeplessness" (Acts 20:11).

In fastings - The Greek word here is NĒSTEIA, meaning "without food days and nights." This can be voluntary or involuntary. It could even be due to long journeys.

6:6 *by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,*

**[The things mentioned in the next two verses (6 and 7) are a detailed list of the conduct Paul and his coworkers engaged in to be commended and regarded as true ministers of God (verse 4).]**

By purity - The original word here (HAGNOTĒS) is defined as "with pureness of motive, uprightness of life." Paul sought to lead a life "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

By knowledge - This is from the Greek word GNŌSIS signifying knowledge, general intelligence and understanding. This indicates the knowledge of the truth of the gospel.

By longsuffering - "Longsuffering" is a translation of the Greek word (MAKROTHUMIA) meaning, "patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness and perseverance." Longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). In Paul's case, this would mean the patience needed in dealing with those who were rebellious.

By kindness - This is from the Greek word (CHRĒSTOTĒS) defined as moral goodness, integrity and gentleness of character or demeanor. This would be especially needed by Paul toward those who mistreated him (Romans 12:20-21).

By the Holy Spirit - Paul's revealing of the truth in his preaching and teaching was guided by the Holy Spirit. It is also not surprising that we see the Holy Spirit mentioned in this context when we consider the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

By sincere love - The phrase "by sincere love" comes from the Greek phrase (AGAPĒ ANUPOKRITŌ) describing affection that is unfeigned, undisguised and sincere. It is not hypocritical (Romans 12:9). Paul had a sincere concern for the spiritual condition of others.

6:7 *by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,*

By the word of truth - This means that as a minister of God Paul used God's word (John 17:17), not human philosophies (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Power of God - This phrase ties directly to the word of truth (Romans 1:16). It is not to be by the power of man. Paul is giving credit to God, not man, for the power of the gospel to save.

Armor of righteousness - This Greek phrase literally means, "arms, weapons." The word "armor" (HOPLON) is translated "instruments" in Romans 6:13. This included right hand (weapons), offensive, as the sword and left hand (weapons), defensive, as the shield.

Ephesians 6:11-17, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

**[The next nine pairs are paradoxes. A "paradox" is a seemingly self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained proves to be well founded and true. In these verses, Paul is showing both the favorable and unfavorable conditions he faced as a minister of God.]**

6:8 *by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;*

By honor and dishonor - "Honor" is from the Greek word (DOXA) that means, "glory." It can also be translated as "favorable opinion." "Dishonor" comes from

the Greek word (ATIMIA) meaning, "without honor, un-honored, less esteemed." This was going on in Corinth at that time concerning Paul. Paul was shown honor by some and dishonor by others.

By evil report and good report - The Greek word here for the phrase "evil report" (DUSPHĒMIA) means, "defamed, ill spoken of, slandered" (cf. Acts 28:22; Romans 3:8). The phrase "good report" is a translation of the Greek word (EUPHĒMIA) meaning, "the utterance of good or auspicious words, praise." This was a good report from good brethren (2 Peter 3:15). Paul was slandered by some at Corinth while at the same time being praised by others.

As deceivers, and yet true - The Greek word for "deceivers" (PLANOS) means, "misleading or leading into error, or to lead astray [cf. Matthew 27:63; 1 Timothy 4:1 (seducing); 2 John 1:7]. They were called "deceivers," but they remained "true." "True" is from the Greek word (ALĒTHĒS) defined as, "truth, truthfulness or without error" (Galatians 4:16; Ephesians 4:15). Paul was accused of being a deceiver by some, but was never guilty of such a charge.

6:9 *as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live, as chastened, and yet not killed;*

As unknown, and yet well known - The word "unknown" (AGNOEŌ) is, "to be ignorant, men of no standing or prominence." The phrase "well known" (EPIGINŌSKŌ) is, "thoroughly, accurately and well known of God," but (previously) men of no standing. Paul was "unknown" in the sense of worldly fame, but well known by God and the faithful.

As dying, and behold we live - The phrase "as dying" (APOTHNĒSKŌ) is, "soon to be dead and gone, to disappear from this earth" (2 Corinthians 5:1-10), and yet he says "we live" (ZAŌ) meaning, "they kept on living" (2 Corinthians 4:11; John 11:25; Matthew 28:20). Paul's life was threatened often, but he continued to live for Christ.

As chastened, and yet not killed - "Chastened" (PAIDEUŌ) is, "to be instructed or taught, to cause one to learn, to chastise or castigate with words or blows, to scourge or whip" (cf. Revelation 3:19; Hebrews 12:5-11). This is possibly a quote from Psalm 118:17-18. "Not killed" (MĒ THANATOŌ) is "not put to death or destroyed." Paul's enemies had done much to physically harm him, but he did not die.

6:10 *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing - "Sorrowful" (LUPEŌ) is, "to be sad, or grieved, a feeling of heaviness" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). "Rejoicing" (CHAIRŌ) is, "to be glad, joyful, to be filled with joy" (Romans 5: 3; Philippians 4:4). Paul was

sorrowful for those wicked ones who would not repent and obey, but he rejoiced in those who obeyed.

As poor, yet making many rich - "Poor" (PTŌCHOS) is, "poverty, destitute, beggarly." Being poor is not something that brings shame. It is actually following in the footsteps of Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9). "Rich" (PLOUTIZŌ) is, "abundance and wealth" (Titus 3:6). Paul was poor in material things, but he was rich spiritually and helping many others to be rich spiritually by their obedience to the gospel.

As having nothing, and yet possessing all things - "Having nothing" (MĒDÉN ÉKHONTES) is, "having nobody, no one and nothing." "Possessing all things" (PÁNTA KATECHONTES) is, "the whole, everyone, all things, everything." The contrast is two-fold:

- a. Between having and not having.
- b. Between temporary (having) and permanent (keeping).

**G. THE APPEAL OF HIS MINISTRY . . . . . 6:11-7:4**

6:11 *O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open.*

We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open - In chapters 3, 4 and 5 Paul has been explaining his actions and now he brings it to a conclusion. Paul had spoken "openly," he had not withheld anything needful (Acts 20:27). The Greek word for "heart" is perfect tense. In other words, his heart was wide open and was still wide open. Paul has poured out his innermost feelings to the Corinthians. The idea is an increased depth of sympathy and understanding. Paul wanted to assure them of the special place they had in his heart.

6:12 *You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.*

You are restricted by your own affections - Paul is saying that he has not restrained or limited his love for them (2 Corinthians 7:3). If there was a problem in the relationship it was on their part (2 Corinthians 12:15). They were restricted by the narrowness of their love.

6:13 *Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.*

Now in return for the same - The Greek word for "return" (ANTIMISTHIA) means, "recompence, repay or reciprocate."

(I speak as to children) - This is an expression of tenderness. It is like a father's loving voice to his children.

You also be open - This comes from the Greek word meaning: "1) to make broad, enlarge 2) be enlarged in heart, i.e. to welcome and embrace you in love." Paul is telling them, "expand your hearts." This same expression is used in the next chapter.

2 Corinthians 7:2, "Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one."

**[In this next section (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) there is a break in subject matter, BUT there is still continuance of thought. This is designed to show that Christians do stand for somethings and do stand against other things.]**

6:14 *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers - The faithful members are to separate themselves from the rebels in the church, as well as from all other leaders of evil (1 Corinthians 15:33). The unbeliever's yoke is to be avoided because the unbeliever would not take on the yoke of faith. A Christian must not join in the unbeliever's unfaithfulness. This does not forbid mere association (1 Corinthians 5:10).

a. This section does not provide all the examples of those with whom Christians must not be unequally yoked together, but it does include:

- 1) Unbelievers (verse 14 & 15)
- 2) The lawless (verse 14)
- 3) Those who live in spiritual darkness (verse 14)
- 4) The wicked - "Belial" (verse 15)
- 5) Those who worship idols (verse 16)
- 6) The unclean (verse 17)

b. Notice, it does not say marriage.

- 1) The question is, "Can it include marriage?"
- 2) Yes, but only under certain conditions.
- 3) This yoke is to be separated from us (v. 17) and cleansed of (2 Corinthians 7:1).

- 4) But, Paul says to remain in marriage with unbelievers so this would not apply in those cases (1 Corinthians 7:13-14).

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? - This is the first of Paul's five rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is a question not intended to require an answer. The answer is implied by the context. In this context the answer for each question is, "None!"

- a. "Fellowship" means "participation or sharing."
  - 1) "Righteousness" - (2 Corinthians 5:21)
  - 2) "Lawlessness" = Unrighteousness (Romans 8:7-8)
- b. "Communion" means, "partnership or association."
  - 1) "Light" - (John 1:5)
  - 2) "Darkness" (Ephesians 5:8)

6:15 *And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*

- a. "Accord" means, "harmony of words or agreement."
  - 1) "Christ" - (Ephesians 1:3)
  - 2) "Belial" is defined as, "worthlessness or wickedness." It is another name for Satan.

If there is no accord (harmony) between Christ and Satan, how can the children of God have true fellowship with the children of Satan?

- b. "Part" means, "portion, lot, calling, destiny or share."
  - 1) "Believer" - This term comes from the Greek word meaning, "faithful, true or certain."
  - 2) "Unbeliever" is equal to an infidel. This is just the opposite of a believer (Ephesians 4:17).

6:16 *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

- a. Agreement - "union, deposit along with or to vote with."
  - 1) Temple of God - This is a reference to the holy of holies (1 Corinthians 6:19).
  - 2) Idols - "image of a false god."

For you are the temple of the living God -

- a. Temple - again this refers to the holy of holies.
- b. Living God - This is present tense literally meaning, "the living One" as opposed to the dead false gods.

As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." - This is a direct reference to Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 11:20 (also see Hosea 2:23; Jeremiah 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; 32:38). Notice that Paul quotes Moses and the prophets but says that God spoke it. This is proof of inspiration. The quote from the Old Testament is a reference to the indwelling of the Father. The idea is that God is at home and His home is in us.

6:17-18 *Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

Therefore - In other words, because of all that Paul has just said they should be motivated to do the following named action.

Come out - Notice this is a command, there is no option! This is something that must be done to be pleasing to God (cf. Isaiah 52:11-12; 43:6; Ezekiel 20:34; Jeremiah 31:9).

Be separate - In the Greek this is second person, plural, first aorist, imperative, passive. Notice the passive voice = be ye separated **by** God!

- a. We are to come out of the world to live godly lives and
- b. God separates us for Himself.

7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

**[This verse should be included as part of chapter 6. It should be understood that the verse numbers and chapter breaks were added by men and therefore, not inspired.]**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit - Notice Paul's use of "us and "ourselves." Paul often includes himself in his admonitions. What does it mean to, "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit?"

- a. We are to keep ourselves from sin (James 1:27).
- b. We are to constantly turn to God (1 John 1:8-9).
- c. The word "filthiness" comes from the Greek word meaning, "defilement, pollution or stain."
- d. Jesus is the example to follow.

1 John 3:3-5, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin."

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God - Fear is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). If we are to be "perfect" (complete) we must not put our trust in our own wisdom (Proverbs 3:5).

7:2 *Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one.*

Open your hearts to us - Paul is telling them, "expand your hearts." This was also stated in the previous chapter (2 Corinthians 6:13).

- a. Notice they were to make more room in their hearts.
- b. The heart that has no room to add others has no room for Christ.

We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one - The denials in the verse of these three offenses may well refer back to the many rebukes the apostle had given them in his previous letter (1 Corinthians). In so doing he had not been unfair or unjust.

7:3 *I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.*

I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts - Paul is guarding against any assumption that he is condemning them. He loves them and is devoted to their spiritual interest.

To die together and to live together - Paul uses this language to show that he wants them to be in the Christian struggle with him (2 Corinthians 4:12).

7:4 *Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.*

Great is my boldness of speech toward you - He is making an appeal to them. He has not condemned them.

Great is my boasting on your behalf - Paul is letting them know he boasts about them. He does not boast about himself.

I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful - The Corinthian brethren had made such wonderful corrections since receiving Paul's first letter that it filled his heart with comfort and joy. This was known to Paul due to the report he had received from Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6-10).

In all our tribulation - The changes made by the Corinthians gave Paul joy and comfort notwithstanding the many tribulations he was suffering for Christ.

Romans 8:16-17, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us."

### III. COMMENTS ON THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST LETTER ..... 7:5-16

7:5 *For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.*

Paul recalls his unrest over them when he had not yet received word from Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). But while he was waiting:

- a. We were troubled on every side - In the Greek this literally means, "in every way being afflicted."
- b. Outside were conflicts - "Conflicts" comes from the Greek word meaning, "contention, disputes, strife, controversy, to fight, to quarrel."

- c. Inside were fears - The "fears" within may have been due to his anxieties about how the Corinthians had received his first letter. He may have had misgivings concerning how it would be received.

7:6 *Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,*

Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast - The Greek word for "downcast" here refers to depression through circumstances. This is one of the loveliest descriptions of God, "God who comforts the downcast (those who have been cast down, lowly)."

Comforted us by the coming of Titus - The troubles he faced seemed smaller after the arrival of Titus and the good news concerning the Corinthians. Paul truly loved them and cared for their spiritual condition.

7:7 *and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.*

He told us - The report was that they had received Paul's letter well. There were three main points made here:

- a. Your earnest desire - This refers to either their earnest longing to do their duty as Paul had commanded in his first letter, or their desire to see Paul.
- b. Your mourning - This would be their deep sorrow for their many failings enumerated by Paul in his first letter.
- c. Your zeal for me - This refers to their kind feelings toward Paul even though he had rebuked them sharply.

These three are the hoped-for reactions to any church discipline.

7:8 *For even if I made you sorry with my letter I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while.*

For even if I made you sorry with my letter - The word "sorry" here is a translation of the Greek word (LUPEŌ) meaning, "to be grieved, made sorrowful (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:1-4). Now Paul could go to Corinth with joy.

I do not regret it though I did regret it - Paul does not now regret the grief he had caused them for it produced good results.

Note: If Paul by inspiration wrote to them, how could he regret it? It is like

a loving parent who regrets the need to punish a disobedient child, but does not regret having done so, especially when the punishment produces the desired results.

7:9 *Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.*

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance - Paul rejoices at their godly sorrow and repentance. It is important for preachers to understand that you cannot induce a painless repentance because such does not exist!

For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing - The phrase "in a godly manner" means they had real, sincere sorrow for their sins. This is the kind of sorrow that is pleasing to God. Not the sorrow of the world that is only feeling sorry that one's sin is exposed. Their grieving led to a mending of their ways, so they suffered no loss. And the apostles did not lose them.

7:10 *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted - Worldly sorrow is sorrow for the consequences of being caught. Godly sorrow is sorrow for the pain our sins have caused to both ourselves and others. This kind of sorrow works toward repentance.

What is true repentance? It is not simply godly sorrow, for that is what produces repentance. It is not simply a change of life, for that is a result of repentance (Acts 3:19; Matthew 21:28-32). Repentance is actually a changing of the will (mind), caused by godly sorrow that produces a changed life (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 7:10). This kind of repentance is never regretted, but sin brings regret.

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But the sorrow of the world produces death - This kind of repentance is sorrow for the consequences of being caught – not for the sin against God. This sorrow produces spiritual death.

7:11 *For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*

For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner - In this verse Paul begins a more detailed explanation of the wonderful effect godly sorrow had on the Corinthians after they were rebuked for their sin of not condemning the member who was guilty of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Paul is praising them for their right attitude and action. Notice the great results that are produced by godly sorrow and repentance:

- a. Diligence it produced in you - "Diligence" comes from the Greek word (SPOUDĒ) meaning, "earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything" and doing it with haste.
- b. Clearing of yourselves - The Greek word here means, "a verbal defence, a speech in defence, or a reasoned statement or argument." The Corinthians had been guilty of wrong in their acceptance of sexual immorality in the church. Only by doing their duty could they then make a defence of their now corrected lives. As the last part of the verse says, "In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."
- c. Indignation - "Indignation" (to be pained) was felt by them when they were confronted by Paul's letter concerning their guilt in tolerating the immoral man in their fellowship. The pain they felt was the proper response to their guilt.
- d. Fear - "Fear" means their reverence for God. They had the proper fear of God concerning what might happen if they chose not to deal with the guilty man as they should.
- e. Vehement desire - The Greek word here (EPIPOTHĒSIS) means, "a longing for or earnest yearning." From the context this probably refers to their strong desire to satisfy God in removing the sin from their midst.
- f. Zeal - This shows they had a passionate enthusiasm and eagerness to make the needed correction.
- g. Vindication - This is not revenge in the sense of vindictiveness but the administering of justice or doing justice to all parties. It is the punishment of the guilty by the approved act of godly discipline. When a church imposes scriptural discipline on a guilty member, it does so by God's approval. Vengeance belongs to God and at times He can use the church to carry out His desire (Romans 12:19).

In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter - Notice the value of

Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians (given in love). Once they had been guilty of treating sin with a callous indifference, but now they changed their hearts and minds to be consistent with God's will.

Note: If they had not withdrawn from this erring member they themselves would have been impure. They would be involved in the sin by their acceptance of it.

7:12 *Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.*

Therefore, although I wrote to you - Paul is speaking about the letter he had previously written to them (1 Corinthians) and now he states his primary reason for writing that letter.

I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong. - This is a comparison of importance only (cf. Hosea 6:6). He did not **only** do it for their benefit. The fornicator and the man whose wife he wrongfully used, were not the only ones involved in this miserable incident. The entire congregation was affected by the situation.

1 Corinthians 5:6, "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

But that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you - Paul wanted them to see and appreciate how much he cared for them. He wanted them to stand justified before God. He saw his own personal feelings and the feelings of others as a small matter compared with their faithfulness to God on which their eternal salvation depended.

7:13 *Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.*

Therefore, we have been comforted in your comfort - Paul's greatest desires for them came true.

And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all - They had received Titus and the message he brought from Paul well. Therefore, Titus made a joyful report to Paul upon his return (2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

7:14 *For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true.*

For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed - Paul lets

them know that he had bragged on them to Titus, and Paul's compliments concerning them had proven to be true.

But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true - Just as Paul's preaching at Corinth had been the truth, so also were his words to Titus.

7:15 *And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.*

And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all,  
- The love Titus had for them was increased by his memories of their obedience. Obedience involves submission and compliance. Paul was telling them how much Titus loved them, and how much he was impressed by their attitude. Paul also stressed two important attitudes they demonstrated when Titus arrived.

How with fear and trembling you received him - This is the fear and trembling they had toward God when they considered the consequences of rejecting His word.

7:16 *Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.*

Therefore, I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything - Paul rejoiced in his confidence toward them. He was confident they would choose to obey God. The dark clouds had now passed, and his misgivings disappeared. However, there were still some further adjustments that needed to be made.

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## CHAPTERS 8 AND 9 GO TOGETHER

The subject is giving. The first information we have on collections is in 1 Corinthians 16:1 where we learn that the Galatian churches were already involved. One reason Christians give is to carry on benevolence (Galatians 2:10). For the historical background see Acts 20:4; 21:17-18; 24:17.

### THE GRACE OF GIVING

- I. Example of the Macedonian church..... 8:1-5
- II. Application of the example..... 8:6-15
- III. Transporting of the funds ..... 8:16-24
- IV. Further admonitions..... 9:1-15

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**IV. THE GRACE OF GIVING .....8:1-9:15**

8:1 *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:*

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you - Notice the use of the word "brethren" by Paul. He is reminding them of his closeness he has to them and the closeness that should exist in the family of God. This is an important reminder for what he is about to say considering brotherly love is the motive for generosity.

The grace of God - Giving comes from the source of God's unmerited favor. God gives that we might give (2 Corinthians 9:10).

Churches of Macedonia - The congregations in the region of Macedonia would include the congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 16:9; Romans 15:26). Of these it seems that Philippi had a reputation for generosity (Philippians 4:10, 15-16, 18). However, the other congregations probably contributed according to their ability, as they were praised for their stirred-up desire to help (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:2).

8:2 *that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*

That in great trial of affliction - The word "trial" would probably be better translated as "testing" or "proving." They gave generously (liberally), even in great "affliction" (persecution), that was a severe testing of their sincerity and devotion.

The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality- The phrase "deep poverty" is an adverbial expression to say their poverty went down to the depths. Their joy of salvation and deep poverty increased their liberality. Their poverty gave them empathy that poured forth in their gifts. The word "liberality" comes from the Greek word (HAPLOTĒS) meaning, "singleness in heart" that is "sincerity" in generosity and bountifulness.

8:3 *For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,*

For I bear witness - This comes from the Greek word (MARTUREŌ) meaning, "to testify as in a court of law, to put into the record, to give evidence, to declare."

That according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing - They gave not only to the full extent of what they normally could give, but beyond what Paul expected of them. Motivated by their willingness to do so they

gave freely in a sacrificial way.

8:4 *imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

Imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints - Paul is saying that they earnestly implored him to receive their gift as a favor, so they could have a part in ministering to the poor saints in Jerusalem and all men in the region of Judea (2 Corinthians 9:13).

8:5 *And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*

And this they did, not as we had hoped - Literally this means, "not as we expected." Their generosity was beyond what was expected.

But first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God - They put their welfare into the hands of the Lord. They were more than willing to physically suffer to help others who were in need. When Christians understand that they are not their own (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), they begin to realize that all they have belongs to the Lord. They followed Paul's directions and gave themselves to God by consecrating all that they had to His service through (or by the means of) His will.

8:6 *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.*

So, we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well - Paul was so encouraged by the example of the Macedonians, that he exhorted Titus to return to Corinth to complete his work of securing a liberal offering from these Gentile brethren.

8:7 *But as you abound in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us - see that you abound in this grace also.*

But as you abound in everything - "Abound" comes from the Greek word (PERISSEUŌ) meaning, "to be abundant, to increase, to advance, to be richly furnished, fully sufficient, more than enough." The Corinthians overflowed in Christian graces and virtues. Some say these attributes were miraculous, but the context does not support such a view.

- a. In faith - This was their faithful holding to the truth.
- b. In speech - Their ability to proclaim the good message of the gospel.

- c. In knowledge - This is their understanding or comprehension of God's word.
- d. In all diligence - This describes their drive or determination to live the spiritual life commanded in the Scriptures.
- e. In your love - They had shown their love for the Lord by their obedience to the gospel and their love for Paul by their acceptance of the message he preached.
- f. In this grace - In the same way they abounded in the attributes listed, he urges them to abound in the grace of liberality also. In this way they would show their love for their brethren.

8:8 *I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.*

I speak not by commandment - Paul had the authority to preach God's commands, but in this instance, he is not issuing orders, but using the example of the loving sincerity of others to test the love of the Corinthians.

8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ - Paul now uses the Lord as an example for them to follow. The "grace" of the Lord was to offer Himself completely as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

That though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich - In this verse we see the poverty of Jesus contrasted to His previous riches, which He possessed and enjoyed in the glories of Heaven. He gave it all up and came to earth as a man to show mankind how they could gain possession of such eternal riches.

Philippians 2:5-7, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

8:10 *And in this I give my advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago;*

And in this I give my advice - "Advice" comes from the Greek word (GNŌMĒ) meaning, "judgment, opinion or view." Paul had no intention of commanding them to provide funds for those suffering in Judea. However, he did give his judgment as to what was the right thing for them to do.

It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago - Their eager willingness to help the poor in the region of Judea had prompted them to begin the collections a year before. Now Paul advises them (not a command because he wanted it to be a freewill offering on their part) to complete the work that they had started.

8:11 *but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.*

But now you also must complete the doing of it - He is merely telling them that they should "follow through with it." We can learn from this example.

- a. Sometimes we have the "will" to do something, but we never "follow-through."
- b. We must not allow high resolve to end in partial execution.

1 John 3:17-18, "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

That as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have - Notice, there was a "readiness to desire it." Fulfilling their intentions to help was vital to achieve the desired result. The fulfillment of our good intentions requires effort and action.

Note: In order for faith to save it requires action.

James 2:14-17, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

8:12 *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*

For if there is first a willing mind - Their eagerness to help was already there.

It is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have - Let no man who is poor grieve because he has little to give for his readiness is acceptable (cf. Mark 14:3; 12:41-44).

Note: There is no such thing as acceptable, **unwilling** service to God (Isaiah 1:18-20).

8:13 *For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;*

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened - Paul was not saying that the poor in Judea should always be relieved and the Corinthians burdened.

8:14 *but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack - that there may be equality.*

But by an equality - Paul is teaching that if they had the means they should help those in Judea now who were in desperate need, so that if a time arose later when their situations were reversed those in Judea could help the Corinthians. In this way there was an equality in care and support.

8:15 *As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."*

As it is written - This is a quote from Exodus 16:16-18. Paul is here making an application from the gathering of manna in the wilderness. The lesson taught here is, if we give freely from our excess to help those in need, no one will be lacking.

8:16 *But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.*

But - This word indicates a new subject.

Thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus - Titus had gone to Corinth and had seen their spiritual condition. His earnest desire to help them was like their earnest desire to help the poor in Judea.

8:17 *For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own record.*

For he not only accepted the exhortation - When Paul exhorted Titus, he accepted the words of the apostle and was eager to deliver the message to Corinth.

But being more diligent, he went to you of his own record - Paul could have commanded Titus to go, but he went of his own accord voluntarily.

8:18 *And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,*

And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches - It was not necessary to name the brother. Some have speculated that this "brother" was Luke since he was at Philippi about this time, and was among those who accompanied Paul from Macedonia (or perhaps Corinth) to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-6). In the next verse we find that this "brother" was appointed to travel with Paul to distribute this gift, and Luke was one of those who often travelled with Paul.

8:19 *And not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,*

And not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift - This shows the respect and trust the area congregations had in this individual.

Which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind - It should be noted that the glory for the giving of this gift would rightly be attributed to the Lord. This was only right in that the Corinthians were not seeking their own glory for their generosity. However, this would help to show their readiness to help their brethren in Judea. A congregation of converted Gentiles being eager to help the converted Jews in Judea was a powerful message against the former prejudice that existed between these two peoples.

8:20 *avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—*

Avoiding this - These things were done in this way to show that no fraud or deception was taking place.

That anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us - The word "lavish" means abundant. In other words, this was a great deal of money. Therefore, Paul made an extra effort to assure that no one could be accused of taking some of the gift for himself. Any man who has been entrusted with the property of another should want to protect himself against any suspicion of dishonesty.

8:21 *providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Providing honorable things - Paul planned out the best way to proceed in order to produce honorable actions. All will know that Paul is honorable in this venture (cf. Proverbs 3:3-4; Romans 12:17; Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 2:12).

Not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men - Not only did he

transport the funds in such a way to be pleasing to the Lord, but he also sought to protect his reputation of being honest and trustworthy.

8:22 *And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.*

And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you - This is a different "brother" than the one mentioned in verse 18. To avoid any danger of suspicion, Paul sent even another brother with Titus. We are not told his name, but he was no stranger to Paul. This individual had shown himself diligent (earnest) and faithful in many things. His diligence was strengthened by his confidence in the Corinthian brethren having heard the good report from Titus.

8:23 *If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.*

If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you - For those who were not familiar with Titus they could give the following good report:

- a. Titus was Paul's "partner" (associate, comrade and companion).
- b. Titus was also Paul's "fellow worker" (laborer, helper). This phrase comes from the compound Greek word (SUNERGOS) meaning, "shared work." From this Greek word we get the English word synergy defined as, "when two or more produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects."

Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ Messengers - For those who were not familiar with these men it should be explained that they were the "messengers of the churches" and as such worthy to carry out such a mission. In the first century the various congregations sent trusted men as messengers to deliver correspondence to sister congregations.

8:24 *Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.*

Therefore, show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf - Paul had boasted (used complimentary terms) of their love when he spoke of the Corinthians. Now he asks them to prove by their treatment of the messengers that his words were not empty.

9:1 *Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;*

Now concerning the ministering to the saints - Paul is continuing his discussion from chapter eight concerning helping those in need.

It is superfluous for me to write to you - "Superfluous" comes from the Greek word (PERISSOS) meaning, "over and above, more than is necessary."

- a. They already knew of the poor in Jerusalem.
- b. They had previously prepared a response to meet those needs.

9:2 *for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.*

For I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians - The previous year the church at Corinth had a willingness and readiness to help the poor in Jerusalem. Paul had used their zeal (Corinth - located in the region of Achaia) as an example to the congregations in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), and now he is using them as an example to Corinth.

And your zeal has stirred up the majority - "Stirred up" comes from the Greek word (ERETHIZŌ) meaning, "incited, stimulated and challenged."

- a. The brethren at Corinth had a part in beginning this effort.
- b. Having prepared a year ago they had an early start.

9:3-4 *Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.*

Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready - This was Paul's purpose in sending Titus and the two others. He wants the Macedonians to see the preparations made by their brethren at Corinth. Paul did not want his boasting in them to be empty words (2 Corinthians 9:2).

Lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting - It could be that some of the brethren from the congregations in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), would make the journey to Corinth with Paul. It would be embarrassing for both Paul and the Corinthians if they were unprepared with

their gift for the poor when the visitors arrived.

9:5 *Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your bountiful gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.*

Therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your bountiful gift beforehand, which you had previously Promised - Paul wanted them to do it willingly, so he sent these brethren to teach and encourage them that their gift would be a cheerful gift from the heart. If this was done, their gift would bring a blessing to them, as well as the needy in Judea.

That it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation - The gift is to be of "generosity," not "obligation." "Generosity" is something bestowed as a free gift. If the gift is not given from a free will desire to bless others, then it shows the giver to be covetous. If it is not a free will offering it shows that it was only given because the giver felt obligated.

9:6 *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly - Paul teaches that the law of sowing and reaping applies to both the physical world and the spiritual world. Those who are stingy in giving to others will not receive the spiritual blessings that come from generously giving to those in need.

And he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully - The Christian who gives to those in need cheerfully will reap a bountiful harvest of spiritual blessings from God. This does not teach that if you are generous with your money God will automatically make you rich. Giving generously to others does not make God indebted to us.

Note: Christian giving is called "sowing."

- a. Giving is like farming.
- b. However, some think of it as throwing away.
- c. But the text here shows us a harvest of spiritual blessings is coming to the bountiful sower (giver).

9:7 *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

So, let each one give as he purposes in his heart - Their mind was already made up.

Not grudgingly - "Grudgingly" means not out of grief, not sorry that you gave (cf. Luke 22:45; John 16:6).

Or of necessity - "Necessity" means by constraint, compulsion, forced to give.

- a. The only acceptable gifts to God are voluntary ones.
- b. This is not a tithe philosophy.

Note: Tithing was commanded in the Old Covenant for the purposes of supporting the tribe of Levi. This was because the Levites did not have a land inheritance as did the other tribes.

Numbers 18:24, "For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore, I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.'"

The responsibilities of the Levites included the work of the priesthood, the caretaking of the temple and other social functions in the various Israelite communities. In essence the offerings were intended to go to the work of edifying the nation spiritually.

There is no such thing as tithing taught in the New Testament. No amount like 10% is specified in the Scriptures. Each Christian is to give as he purposes in his heart, in accordance with how God has prospered him (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Every giver determines the proportion of his income that he will give to God. However, Every Christian should give liberally (2 Corinthians 9:6-9).

The collection in the New Testament is done on the first day of the week, when Christians gather together.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."

In the New Testament funds collected are used to further the work of the church. The work of the church consists of evangelism (teaching the lost), benevolence (helping the needy), and

edification (strengthening other Christians). Therefore, Christians are commanded to give from their earnings and possessions to advance the cause of Christ in the areas of evangelism, benevolence and edification (1 Corinthians 9:14; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

For God loves a cheerful giver - "Cheerful" comes from the Greek word (HILAROS) meaning, "cheerful, joyous, prompt to do anything."

9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.*

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you - Paul reminds the Corinthians that if they would faithfully do as they promised in relieving the poor, God was able to provide them with an abundance of spiritual blessings.

That you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work - Their own sufficiency would provide the necessary means to help provide for the less fortunate.

9:9 *As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness remains forever."*

As it is written - This verse quotes Psalm 112:9.

He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness remains forever - How does God give to the poor? Through the blessings He provides to the faithful, who are then able to care for the needy. **God uses the righteous to carry out His will.** If they do not carry out His will they are no longer righteous.

9:10 *Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,*

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness - God supplies, multiplies and increases. What is done through the working of God's laws, can be said to be done by God. Through the natural laws when a man sows seed in his field, God provides him with the means of sowing again. God not only gives him a harvest, but blesses him also in giving him the ability to sow again. God gives freely to the righteous who give freely to others. In this way, God multiplies what is given and increases the means of doing good.

Note: God is the source of doing good, and God should always get the glory for the good being done. The Corinthians must not glorify themselves for their gift to the poor in Judea. God is the one who makes their giving possible, and it is God who should receive the glory.

9:11 *while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

While you are enriched in everything for all liberality - This connects back to verse 8. Paul is saying that their sufficiency from God provided the necessary means to show liberality to the poor in Judea.

Which causes thanksgiving through us to God - The phrase, "through us" means that Paul and his helpers would distribute their generous gift in such a way as to cause thanksgiving to God. Those who received the gift would be thankful and those who heard of their generosity would also be thankful. In all ways the praise would go to God.

9:12 *For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,*

For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints - This is elaborating on the preceding verse. The Greek word for "supplies" means, making up the things lacking, filling up by adding to. The idea is supplementing what the Christians lacked.

Note - The word "saints" is an English translation of the Greek word (HAGIOS) that means "holy, sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated." All Christians are saints (Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Philemon 1:5).

But also, is abounding through many thanksgivings to God - "Abounding" comes from the Greek word (PERISSEUŌ) meaning, "a thing which comes in abundance, or overflows unto one." The wonderful results of the generosity of the Corinthians was not limited to meeting the physical needs of the poor in Judea, but had the greater effect of promoting gratitude and praise to God.

9:13 *while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,*

While, through the proof of this ministry - "Proof" comes from the Greek word (DOKIMĒ) that we used to describe a thing that is proved or approved after examination and trial. Their response to this "ministry" proved their righteousness. The "ministry" refers to the effort to collect funds for the poor in Judea.

They glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ - The poor who were helped would glorify God for the actions of the Corinthians. Their actions demonstrated that they were living up to the confession of their faith

in the gospel of Christ. Notice again that the thanks (glorifying) goes to God and not to the Corinthians.

And for your liberal sharing with them and all men - Their gift was not just for Christians only (cf. Galatians 6:10). When gathering benevolent funds for the poor in Jerusalem, Paul told the Corinthians that their gifts would be distributed to "them" (the saints in Jerusalem) and "all men."

The Bible is sufficiently clear. The church is to extend assistance to all worthy souls who are in need, giving first preference to fellow Christians. We must not ignore these Scriptures or twist them to avoid their clear meaning. Those who say the church is not authorized to help those who are not Christians from the church treasury are not following the Scriptures (Matthew 5:44-47; Luke 6:30-36; Galatians 6:10). Those who take this false view are forced to say that individual Christians should love and do good to non-Christian, but the church (from the treasury) should not show love and compassion to non-Christians.

9:14 *and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.*

And by their prayer for you - This refers to the poor saints in Judea praying for their Corinthian brethren. Remember the powerful message this sends concerning the past prejudices that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. This whole process helped to lessen any hard feelings between the Jews and the Gentiles who had become Christians. The Jewish Christians could see that the Gentile Christians cared for them and as a result they had care and concern for them in return.

Who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you - The Christians in Judea longed to be with their brethren in Corinth due to the grace of God operating in the Corinthians.

Notice some of the results of their giving:

- a. God blessed them more in order to increase their liberality.
- b. Their giving produced thanksgiving to God.
- c. The effort to help the poor supplied a test for Corinth.
- d. The saints in Judea prayed for the Corinthians.
- e. The saints in Judea longed to be with the Corinthians.

9:15 *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift - The word "indescribable" means words were not adequate to fully describe the magnitude of the gift.

Gift - What is the "gift" referred to in this verse? The unspeakable gift of God is truly Jesus Christ and the good news of salvation that brings all men (Jews and Gentiles) into one body (Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:27-28). The gift of Jesus Christ and the gospel are a demonstration of God's grace (verse 14) and the love He has for mankind, and in turn this inspires mankind to love others.

**V. PERSONAL DEFENSE.....10:1-12:13**

10:1 *Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - who, in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.*

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - Paul has concluded what he wanted to say about the collection. He now moves on to a different topic.

Notice the use of the phrase, "I, Paul, myself." This indicates that he is now speaking about himself only.

In this portion of the letter Paul defends his apostolic authority against his enemies who were trying to undermine his authority and end his influence. In this way they could gain control over the congregation to impose their own view that the Gentiles needed to become Jews before they could become Christians. He was pleading with the Corinthians, in all the meekness and gentleness of Christ, not to listen to the slanderous words of his enemies.

Who, in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you - Here Paul begins to address the charge of his enemies that he was bold in his writing, but weak of body and speech in their presence.

2 Corinthians 10:10, "'For his letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.'"

10:2 *But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.*

But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some - Paul begs them to not listen to his enemies. Paul is promising to be bold toward some when he comes (1

Corinthians 4:21; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 13:1).

Who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh - An accusation made by his enemies was that his conduct and teaching was prompted by his fleshly interests. Perhaps they thought that what they perceived as his inconsistency in conduct was an undue regard for the opinions of others and an effort to be pleasing to all men.

10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.*

For though we walk in the flesh - Paul did not deny that he was human and burdened with human weaknesses.

We do not war according to the flesh - Paul did not conduct himself in a worldly fashion. His human weaknesses did not direct his actions.

10:4 *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,*

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds - The war Paul was fighting was the battle between good and evil. It involved attacking the religious errors of his day and proclaiming the truth of the gospel. His weapon was the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). He did not use worldly tricks and schemes to sway the opinions of men.

10:5 *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God - The "arguments" referred to here were false arguments, not based on the Scriptures. Error has no chance against truth boldly proclaimed. "Every High thing" would include all that opposes the true knowledge of God (human wisdom - 1 Corinthians 1:22; 2:4).

Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ - This verse is often used to teach what individual Christians should do in their own minds. It is true that Christians should guard their thoughts (Proverbs 12:5; 15:26; Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:2, 5; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7), but that is not what this verse is teaching. Notice this verse is talking about what we do to false teachers.

In spiritual warfare, the goal is to use the truth to convince men of their flawed reasoning. In this way their hearts and minds can be brought into submission to Christ.

10:6 *and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

And being ready to punish all disobedience - Here Paul refers to those rebellious critics of his in Corinth who had persisted in their disobedience.

When your obedience is fulfilled - Paul did not want to rush to Corinth to punish his enemies (2 Corinthians 1:23). He was giving them time to repent and obey. After that, Paul would deal with those who remained disobedient in a bold fashion. Paul does not say what he was going to do to them, but perhaps it was the discipline previously used to deliver such a one to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 5:20) as a final effort to win them back to Christ (2 Corinthians 13:3-10)

10:7 *Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.*

Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? - Paul is asking them to look at the situation. He wants the Corinthians to carefully consider the actions of his critics who were attacking him, even though he had shown himself to be an apostle and faithful servant of the Lord.

If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's - How could these critics claim to be of Christ when they were attacking Paul who was clearly Christ's servant and apostle?

10:8 *For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction. I shall not be ashamed -*

For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction. I shall not be ashamed - The "us" in this passage refers to the apostles. "Boast" comes from the Greek word (KAUCHAOMAI) meaning, "to glory in a thing (whether with reason or without)."

Paul was not ashamed of his authority as an apostle and could glory in the opportunity to serve Christ in such a position. However, he preferred to use his role as an apostle to edify (build up), rather than use his authority as an apostle for their destruction (severe rebuke and discipline).

10:9 *Lest I seem to terrify you by letters.*

Lest I seem to terrify you by letters - Paul's enemies were saying that he wrote in an authoritative way to frighten his readers (see next verse), but he did not actually have the authority to carry out his warnings. Paul assures the Corinthian brethren that such an accusation was not his intent.

10:10 *“For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”*

“For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful” - "Weighty" comes from the Greek word (BARUS) meaning, "burdensome, severe, stern." "Powerful" comes from the Greek word (ISCHUROS) meaning, "strong, mighty."

“But his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” - The Greek word for "weak" (ASTHENĒS) means, "feeble, impotent, sick, without strength." The word "contemptible" comes from the Greek word (EXOUTHENEŌ) meaning, "to make of no account, despise utterly."

10:11 *Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.*

Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent - The enemies of Paul are called upon to consider their claim concerning his writing that it was, "weighty and powerful."

Such we will also be in deed when we are present - He warns them that what they have read in his letters is what they will have in his presence. This was a promise from Paul that whether "present" or "absent" his teaching against false doctrine would be the same. It did not matter about any physical infirmities he may have had. His teaching would be the same because he was speaking God's word and not his own. He was guided by the Holy Spirit in all that he wrote.

2 Peter 1:20-21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

10:12 *For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves - His enemies liked to praise themselves, and Paul was determined not to follow their example.

But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise - Paul points out their foolishness of setting themselves as the standard, instead of Christ who is the real standard.

Christians often make this same mistake today. They like to justify themselves by comparing themselves to other Christians. However, when we measure ourselves against Christ, the true standard, we find we all have room to grow and improve.

10:13 *We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us - a sphere which especially includes you.*

We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us - Remember, "boast" comes from the Greek word (KAUCHAOMAI) meaning, "to glory in a thing (whether with reason or without)." Paul is saying he would not glory more than he should ("beyond measure") concerning the role he had been given as an apostle. He was grateful to have such an opportunity to serve Christ. He would not think more highly of his given authority than he should.

A sphere which especially includes you - Paul had been given a mission by the Lord, to lift-up His name "before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:16-18). His sphere (area of concern) included "all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28).

10:14 *For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ;*

For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you) - Paul had the special work of carrying the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8). He had authority from Jesus to take the gospel to them.

For it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ - He did not go beyond his authority when he came to them. The work he performed by the authority of Christ actually brought him unto them (Acts 18).

10:15 *not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,*

Not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors - Paul would not take any credit for the work of others. He boasted only in his own labors (verse 13).

That as your faith is increased - Paul hopes their faith is growing and that with their growing faith will come greater growth in their area (region).

We shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere - Paul will be magnified (held in more esteem) by the results of the gospel seen in the Corinthians, and of course most importantly Christ will be glorified.

10:16 *to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.*

To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you - As a result of their good example, he would have a better opportunity to preach the gospel in the surrounding regions.

And not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment - This was a big difference between Paul and the false teachers.

10:17 *But "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

Glory in the Lord - Paul did not glory in what others had done. He would only glory in what the Lord had enabled him to do. The work he did under the direction of the Lord, the Lord did through him, because the Lord enabled him to do it.

Jeremiah 9:24, "'But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the LORD."

10:18 *For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.*

For not he who commends himself is approved - In the great work of serving the Lord self-approval does not justify. The Lord does not commend men on the basis of how they think they compare to other men, but on whether the work they do is in harmony with His will.

But whom the Lord commends - The Lord commended Paul:

- a. By calling him to be an apostle (Acts 9)
- b. By granting him revelation (1 Corinthians 2:10).
- c. By providing him with power (1 Corinthians 2:4).
- d. By giving him the signs of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12).

11:1 *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly - and indeed you do bear with me.*

Oh, that you would bear with me - "Bear" comes from the Greek word (ANECHOMAI) meaning, "to put up with or endure."

In a little folly - "Folly" is a translation of the Greek word (APHROSUNĒ) meaning, "senselessness." Paul is meeting the false teachers on their own ground, by their own foolish standards (2 Corinthians 11:5). Every claim they can make he can make better. This legitimate self-vindication, demanded by the circumstances, is ironically spoken of as folly. He uses this approach as a teaching device.

And indeed, you do bear with me - The faithful Corinthians recognized his love and concern for them. They understood the purpose of his "folly" (boasting) was not to lift himself up (2 Corinthians 11:17-18). He wrote to them about his accomplishments to show his love for them and the weakness of his enemies.

- 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy - The picture Paul presents is that he has betrothed the bride (Corinthians) to his friend the groom (Jesus Christ) and therefore shares the bridegroom's jealousy for his bride (John 3:29).

For I have betrothed you to one husband - "Betrothed" comes from the Greek word (HARMOZŌ) that means "to join together."

That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ - "Chaste" is from the Greek word (HAGNOS) meaning, "perfect, clean or pure" (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33).

- 11:3 *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness - This is a reference to the events that took place in Genesis 3:1-6. "Deceived" is from the Greek word (EXAPATAŌ) meaning "to deceive thoroughly, to delude."

So your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ - Paul fears his enemies will seduce the Corinthians into adopting their false doctrines. The Judaizing teachers were saying that a Gentile would need to become a Jew before he could become a Christian. False teachers always attack simplicity and purity.

- 11:4 *For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.*

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached - The name Jesus means Savior. Anyone teaching a different savior is a false teacher.

John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."

Or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received - The Corinthians had received the "Spirit of the living God" (2 Corinthians 3:3). A better spirit than the Spirit of God does not exist.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Romans 8:15, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"

1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Or a different gospel which you have not accepted - The "different gospel" was a different or another kind; not the one true gospel. Once the gospel is perverted it will not save. Often false teachers will pervert or twist Scriptures to the opposite meaning (putting darkness for light). We have no choice of gospels. There is one and only one! The only choice is whether we accept it or reject it.

Since there is only one gospel, all church divisions result from perversions of that one gospel. All the religious division in the world is the work of Satan. The conclusion is these troublers were teaching a counterfeit gospel.

You may well put up with it - The last word of this verse ("it") has been added by the translators. It would probably be better translated as "me." Moffatt translates this last phrase as, "Why not put up with me," which makes better sense when we consider the context. Paul is saying ironically, "You gladly endure these false prophets; why do you not endure me?" Paul now goes on to explain why they should be listening to him and not the false teachers.

11:5 *For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.*

For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles - The phrase "most eminent" comes from two Greek words (HUPER LIAN) literally meaning, "over much or superior." There are two prominent views concerning to whom this refers; the actual apostles (specifically Peter, James and John) or the false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Philip E. Hughes presents both cases well:

- a. "The thrust of Paul's thought is: 'You bear well enough with an intruder such as I have just described - verse 4; then I ask you at least to bear with me - verse 1, for I reckon that I am in no way inferior to super-apostles of his kind.' We concur with the opinion of most modern commentators that Paul is not referring to the authentic apostles, but to the imposters who had invaded his Corinthian territory falsely claiming to be apostles of Christ - verse 13. To have heard them commend themselves, one would have thought that these 'comers' - verse 4, were something even grander than the apostles. Paul's description of them here is vibrant with sarcasm: they are, if one believes all that they say about themselves, 'extra-super-apostles.' The verses that follow show how well he comes out of a comparison with them and their practices.
- b. "The possibility that the commentators of earlier centuries were right in understanding Paul to be speaking here of the true apostles cannot, of course, be ruled out. Thus, Chrysostom holds that he is referring to the very chiefest, the innermost circle, of the twelve, namely, Peter, James, and John; and this view has been acceptable to Calvin, Bengel, Hodge, and many others of more recent times. Paul is then saying to the Corinthians in effect: 'You bear well enough with these intruding deceivers; surely, then, you will bear with me who, if you take into account my calling by the Lord, my spiritual gifts, my labours, and my character, can stand comparison with the very topmost of those who are genuine apostles. Of his apostolic commission and authority he has no doubts; not in their consciences, have they.'"

Either view fits the context and does not contradict any verse of Scripture.

11:6 *Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.*

Even though I am untrained in speech - Paul's enemies criticized him for not following the rhetorical style of speaking that was common for the day. He was plain and direct in his speech.

Yet I am not in knowledge - Even if they considered his speech "untrained" (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 10:10), he was not lacking in knowledge since the words he spoke were received through direct revelation from God (Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:4-5; 2 Peter 1:21).

But we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things - In every way and in everything he had made himself distinct and clear. The Corinthians had no reason to doubt his knowledge of the gospel.

**[In this next section (2 Corinthians 11:7-12), Paul explains that he taught the gospel without taking wages from them.]**

11:7 *Did I commit sin in abasing myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?*

Did I commit sin in abasing myself that you might be exalted - The phrase "abasing myself" does not refer to an improper or degrading action. Here he is referring to supporting himself financially by working at his trade (Acts 18:3). The word "exalted" is used to describe those at Corinth who had obeyed the gospel. When one obeys God's plan of salvation they are "exalted" (lifted up).

Because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? - Paul's enemies said that he had preached the gospel in Corinth without charging them because he knew he wasn't really an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:1-15). They assumed that Paul's guilty conscience would not allow him to charge those to whom he preached.

11:8 *I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.*

I robbed other churches - Paul says he "robbed other churches," but this does not mean that he took something that did not rightfully belong to him. Paul is saying that he called upon other congregations to support him in his work at Corinth. For example, the church at Philippi supported Paul in his labors in other places (Philippians 4:15).

Taking wages from them to minister to you - The word "wages" comes from the Greek word (OPSŌNION) that was used to describe the rations for a soldier or the supplies for an army.

1 Corinthians 9:7, "Whoever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?"

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

11:9 *And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.*

And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied - The things that his own labor did not provide were supplied by the churches. The "brethren who came from Macedonia" refers to those good brethren who came from the city of Philippi in the region of Macedonia.

And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself - Paul did not want to burden the Corinthians with his support. He was deserving and worthy of support for the work he was doing, but he did not want others to accuse him of preaching the gospel for money. Paul counted it as his reward to preach the gospel freely.

1 Corinthians 9:16-18, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel."

11:10 *As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia.*

As the truth of Christ is in me - This comparison is made by Paul to emphasize his commitment to following this course. Just as the truth of Christ was in him, he was determined to preach the gospel without charge (1 Corinthians 9:18).

No one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia - No one was going to stop Paul from the glory of bringing the gospel to the "regions of Achaia" (southern Greece) with no cost to them. Under Roman power Greece was divided into two main parts. Macedonia was the region to the north and Achaia was the region to the south. Corinth was a chief city in the region of Achaia.

11:11 *Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!*

Why? Because I do not love you? - Was Paul's approach to the regions of Achaia a result of his lack of love for them? His desire to not charge them for preaching the gospel to them was certainly not because he did not love them. His love for them could not be doubted.

God knows! - Paul explains that God, who "searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9), knew of his great love for the Corinthians.

11:12 *But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.*

But what I do, I will also continue to do - Paul promises that his plan to preach freely to the Corinthians was not going to change.

That I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast - The enemies of Paul wanted to charge the Corinthians for financial support, because they claimed they were preaching to them the Gospel. However, Paul's example (preaching for free) would shame them from making such a demand on the church.

11:13 *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.*

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers - Here we see Paul's assessment of these individuals. They are "false apostles" (Revelation 2:2) and "deceitful workers" (Galatians 2:4).

False apostles - They claimed to be what they were not, and usurped an authority that did not belong to them. Those who claim to be apostles today do so without Bible authority.

1. One of the qualifications of an apostle of Christ is he had to be chosen by Christ (Acts 9:15; 26:16).
2. Another qualification of an apostle of Christ is he had to have seen the resurrected Jesus to be able to serve as a witness to His resurrection.

**No one can meet these qualifications today!** [For additional information concerning qualifications of an apostle please see the appendices - ARE THERE MODERN-DAY APOSTLES?]

Transforming themselves into apostles of Christ - Their actions were truly deceptive. Their goal was to appear as true apostles of Christ. These false teachers were able to mislead many brethren by trickery and deception.

11:14 *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

Satan - God's word does not reveal to us a specific occasion when this was done directly. However, it could be that this language is being used to describe in a more general sense how he presents himself as if he is righteous. He pretends to be seeking the good of those he actually wants to destroy. An example of this is seen in his appearance to Eve (Genesis 3).

There are some apocryphal books that have created events in their

writings where Satan appeared as an angel of light, but these accounts are merely the fanciful imaginations of men. The Apocrypha (meaning "doubtful writings") refers to 15 books or writings. None of these writings are inspired! Jesus and the Apostles never quoted from these books (even though they existed in some Septuagint versions at that time). The early church writers never referred to these writings as inspired, though they obviously knew of their existence.

11:15 *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness - The false teachers were servants of the devil, so it is not surprising that they deceptively present themselves as servants of righteousness. However, God's word gives clear instruction concerning how to deal with false teachers (Matthew 7:15-20; Romans 16:18 and Revelation 13:11-14).

Whose end will be according to their works - What will become of these false teachers?

2 Peter 2:1-2, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed."

11:16 *I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little.*

I say again, let no one think me a fool - Paul asks them not to think that he is utterly foolish, but he is going to glory like the false apostles do to demonstrate that he had accomplishments far superior to the false teachers.

In *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, J. W. Shepherd makes the following point:

"Paul had made three attempts to begin his glorying. First (2 Corinthians 10:7), he stops to give attention to the empty glorying of his opponents; second (2 Corinthians 11:1), he pauses to express his anxiety for the Corinthian Christians under the influence of false teachers; and third (2 Corinthians 11:6), he stops again to answer the charge of not accepting support. Now he returns to the point and expresses himself fully as far as 2 Corinthians 12:13."

If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool - The point Paul is making is that they

had accepted the foolish boasting of the false teachers, so they should certainly accept his actual accomplishments in his work for the Lord.

That I also may boast a little - Now Paul begins his so-called "boasting" that will continue through chapter 12:13.

11:17 *What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.*

What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting - His glorying is going to be after the manner of men and not after the manner of the Lord. Praising self is not the proper spirit of the faithful Christian. However, it was necessary to uphold the truth and honor of Christ.

11:18 *Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.*

Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast - Paul mimics the actions of the boasters, to show that he has a much stronger claim than they do to be received by the Corinthians, even on their own terms.

11:19 *For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!*

For you put up with fools gladly - The Corinthians were "putting up with" these false apostles even though they were fools. The brethren at Corinth considered themselves to be wise, yet they tolerated those they considered to be fools. They even tolerated many of their foolish doctrines such as being brought into bondage to the ordinances of the old law (2 Corinthians 3:5-18).

Since you yourselves are wise - Paul probably makes use of irony here. They considered themselves to be wise, patient and superior in their compassion as they indulged the actions of these false apostles. They probably felt very good about themselves, much as they did when they allowed the one who was guilty of sexual immorality to continue with them without rebuke (1 Corinthians 5:1-3).

11:20 *For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.*

For you put up with it - The Corinthian brethren were tolerating (allowing) all of these abuses and mistreatments from the false apostles. This verse is an example of how far they had gone in tolerating these false apostles.

If one brings you into bondage - This refers to their confusion concerning their relationship to the ordinances of the old law. The false teachers were trying to take away their freedom in Christ (John 8:36) to subject them to bondage to the law of Moses.

Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

If one devours you - The false apostles had devoured their substance.

If one takes from you - This refers to those things the false teachers had taken from them.

If one exalts himself - This refers to the foolish boasting done by the false apostles.

If one strikes you on the face - This was more of a custom of the day to show disrespect (cf. 1 Timothy 3:3; Acts 23:3; Matthew 5:39 and Luke 22:64).

11:21 *To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold - I speak foolishly - I am bold also.*

To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! - Paul had been criticized for his physical weakness (2 Corinthians 10:1, 10), but he would not allow that to discourage him. Actually, the weaknesses his enemies condemned him for was the source of his boasting. In this context (verses 24-28), Paul explained that he had endured numerous trials in spite of his supposed weaknesses.

But in whatever anyone is bold - I speak foolishly - I am bold also - Paul is saying that even speaking in a foolish (human) way, he possesses every qualification on which the false teachers prided themselves.

11:22 *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*

So am I - Paul did not lack any honored quality possessed by the false prophets.

Hebrews...Israelites...Seed of Abraham - For Paul's assessment concerning the value of these things compare this passage with Philippians 3:4-8. These three names appear to be arranged climactically:

- a. Hebrews - according to their nationality.
- b. Israelites - according to their special relationship to the Law.
- c. Seed of Abraham - according to Messianic privilege.

In his *Bible Commentary*, E.M. Zerr states, "In the Bible there are three terms applied to the same people, namely, Hebrews, Israelites and Jews. However, they were not all derived from the same source. The first came from Heber, a distinguished man in the blood line (Genesis 10:21). The second is from the extra

name given to Jacob by the angel (Genesis 32:28). Since Jacob was preferred before the elder brother Esau, to be in the blood line for the Messiah, it was an honor to be called an Israelite. The third is derived from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, through whom the blood line was to flow. A man called by any of these names could boast of being of the seed of Abraham, as Paul does in this verse."

11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*

Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more - Adopting the foolish boasting of men he could rightfully say that he was more of a servant of Christ than the false apostles.

In labors more abundant - Paul's work for the Lord in every measurable way was unequalled by any other Christian. His enemies did not labor, but claimed the fruits of his labor.

In stripes above measure - The word "stripes" is used to describe the whip marks left on a person's back after they have been beaten.

In prisons more frequently - An example of this can be found in Acts 16. Non-inspired, secular history has related a number of times when Paul was placed in prison because of his labors for Christ.

In deaths often - The phrase, "in deaths often" is figurative language used to convey the idea that he was frequently in danger of death (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).

11:24 *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.*

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one - We do not have these occasions detailed for us in the Scriptures. "Stripes" refer to the whip marks left in the back of the one being punished. The number of stripes Paul received each time he was beaten agrees with the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 25:3 that says, "forty blows he may give him and no more." The whip used was originally a single strip of leather that required forty strokes to administer the forty stripes.

In his *Bible Commentary*, E.M. Zerr makes the following observation quoting from *Prideaux's Connexion*, Year 108:

"This punishment among the Jews was not to exceed forty stripes, and therefore the whip with which it was inflicted [after the change mentioned above] being made of three thongs, each blow giving three stripes, they never inflicted upon any criminal more than thirteen blows, because thirteen of those blows made thirty-nine

stripes; and to add another blow, would be to transgress the law, by adding two stripes over and above forty, contrary to its prohibition. And in this manner was it that Paul, when whipped by the Jews, received forty stripes save one, that is, thirteen blows with this threefold whip."

11:25 *Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

Three times I was beaten with rods - One time he was beaten with rods is found in Acts 16:22-23.

Once I was stoned - For this account please read Acts 14:19-20.

Three times I was shipwrecked - The shipwreck at Malta (Acts 27-28) was later so these three are not recorded for us.

A night and a day I have been in the deep - The three occasions referred to here are not recorded in the Scriptures. The phrase "been in the deep" means he was forced out by shipwreck to float in the water perhaps holding onto boards from the ship.

11:26 *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

In journeys often - Traveling in those days was often difficult and dangerous. As Paul travelled he would be exposed to various forms of peril (mentioned next). It should be understood that the journeys he took were necessary for the spreading of the gospel.

In perils of water - The Greek word (POTAMOS) translated as "waters" here would include brook, creeks, rivers and streams. There was always danger of drowning when unforeseen flooding changed a slow flowing river into a torrent.

In perils of robbers - Many of the roads that Paul travelled were known to be infested by robbers who would prey on those who passed by.

In perils of my own countrymen - His own "countrymen" refers to the Jews who frequently persecuted Paul (2 Corinthians 11:24). The Jews were often the first to stir up trouble for him. They would turn the people against Paul with their lies. We see this at Damascus (Acts 9: 23), at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 9:29), at Antioch in Pisidia (2 Corinthians 13:50), at Iconium (2 Corinthians 14:5), at Lystra (2 Corinthians 14:19), at Thessalonica (2 Corinthians 17:5), at Berea (2 Corinthians 17:13), and at Corinth (2 Corinthians 18:12). The Jews despised him and his preaching of the gospel. So, he was in constant danger of being killed by

them.

In perils of the Gentiles - This refers to Paul's mistreatment by the Gentiles. It was usually the case that the Gentiles were stirred up against him by the Jews, but sometimes the persecution came from idolaters. Such as at Iconium (Acts 14:5), Philippi (Acts 16:19-24) and Ephesus (Acts 19:23-31).

In perils in the city - Many places could be mentioned to demonstrate this. Such as: Damascus (Acts 9:23), Jerusalem (Acts 9:29), Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50), Iconium (Acts 14:5), Lystra (Acts 14:19), Philippi (Acts 16:19), Thessalonica (Acts 17:5), Berea (Acts 17:13), Corinth (Acts 18:13) and Ephesus (Acts 19:23).

In perils in the wilderness - During his travels between cities Paul would be required to pass through wild lands with their own type of dangers. On these journeys he would be exposed to wild animals, bandits, hunger and isolation. Paul faced constant danger wherever he was, whether in the busy cities or the loneliness of the wilderness.

In perils in the sea - Paul had encountered many storms and shipwrecks on the seas. He may have even been attacked by pirates.

In perils among false brethren - This may refer to the deceit of those who claimed to be his brethren, but were actually working against the cause of Christ (Galatians 2:4).

11:27 *in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -*

In weariness and toil - It is hard for us to fully grasp the enormous toll taken on Paul's body through the unrelenting labor and subsequent exhaustion he must have suffered.

In sleeplessness often - This describes to us the lack of rest Paul received at night. He was often awake and restless. Not only was this lack of sleep due to his concern for the church, but also, he would sacrifice sleep if there was an opportunity for teaching and preaching (Acts 20:31) or prayer and meditation (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

In hunger and thirst - This refers to those times when Paul's friends were unable to help him with his needs. In these situations, he would be deprived of the supplies he so desperately needed.

In fastings often - The "fastings" referred to here are similar to the "hunger" just mentioned. However, "fastings" includes the long length of time Paul was forced to go without food. This would also include those times when he chose to abstain from food to focus on his service to Christ and his labor to bring the message of

salvation to men lost in their sins (2 Corinthians 6:5).

In cold and nakedness - Paul was even without adequate clothing at times (2 Timothy 4:13).

11:28 *besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*

Besides the other things - The KJV translates this Greek phrase as, "beside those things that are without." So, in addition to all these outward afflictions, there was the inward burden of his care and concern for the churches.

What comes upon me daily - Notice this was a daily concern for Paul.

My deep concern all the churches - Some could probably endure all of these external problems, but to multiply the outward trials with the inward burden of concern for the church would be too much for many to bear.

11:29 *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*

Who is weak, and I am not weak? - Paul understood the weaknesses and difficulties of this life. He could sympathize with others. He became all things to all men.

1 Corinthians 9:22-23, "To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."

Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? - For those who fell into sin Paul's heart was inflamed with anger and grief. He felt their pain. He had real sympathy and love for them.

11:30 *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

If I must boast - If Paul was required to boast to get them to see his love for them, he would do so. However, he would not engage in idle boasting designed to exalt himself.

I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity - Paul would boast in the things (like those just listed) which show his weaknesses, not in assumed strengths as the false teachers were doing.

11:31 *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.*

God...knows that I am not lying - But concerning his list of weaknesses, God is a witness that Paul is not lying (Romans 9:1-3). One of the greatest motives for always telling the truth is that God knows our hearts (Psalm 44:21). We may be able to fool others at times, but we can never fool God.

11:32 *In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me.*

In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison - We learn from this that Damascus was at that time under the dominion of Aretas, who was king of Arabia. It appears that in this situation the Jews had gained his cooperation in their attempt to arrest Paul inside the gates of the city. Also, since Damascus was at that time under the king of Arabia, the country must have been overrun by his forces, and was considered a part of Arabia.

Desiring to arrest me - This was just another example of the persecution Paul faced.

11:33 *but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*

But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands - The account of this event is found in Acts 9:23-25. In the context of that event we learn that the Jews were so anxious to capture Paul that they watched the gates both day and night. However, some of the houses in Damascus were built against the wall. This arrangement allowed Paul an opportunity to escape.

12:1 *It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:*

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast - Even though he does not like it, it is necessary for Paul to keep on boasting to help them in their understanding of the situation.

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord - His boasting will now include a report of the visions and revelations he had received. The terms "visions" and "revelations" means that the Lord appeared to Paul, and while Paul was in His presence Christ revealed some truths to him that had not been known by him before.

12:2-5 *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man - whether in the body or*

*out of the body I do not know. God knows - how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.*

I knew a man in Christ - There is little doubt, when one considers the context (2 Corinthians 12:1, 6-7), that this is Paul himself. He had kept this vision a secret for fourteen years. This is a good example of his humility. We see this characteristic of Paul throughout the passage as he refers to "a man" and "such a one" instead of himself.

Who fourteen years ago - 2 Corinthians was written around 57 A.D. and 14 years prior would be around 43 A.D. If we look at the chronology we will find that this vision occurred around the time he and Barnabas were travelling through the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14). A very interesting event occurred in Lystra that may shed some light on when this vision occurred.

Acts 14:19-22, "Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'"

Whether in the body or out of the body - This could mean that Paul did not know for sure if he was alive or dead, or perhaps he is saying he could not tell whether he was physically carried away or only his spirit was transported to the third heaven.

Such a one was caught up to the third heaven - The word heaven can be used in various ways in the Scriptures. The **first** heaven is the blue sky above where the birds fly (Genesis 1:20), the **second** heaven is the darkness of space where we see the stars and planets (Genesis 22:17), and the **third** heaven is where we find God's throne (Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 66:1-2).

How he was caught up into Paradise - The word "paradise" is another term to describe the third heaven. This term is used by Jesus in Luke 23:43. Paradise is also mentioned in Revelation 2:7. The Greek word translated as "paradise" means, "beautiful park." This imagery is taken from the Garden of Eden.

Heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter - The words Paul heard were "inexpressible" only in the sense that Paul was not allowed to repeat them.

Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities - Paul would only boast as the one who was granted this view of heaven. But he would not boast of his own unaided accomplishments. He was what he was only by the grace of God.

- 12:6 *For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I forbear, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.*

For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool - Boasting is always foolish when it is boasting in oneself. However, it would not be foolish for him to boast in the things God had done. This would give proper glory to God and not self.

For I will speak the truth. But I forbear - Paul does not want his boasting to be misunderstood as he is not glorifying himself. If he were tempted to boast vainly, he would not. He does not want anyone to think of him more highly than they ought (cf. Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

- 12:7 *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.*

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations - The "abundance of the revelations" refers to Paul being inspired (cf. 2 Peter 3:16).

A thorn in the flesh was given to me - Paul was not impaled with something as some have suggested. What was this thorn in the flesh? There have been many suggestions made concerning the "thorn in the flesh," but the truth is we simply do not know! The Scriptures do not say and it is foolish to speculate.

I do not know why it is that some Bible scholars think they are suddenly medical doctors when it comes to this passage. Some of the theories concerning Paul's "thorn in the flesh" include: blasphemous thoughts, tortures of conscience, sexual temptations, eye misery, headaches, malaria, ear trouble, rheumatism, Malta fever, melancholia and epilepsy. The truth is, we do not know!

A messenger of Satan to buffet me - Since all afflictions have come upon man as a result of Satan's evil work Paul calls his "thorn in the flesh" a "messenger of Satan." Also, the Bible teaches that Satan was at times permitted to afflict bodily afflictions on certain men (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16).

To buffet me - The word "buffet" is derived from a Greek word (KOLAPHIZŌ) that means, "to strike with the fist, give one a blow with the fist." This seems to imply

the idea that the affliction was outward. Perhaps it was visible in such a way that it could prejudice his hearers against him, and could be used by his enemies to turn the people against him (2 Corinthians 10:10).

12:8 *Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me - There is no reason to assume that this is an example of Paul praying to Jesus. From the context of Paul's vision (2 Corinthians 12:2-5) it makes more sense to suppose this was a conversation Paul had directly with Christ in a vision.

There is a clear pattern set forth in the Scriptures for prayer. We are to pray to God the Father, through Jesus Christ with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray He said, "When you pray, say: 'Our Father in heaven'" (Luke 11:1-2). It is clear that our prayers are to be directed toward God the Father through Christ our mediator (John 14:13-14; 15:16; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5). Christians are blessed to have direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19; 4:16; John 16:20-23).

Those who want to pray to Jesus are actually seeking to pray to Jesus alone, ignoring the clearly defined roles of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our prayers. Is it Scriptural to just pray to Jesus? The answer is obviously, "No." There is no way to separate (or isolate) the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 17:21). We have no authority to cut God the Father and the Holy Spirit out of our prayers.

The Bible teaches that with the help of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26) we pray "to" (or more accurately "through") Jesus and then He delivers our prayers as our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) to the Father. This is the only biblical process or pattern taught for our prayers.

Those who say, "I want to just pray to Jesus," have a fundamental misunderstanding of the Godhead.

Any so-called "example" they can point to of someone praying to Jesus we could simply ask, "Did God the Father have a part in that prayer?" and "Did the Holy Spirit have a part in that prayer?" If they say, "No" they have denied the Godhead. If they say, "Yes" we simply ask them to explain, "What part did the Father and Holy Spirit have in that prayer?" Obviously, they are not following the pattern for prayer set forth in the Scriptures. We are to pray to God the Father, through Jesus Christ with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

They want to pray directly to Jesus without involving the Father and the Holy Spirit. But, knowing what we know about the Godhead, how would that even work? We know all three are involved in our prayers, and the Bible teaches us **how** they are involved. Denying the clear pattern for prayer is just as bad as denying the clear pattern for the church, worship or obeying the gospel. Let us stay true to the pattern set forth in God's word!

12:9 *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

And He said to me "My grace is sufficient for you" - Jesus did not grant Paul's request, but told him that His grace would be sufficient to enable him to endure the difficulties and continue to proclaim the gospel. Christians can be comforted knowing that God's grace will always be there in time of need (cf. Hebrews 4:16; 2 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

For My strength is made perfect in weakness - The power of God is seen more clearly in the weakness of man. Paul would continue to do great work for the Lord even in his weakness. In this way the power would clearly be seen to be from God and not Paul. God has always used the weak to show His might and power. God used a shepherd boy to defeat a giant (1 Samuel 17). We should also consider the fact that God has tasked mere men with the preaching of the gospel to show His power and glory.

2 Corinthians 4:5-7, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me - Paul would never boast of his own unaided achievements, but only in his weaknesses, because his weaknesses showed the grace and power of God. The phrase "may rest upon me" comes from the Greek phrase (EPISKĒNOŌ EPI EME) that is used to describe a tent or habitation set upon something. The figure here is that of Christ abiding upon Paul like a tent spread over him.

12:10 *Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake - Paul felt honored to suffer these difficulties "for

Christ's sake."

Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

1 Peter 4:12-13, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

For when I am weak, then I am strong - The greater Paul's trials and persecutions became, the more he appreciated the value of the Lord's help. When we face difficulties in this life it should cause us to rely more heavily on our God. He is the true source of strength.

12:11 *I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.*

I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me - The false teachers had boasted well about themselves. Paul's boasting was used to show the Corinthians just how poorly the false teachers compared to a true apostle of Christ. Paul's boasting was required for the Corinthians to see the foolishness of listening to the false apostles.

For I ought to have been commended by you - The Corinthians should have already seen the deception of Paul's enemies. The brethren should have been commending Paul not the false apostles.

For in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles - He repeats his claim made in 2 Corinthians 11:5. The phrase "most eminent" comes from two Greek words (HUPER LIAN) literally meaning, "over much or superior." There are two prominent views concerning whom this refers; the actual apostles (specifically Peter, James and John) or the false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13). Either view fits the context and does not contradict any verse of Scripture. [See 2 Corinthians 11:5 for additional information.]

Though I am nothing - Once again we see Paul's humility. He gives all the credit to the Lord for those things he was able to accomplish. He could not have demonstrated the signs of his apostleship to the Corinthians without the Lord.

12:12 *Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all*

*perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds - Paul fully proved his apostleship among them by the miracles he did and the powers he demonstrated. It should be remembered that only the apostles could lay their hands upon Christians to give them the power to work miracles through the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-21). Notice the phrase, "signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

In *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, J. W. Shepherd makes the following point:

"By the three terms, Paul does not mean three classes of action, but he uses them to describe the same phenomena. He means the miracles he wrought, which were signs because they signified God's approval of what he taught; they were called wonders, because they excited wonder in those who witnessed them; and they were called mighty works (*deeds*), because wrought by the immediate power of God. These three terms occur three times in connection with one another (Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:9), although on each occasion in a different order. They are all descriptive of different aspects of the same works rather than themselves different classes of works."

12:13 *For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!*

For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches except that I myself was not burdensome to you? - The only difference in Paul's dealing with the Corinthians as compared to other congregations was that he did not burden them with his support. The Lord's plan was that preachers would be supported by the congregations to whom they preached (1 Corinthians 9:14). Since Paul had decided to preach to the Corinthians without asking for support they may have thought they were inferior to the other congregations. However, Paul had a legitimate reason for following this course of action. He knew that his enemies would claim that he preached to the brethren at Corinth only for the money. Paul was wise to take this avenue of attack away from his enemies.

Forgive me this wrong! - Paul asked for their forgiveness if his actions caused them to feel inferior. It was a necessary course of action never intended to offend them.

**VI. PREPARATION FOR A VISIT ..... 12:14-13:10**

12:14 *Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be Burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for*

*the parents, but the parents for the children.*

Now for the third time I am ready to come to you - Paul must have made a quick trip that is not recorded for us. Paul's first visit to Corinth is recorded for us in Acts 18. We must understand that the Scriptures are not intended to include every detail we are curious about, but instead every detail truly necessary for our salvation and worship of God, as we faithfully serve Him.

And I will not be Burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you - Here Paul reassures the Corinthians that he will continue his practice of not asking them for financial support. He is seeking their soul, not their possessions.

For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children - The Corinthians were Paul's spiritual children (1 Corinthians 4:14-15). This follows the common practice of the parents' responsibility to provide for their children, and not the children for their parents. This is the principle when the children are young and not yet adults.

12:15 *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.*

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls - The phrase "be spent" conveys the idea of to spend utterly, the consumption of life itself.

Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved - Paul would not let the actions of those few Corinthians, who were turning toward his enemies, to stop his love and concern for their souls. Love should kindle love but we must continue to love even if it is refused or not returned.

12:16 *But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!*

But be that as it may, I did not burden you - He did not burden them with his financial support.

Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! - This is seen by most commentators as Paul stating a charge made against him by his enemies. It could be the enemies readily admitted that he did not ask for support in the traditional way, but was able to obtain it through cunning. They may have been saying that the collection for the poor in Jerusalem was actually being used by Paul secretly to support himself.

12:17 *Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?*

Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? - Paul answers the implied charge against him in verse 16 with a rhetorical question concerning

his actions. He is basically asking them to produce the evidence for the false accusations they have made. He follows this with specific questions concerning the conduct of those he had sent.

12:18 *I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?*

I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him - The Scriptures do not tell us the identity of this other brother. However, we can be confident that he was a faithful servant of Christ who had Paul's complete confidence. Those Paul sent conducted themselves like Paul, with unselfish service and love.

Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps? - There may have been some of Paul's enemies who were saying that although he did not take advantage of the Corinthians Titus did. Paul asks them to produce the evidence. There was no evidence of misdeeds because Titus walked in the same spirit (attitude) and steps (behavior) as Paul.

12:19 *Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.*

Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? - Paul had no need to justify himself to the Corinthians.

We speak before God in Christ - Paul was speaking before God in Christ. So, why would he be concerned about the opinions of these men? He has no need to justify himself to them.

But we do all things, beloved, for your edification - Everything Paul had done and was doing was done to edify the Corinthians.

12:20 *For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults;*

For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish - Paul was concerned they had not made the necessary corrections as he had instructed. If this was the case, his visit would not be pleasant for them.

Lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults - Paul was concerned he would find examples of these sins when he came to see them.

- a. Contentions - strife, quarreling, wrangling.

- b. Jealousies - an envious and contentious rivalry.
- c. Outbursts of wrath - passion, heat, anger boiling up.
- d. Selfish ambitions - a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and fractious spirit.
- e. Backbitings - defaming or speaking evil of others.
- f. Whisperings - evil whispering, secret slandering or detractions.
- g. Conceits - inflated with pride, a puffing up, loftiness.
- h. Tumults - instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion.

12:21 *lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and licentiousness which they have practiced.*

Lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you - Paul would be humbled if he found the congregation in a disgraceful state, especially after he had boasted about them.

And I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented - Once again we see an example of Paul's great love and concern for the Corinthians. He would wail with mourning if he found them unfaithful. His whole purpose was to help their souls get to heaven.

- a. uncleanness - impurity, immorality or defiled motives.
- b. fornication - illicit sexual intercourse.
- c. licentiousness - unbridled lust, excess, lasciviousness, wantonness, shamelessness.

13:1 *This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."*

This will be the third time I am coming to you - We only have one record of a visit to Corinth by Paul in the Scriptures (Acts 18:1-18). However, this verse and 2 Corinthians 12:14 make it clear that he once made a visit to them that is not recorded in the New Testament.

By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established - The law of Moses commanded that no man could be put to death or punished except on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6;

19:15). This standard was also used by the Lord when giving the command concerning church discipline (Matthew 18:16). In this text, Paul uses the same standard concerning his dealings with the Corinthians. The words to be established were charges made against Paul by his enemies. They were guilty of many false statements that would be addressed fully by Paul when he arrived. Considering the power of the apostle (Acts 13:8-11), the false teachers should have been terrified at the prospect of such a meeting.

13:2 *I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare -*

I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time - Paul wanted there to be no misunderstanding. When he was with them before he had dealt with them in a gentle way. However, he also warned them that if changes were not made he would not be lenient when he came again.

Now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare - If he came to visit them again he would not come in gentleness, but severity.

13:3 *since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.*

Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me - Paul's enemies had criticized him for his humble manner saying he lacked the true power of an apostle. They challenged him to show his power if he really was an apostle. Obviously, they had no idea the punishment they were asking to receive.

Who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you - The powers of Christ in Paul had been abundantly demonstrated to them. He had both worked miracles and laid his hands upon some of the Christians at Corinth to give them the power to work miracles through the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 12:12). There had been plenty of evidences provided to the church at Corinth that God's power was working in Paul as an apostle of the Lord.

13:4 *For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.*

For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God - Christ's crucifixion was the result of human weakness. Jesus took upon Himself human flesh and blood (Philippians 2:7) He was both God and man. The weakness here is the same that Paul had endured with meekness and humility. He was willing to subject himself to the attacks of his enemies as he followed the example of Christ in sacrificial service. However, just as Jesus showed great

power, so could Paul. His might as an apostle should not have been questioned or doubted by his enemies.

- 13:5 *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you are disqualified.*

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves - "Examine" is a translation of the Greek word (PEIRAZŌ) meaning, "to try, test, scrutinize, prove, tempt." The Corinthians should have been examining themselves, not Paul. "Prove" is a translation of the Greek word (DOKIMAZŌ) meaning, "to test, by implication to approve, discern, examine, to try." This word has a very similar meaning to the first and is probably added for emphasis.

Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - Jesus Christ was in them if they obeyed His commands and followed His example. Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17). Having Christ in us requires us to put to death our old man of sin and live a new life faithfully submitting to Christ.

Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Unless indeed you are disqualified - "Disqualified" comes from the Greek word (ADOKIMOS) meaning, "unapproved, that is, rejected; by implication worthless (literally or morally): a castaway, rejected, reprobate." This describes Paul's enemies at Corinth (false apostles, false teachers).

- 13:6 *But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.*

But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified - The Corinthians should know, without any doubts, that Paul is qualified.

- 13:7 *Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified.*

Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified - Paul's prayer was for them to follow his instructions, thus doing good and not evil. He wanted them to do this for the sake of doing what is right, not for the purpose of showing Paul as approved. Even if some enemies would think Paul was disqualified that should not deter them from doing what is right.

- 13:8 *For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.*

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth - Those who are

motivated by the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) will do nothing against, or to harm, the cause of truth. Paul would never want to find an occasion for punishing them merely to demonstrate his own authority and power as an apostle.

13:9 *For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.*

For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong - Paul did not care if he was considered weak, as long as they were spiritually strong.

And this also we pray, that you may be made complete - Paul prayed for the welfare of the Corinthians. "Complete" comes from the Greek word (KATARTISIS) meaning, "a strengthening, perfecting of the soul, a training, disciplining, instructing."

13:10 *Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.*

Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness - Being away from them gave Paul the time and distance to better consider their situation and his attitude toward the things taking place.

According to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction - Paul had been given by the Lord great power and authority as an apostle. His power could be used for the good of the Corinthians, but if they chose to reject him and follow after the false apostles his power would be used for their destruction.

**CONCLUSION ..... 13:11-14**

13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Finally, brethren, farewell - "Farewell" comes from the Greek word (CHAIRŌ) used here to say, "May all things go well and spiritually prosperous for you." This is an exhortation to spiritual joy.

Become complete - The Greek word is, second person, plural, present, imperative, passive. In other words, it is a command. Paul is giving an order to say, "All of you allow yourselves to be repaired and restored spiritually."

Be of good comfort - Paul wants the Corinthians to be comforted by the promises and blessings of the gospel. They should be edified and consoled by his message.

13:12 *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

Greet one another with a holy kiss - In the culture of the day, a kiss was a part of the standard greeting. This was the eastern manner of greeting, just as the hand-shake is the manner of greeting in the west.

Paul's command concerning a "holy kiss" was a clear restriction against impure motives during the greeting. If people greet one another with a kiss it must be a HOLY kiss. "Holy" means "pure, sanctified and godly." Such greetings could obviously provide an opportunity for lust or impure thoughts. Paul's command concerning the "holy kiss" was given to regulate a practice already in existence, rather than establishing a new law demanding that all Christian must kiss when they greet each other (see Romans 16:16 and 1 Corinthians 16:20).

13:13 *All the saints greet you.*

All the saints greet you - A saint is a sanctified person (Romans 1:7). Those referred to were saints because they had become Christians by obeying God's plan of salvation.

Many religious groups use the word "saint" incorrectly to represent a special higher class or exalted Christian. The word "saints" is an English translation of the Greek word (HAGIOS) that means "holy, sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated." All Christians are saints (Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Philemon 1:5).

13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ - The grace of Jesus is seen in His willingness to come to this life and live as a man and then give His life as the perfect, sinless, sacrifice for man's sin. In this way He provided the only way for man's salvation.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul had told them, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

And the love of God - God's love is seen in the gift of His only begotten Son.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all - The communion (fellowship) with the Holy Spirit is made possible by the forgiveness of our sins and the restored unity with our God. The "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3) means not only spiritual unity, but also unity of thoughts, aspirations and affections. Those things worthy of and coming from the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23).

Note: All three of the godhead are included in Paul's closing remarks.

Amen - "Amen" literally means "so be it." The word "Amen" started as a Hebrew word (Numbers 5:22), that was transliterated into Greek and then eventually into English. The word comes from a Hebrew root word that means "to build up or support; to be firm or faithful, to trust or believe; to be true or certain." It is also used as an adverb at the beginning of a speech to mean "surely, of a truth, truly" (Matthew 5:18; Mark 3:28; John 3:3). At the conclusion of a sentence it is used to mean "so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled." When the word is used as an adjective it means "firm or true." Some dictionaries claim that when "Amen" is used at the end of a prayer it means approval of what is being said. However, our approval does not make it true. It is more correct to think of it as "this is true, or may it come to pass, or may it be fulfilled."

**FINIS**

**APPENDICES**.....  
 FAITH AND WORKS.....  
 ARE THERE MODERN DAY APOSTLES?.....

**FAITH AND WORKS**

- I. Can we be saved by our own works?
  - A. Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast."
  - B. 2 Timothy 1:8-9 - "Saved...not according to our works but according to His own purpose."
  - C. Romans 11:6 - "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work."
  
- II. In Romans 4:1-25 Paul is correcting a false belief that man could be saved by his own "perfect works." If a man could do a "perfect work" (one's life being that work — completely void of sin), then there would be no need for God's grace.
 

Paul argues that God would then be indebted to that person due to their perfect life (4:4). Abraham's righteousness was "by faith," not his own "perfect work," or God would have owed Abraham a debt, and no grace would have been necessary.

But we see that grace AND faith were needed to justify him.
  
- III. We have seen that we are justified by faith as a result of God's grace (unmerited favor).
 

BUT is it necessary to "obey God in order to receive this grace?"

  - A. 1 Samuel 15:22 - "Then Samuel said: Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."
  - B. Ecclesiastes 12:13 - "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

- C. John 14:15 - "If you love Me, keep my commandments."
- D. Romans 6:17-18 - "But God be thanked that though you were the servants of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, ye became slaves of righteousness."

It is, therefore, necessary to obey God in order to receive His grace, and to become servants of righteousness!

IV. Why are we God's servants; what is our purpose?

- A. Ephesians 2:10 - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, [What kind of works? Our own? No!] which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
- B. Notice that these are not our own works, but the works that God Himself prepared for us to do.
- C. Compare Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 11:6; 4:4-5.

V. What are these works which these verses refer to?

- A. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 - "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love..."
- B. Hebrews 6:10 - "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love."
  - 1. God desires all to do the same thing (v. 11).
  - 2. Be not slothful (v. 12).
- C. Galatians 5:6 - "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."
- D. Romans 16:26 - "But now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith."

We can see by these passages that faith is supposed to do something.

VI. Can we receive the grace of God in vain?

- A. 2 Corinthians 6:1 - "We then as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."
  - B. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul said he had not received the grace of God in vain — "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."
  - C. It should be noted here that the grace of God caused Paul to labor (work), and if he would not have worked, the grace would have been in vain!
  - D. Through faith we are justified by works:
    - 1. Done in obedience to God's commandments,
    - 2. Which are a result of His grace.
- VII. Other examples of faith which led to works which led to perfect faith.
- A. Noah was led by faith to build an ark (Hebrews 11:7).
    - 1. He and his family would not have been saved by faith alone.
    - 2. Without works they, as well as their faith, would have been dead.
  - B. The bronze serpent (Numbers 21:4-9).
    - 1. Israel's belief in what God said led them to obey and to look upon the serpent.
    - 2. They could have believed all day long, but without obeying and looking upon the serpent they were without hope.
  - C. The wall of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-21).
    - 1. God's promise was not put into action until some works were done.
    - 2. The people had to walk around the city for seven days until God would work His works.
    - 3. Until that last command was obeyed God would not cause the walls to fall.
  - D. Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:1-19).

1. A work of faith led Naaman to obey the prophet by doing something.
2. He evidently believed he would be healed or he would not have sought the prophet in the first place — but that was not enough!
3. He scoffed at a simple command to go and dip in the Jordan river BUT until that command was obeyed the man continued to be a leper!
4. It is amazing how people today scoff at a simple command like baptism in the same way.
5. Work is a result of God's commands through faith. Nothing more and nothing less is acceptable to God.

#### CONCLUSION:

WE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS (OUR OWN), BUT WE ARE SAVED BY A WORKING OBEDIENT FAITH THAT LEADS TO WORKS WHICH ARE A RESULT OF GOD'S WILL.

- A. Faith in itself is dead.
  1. We must do the will of God, not just be hearers only (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:35-40).
  2. God has shown time and time again that He will not carry out a promise until conditions are met.
  3. That condition is obedience to His word which, when obeyed, are works which He has prepared for us to walk in.
- B. Let us not accept the grace of God in vain by NOT doing the works which He commanded.
  1. In Revelation 2:10 John writes, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."
  2. This was not a dead faith but was one of action and works, and became their work of faith and labor of love.

THROUGH FAITH WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS DONE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, THROUGH WHICH HIS GRACE IS GIVEN!

## ARE THERE MODERN-DAY APOSTLES?

By: Dave Miller, Ph.D.

The incredible diversity of viewpoint that exists in religion today is startling and disconcerting. We are witnessing a breakdown of respect for authority in American culture, as well as a tremendous increase in personal opinion and feelings as the standard of authority. Consequently, we now have a veritable smorgasbord of doctrinal variety in religion. Such is the nature of pluralism. One is likely to see anything and everything perpetrated in the name of religion and/or Christianity. The only solution to such a situation is to reaffirm the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The Bible is the only written document on this planet that is the standard of authority in life and in religion (see Miller, 1996, pp. 430-446,462-471).

### THE DEFINITION OF AN APOSTLE

Such being the case, we must go to the Bible to determine God's will with regard to modern-day apostles. When we do so, we first learn that the word "apostle" comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one sent from or forth, a messenger, delegate" (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 99; Thayer, 1901, p. 68). The term is used in the New Testament in two distinct senses. It can refer to an individual who is sent by other humans to accomplish a particular mission or task. The term is so used to refer, for example, to Barnabas (Acts 14:14). He was an "apostle" in the sense that he accompanied Paul on an evangelistic trip. Jesus is said to be our "Apostle" in the sense that He was sent to atone for our sins (Hebrews 3:1).

The term "apostle" also is used in a second sense—what we might call an **official** sense. That is, "apostle" can refer to individuals who were officially and divinely selected to serve as Jesus' original representatives—"ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus handpicked the original twelve apostles (Matthew 10:1-5; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-2). Of these original twelve, Judas betrayed the Lord as predicted by the Old Testament (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18-19; 18:1-5). Instead of repenting, he cinched his apostasy by committing suicide (Matthew 27:3-5; John 17:12). Consequently, a successor to Judas was selected by divine decree (Acts 1:16-26).

Only one other apostle in the official sense is alluded to in the New Testament—Paul. His appointment to apostleship was unique and unparalleled in that he was chosen for a specific first century task (Acts 9:15; 22:14-15; 26:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Galatians 1:11-12,15-16). Christ selected him to introduce the message of Christianity to the Gentile world (Romans 11:13; 15:16; Galatians 2:8; Ephesians 3:8). Paul was careful to document the fact that his apostleship was by divine appointment (e.g., Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1,16).

### THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE

When one assembles all the relevant New Testament data, at least three qualifications emerge as prerequisite to one becoming an apostle in the official sense (Hayden, 1894, p. 33, expands these credentials to seven in number). First, an apostle had to have seen the Lord and been an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:22; 22:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1). Second, an apostle had to be specifically selected by the Lord or the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:5; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:26; 9:15; 22:14-15,21; 26:16). Third, an apostle was invested with miraculous power to the extent that he could perform miracles. The power to perform miracles included the capability to confer the ability to work miracles to other individuals through the laying on of his hands (Mark 3:15; 16:17-20; Luke 9:1-2; John 14:12,26; 15:24-27; 16:13; Acts 2:43; 4:29-31,33; 5:12,15-16; 6:6; 8:14-18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11; Hebrews 2:3-4). Jesus referred to His bestowal of miraculous capability upon the apostles when He promised they would be "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

### THE WORK OF AN APOSTLE

The apostolic office was unquestionably a temporary office for the early church (though apostolic appointment was for life). Its essential purpose was twofold. First, apostles were commissioned by Jesus to launch the Christian religion (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). This purpose was achieved by means of the initial presentation of the Gospel to the whole world (Colossians 1:23), and the establishment of the church of Christ (Acts 2). Second, apostles were largely responsible for making the New Testament available—first in oral form and, more specifically, in written form (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:14; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:15-16).

These two central tasks are set forth clearly in the New Testament. In Matthew 16, Jesus declared that He would build His church after His resurrection from hades (vs. 18). He then explained that it would be the apostles who would instigate initial entrance into Christ's church (hence the significance of "keys"—vs. 19). This commencement of the Christian religion and the church of Christ would be achieved by means of the apostles "binding" and "loosing" the doctrinal tenets and principles of Christianity that Heaven had previously bound or loosed [the Greek uses the perfect passive and should be translated "will have been bound/loosed in Heaven" as in the NASB (cf. Matthew 18:18-20; John 20:22-23)]. Peter and the apostles articulated the terms of entrance into the kingdom of Christ for the first time on the Pentecost that followed Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:14ff.).

In Ephesians 4, after summarizing Christianity in terms of seven core concepts (vss. 1-6), Paul described the initial sequence of events that recounted the advent of Christianity (vss. 7-16). Paul noted that: (1) after His crucifixion, Jesus descended into the Hadean realm; (2) He then was resurrected; (3) He ascended back to Heaven; (4) upon His ascension, He dispensed gifts; (5) the apostolic office was included in the reception of these miraculous capabilities; (6) the purpose of these gifts was to equip and edify the church; (7) the preparation provided to the infant church by these gifts was temporary ("till" is an adverb of time connoting **when** the

miraculous gifts were to terminate), in that the same preparation soon would be available through the completed revelation, i.e., “the faith.” [By “completed revelation” we do not mean completed **canon**. We mean that all of God’s communication to humanity would have been revealed. See the New Testament discussion contrasting “mystery” with “made known” (Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:1-11). In the meantime, the process of producing copies of the various New Testament documents and circulating them far and wide would have been occurring rapidly and extensively from the very moment of their production by the inspired writers (cf. Colossians 4:16, 1 Timothy 5:18, where Luke 10:7 is already known and classified as “Scripture,” and 2 Peter 3:15-16, where Paul’s epistles are already circulated and recognized as “Scriptures”). Further, the reference to “the faith” in Ephesians 4:13 cannot refer to a time when all people or all Christians will achieve unity in faith. Such a circumstance will never occur. Paul was referring to the time when all people would have access to all of God’s communication to man, thus giving them the potential for attaining spiritual maturity (“a perfect man” vs. “children”). See Miller, 2003].

Once all of the information necessary to the promotion of the Christian religion was revealed to the early church (through oral means made possible by the distribution of the gifts), the church would have the means available to grow and mature in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). While prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers [the words “pastors and teachers” share the same article in the Greek, and so should likely be construed to mean “pastor-teachers,” i.e., a single function in which pastors (those selected by the local congregation to serve as elders or shepherds) were endowed with the miraculous ability to teach inspired information not yet made available in written form] were part of this early development of Christianity (Ephesians 4:11), the office of an apostle was the primary means by which Christ accomplished the inauguration of His religion.

The apostles had the sole responsibility of executing the will of the Son of God in founding, organizing, and fully equipping the church of Christ on Earth, that she might fulfill her heaven-borne mission, until Jesus comes again (Hayden, p. 22). That is why Paul could say two chapters earlier that the household of God (i.e., the church) was built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20; cf. 3:5; Revelation 21:14). That is why he informed the Corinthian Christians:

God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:28-30).

The apostles are said to be “first” in the significance and criticality of their divinely appointed role. The apostles specifically described their unique role in the early church as entailing giving themselves to “the word of God” and “the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2,4).

## THE DURATION OF AN APOSTLE

Once the church of Christ was established and Christianity was given its initial presentation (cf. Colossians 1:23), the apostolic office **faded from the scene** along with the age of miracles. As an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection, Paul referred to himself in relation to the other apostles as "**last of all**" (1 Corinthians 15:8). Neither apostles nor miraculous gifts was needed any longer. They had served their temporary purpose (Mark 16:20; Acts 4:29-31; 13:12; 14:3; Romans 15:18-19; Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Exodus 4:30). Miraculous gifts functioned as scaffolding while the church was under initial construction, and were removed once the structure had been completed (1 Corinthians 3:10; 13:11; Ephesians 4:13-14). The book we call the Bible is the totality of God's written revelation to the human race. Consequently, people now have access to **everything they need** (2 Peter 1:3) to enter into a right relationship with God via Christianity and the church of Christ. The apostles "had no official successors. From the nature of their duties, there could be no succession" (Hayden, pp. 20-21). **Apostles, quite simply, are no longer needed!**

### NO APOSTLES TODAY

Unfortunately, several groups that claim affiliation with the Christian religion allege to have apostles among them, including Catholicism, Mormonism, and some pentecostal groups. This claim is unbiblical. No person living today can meet the qualifications given in Scripture for being an apostle. No one living today has been an **eyewitness** of Christ's resurrection. Christ has selected no one living today for the apostolic role. No one living today possesses the miraculous capabilities of an apostle. We should not be surprised that people would falsely **claim** to be apostles. Jesus warned that false prophets would come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they would be ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15). Paul described some of his opponents in these words:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Further warning was issued to the Galatian churches: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Anyone claiming to be an apostle today who teaches anything **in addition to** the New Testament is clearly not an apostle of Christ!

Peter added his voice on the same subject: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). No wonder John admonished: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1; cf. Matthew 24:11,24). In the Revelation, the church at Ephesus was commended because they "tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars" (Revelation 2:2).

Catholicism maintains that Peter was the supreme bishop, even over the other apostles, and that every pope since Peter is an apostolic successor to Peter. The pope is selected after literally hours and days of deliberation by cardinals in the Vatican. The only apostle in the Bible that was not handpicked by Christ in person was Matthias. Yet he was not selected by mere men deliberating and debating his potential. He was selected by the casting of lots—which was simply another way for Jesus to do the selecting (Acts 1:26; cf. Proverbs 16:33).

It is incredible to think that any human beings living today would presume to appoint apostles. In pinpointing the credentials of an apostle, Luke (Acts 1) made it abundantly evident that to qualify as an apostle a person would have to have **seen** the Lord and been an **eyewitness** of His resurrection. That is why Paul was careful to state: “Am I not an apostle? ...Have I not **seen the Lord?**” (1 Corinthians 9:1, emp. added). In recounting his conversion, he quoted Ananias as having said, “The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and **see the Just One**, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14-15, emp. added). What alleged modern-day apostle could make such a claim?

The New Testament also makes clear the fact that an essential characteristic of an apostle was that he had been selected by Deity. When Jesus was on Earth, He handpicked the first twelve apostles. After His departure from Earth, the disciples cast lots to select a successor to Judas. Their method allowed no input from mere humans—except in the recognition that two men possessed all the qualifications necessary to be an apostle. Casting lots allowed **God** to do the selecting. Divine control in the selection process by casting lots was common in Old Testament history (see Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 26:55; 33:54; 34:13; Joshua 14:2; 18:6,10; 19:51; cf. Acts 13:19; 1 Samuel 14:42; Nehemiah 10:34; Psalm 16:5). Solomon claimed: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33). Indeed, Peter’s prayer on the occasion shows that the decision already had been made by the Lord before the actual casting of lots: “...show which of these two **You have chosen**” (Acts 1:24, emp. added). The summary statement regarding Matthias—“he was numbered with **the eleven** apostles” (Acts 1:26; cf. Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33)—gives way to a return to the expression “the twelve” (Acts 6:2; cf. Acts 2:14). The text states: “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:24-25). Paul also was handpicked by Jesus—to be a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15). No human being on Earth today can claim he has been personally singled out and chosen by Jesus to be an apostle.

A third proof that no apostles exist on Earth today is the fact that New Testament apostles were empowered by God—not only to perform miracles—but also to **convey miraculous power to other people** who then could work miracles themselves. This characteristic is demonstrated in detailed fashion in Acts: “Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” (Acts 8:18). The issue of modern-day apostles may be settled very quickly! To authenticate their claim to be apostles, they must be able both to perform miracles as well as confer miraculous power to others. The apostles of Jesus in the New Testament demonstrated their apostolic status without hesitation.

Anyone today who claims to be an apostle should be willing to do the same. No such ability exists today.

## ORIGINAL APOSTLES WERE SUFFICIENT

A fascinating passage in the New Testament sheds further light upon this notion of modern-day apostles. That passage is Matthew 19:28. There Jesus informed Peter and the other apostles: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” A related passage is Luke 22:29-30 which says, “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

These verses are Christ’s figurative declarations describing the role of the twelve apostles in the establishment of the church and the dissemination of the gospel proclamation (cf. Bales, 1957, pp. 187-223). The “regeneration” refers to the Christian era, which began at Pentecost, during which time spiritual regeneration became possible through the blood of Christ (Titus 3:5). It is an equivalent expression with the “time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:10). The throne of Christ’s glory refers to His present location at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-36; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12-13). The “judging” done by the apostles refers to the rule that the apostles exerted while they were on Earth, setting in place the features of New Testament Christianity (Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23). The “twelve thrones” refers to their complete authority from Christ to implement Christ’s will until the end of time—which they presently do today **through their authoritative writings—found only in the New Testament**. The “twelve tribes” is a figurative way to refer to the church—the spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16; James 1:1; cf. Romans 2:28-30; Galatians 3:29).

Neither Christ nor the original apostles needs successors or representatives on Earth today. They continue to rule and reign over the kingdom through the work that they achieved in the first century, and that is preserved for all in the New Testament. Christ is **now** on His throne ruling and reigning. The apostles also are on the thrones assigned to them by Christ. To suggest that the apostles have modern-day successors is to discount and discredit the current rule of the apostles. Neither Christ nor the apostles has abdicated their authority or their current rule to any humans on Earth.

Additionally, the fact that Jesus declared that **all twelve apostles** would occupy thrones in the kingdom proves that Peter had no greater authority than the other apostles. The apostles were **equal** in their reception and wielding of the authority delegated to them by Christ. Yet the Catholic Church claims that the immediate successors to Peter were Linus (from A.D. 67 to 79), Cletus (from A.D. 79 to 91) and Clement (from A.D. 91 to 100). They agree that the apostle John would have still been alive throughout this period (see G.C. Brewer’s discussion as quoted in Bales, pp. 208-210). The doctrine of the primacy of Peter means that the first three of the alleged successors of Peter would have exercised authority over the still-living apostle John—who had been handpicked by Christ Himself! The very John whom

Jesus placed on one of the twelve thrones would have been **under** the authority, knowledge, and power of three popes who had not been selected to be among the original Twelve! (see also Hayden, pp. 22-33). Hayden aptly summarized the New Testament position regarding modern-day apostles:

The thirteen apostles chosen, ordained and endowed by the newly crowned Messiah faithfully and fully executed their commission. When they entered into everlasting rest, the church was established, with all needful ministries to edify, extend and perpetuate it throughout all coming centuries. Then the extraordinary, which was necessary to found a new institution, was succeeded by the ordinary, which is sufficient to teach, regulate and govern the subjects of Christ's kingdom according to the laws that went forth from Jerusalem. The revelation of God was completed. The word of faith is henceforth nigh every believer, even in his mouth and in his heart. The apostolic office ceased, and evangelists and pastors became the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church (pp. 33-34).

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