

***Second Corinthians***  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

First Corinthians speaks of the problems of a church while Second Corinthians speaks to the problems of a man.

First Corinthians is Paul telling a church what they need to be while Second Corinthians is telling the church what he is.

First Corinthians is a letter of correction while Second Corinthians is a letter of testimony.

## Background

Out of the thirteen epistles that Paul wrote, this is the fifth chronologically.

He had already been in ministry for twenty years and still had ten to go.

He is in his late 50's and knew what he was talking about.

This epistle is more than any other, biographical.

It is a peek, in written form, into Paul's heartache over the Corinthian church.

## Paul, an Apostle

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

*“an apostle of Jesus Christ”*: already we see a hint of the purpose of this letter.

Paul's apostleship was being questioned, but he reminds them that he is indeed an apostle and that his calling was *“by the will of God.”*

Paul constantly had to reaffirm his apostolic credentials because the false teachers and prophets would challenge it because he was not one of the originals.

The only requirements of an apostle are found in Acts 1:16-22.

Paul met all of these qualifications in that he was most likely there to witness Christ's earthly ministry from the baptism of John to the crucifixion and if not a witness immediately after Christ's resurrection, certainly on the Damascus Road (Acts 9).

Certainly, no one meets this requirement today even if they do claim to have seen Jesus.

## Daily Pressure

Paul goes on to defend his apostleship in 11:23-28

However, notice v.28 where it says, *“Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”*

In spite of all that Paul had gone through, the churches were a never-ending weight on him.

He could receive beatings and shipwrecks that passed, but the pressure of the constant oversight and dealing with the churches was constant.

The Corinthian church was most likely the guiltiest of causing this pressure.

As a pastor, I can truly attest to this fact.

*“and Timothy our brother”*: Notice that he does not address Timothy as an apostle but as a brother.

It’s interesting that out of the thirteen epistles that Paul wrote, Timothy is mentioned in ten of them.

He is in the greeting of six of them and, of course, two of them are written to him.

There had met in Acts 16 at Derby and Lystra.

It’s interesting that Timothy was there at the founding of the church of Corinth in Acts 18.

They were both there for a year and a half together ministering to this church (Acts 18:11).

That was mostly likely why Paul felt so comfortable in sending Timothy back to them in 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 16:10-11.

We have no record of Timothy report back to Paul about the Corinthians.

All we have is the report of Titus in 7:6-7.

However, there is no doubt that Paul was pouring his life into him.

*“To the church of God which is at Corinth”*: I’m amazed that Paul even addressed them as a church of God.

***“with all the saints throughout Achaia”***: This shows that Paul intended for the letter to go beyond Corinth.

### **Trouble vs. Comfort**

It’s interesting that in vv.3-11 that he uses five different words to describe trouble (affliction, suffering, burdened, despaired and peril) but yet he uses the word “comfort” ten times.

It’s almost like even though he knows that the church is full of problems that he addressed in the first letter; he also knows that many in the church are responding positively to that letter.

Cf. 7:6-7 where Titus gives a good report as the result of the first letter.

***“To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints”***: Notice that the “Church of God” is not a denomination, but a reference to all the saints that make up the Body of Christ.

History tells us that there was about half a million people in Corinth at this time.

***“throughout Achaia”***: Achaia, in the largest sense, included the whole of Greece. Achaia proper, however, was the district or province of which Corinth was the capital.<sup>i</sup>

We know of at least two people in the Bible that are mentioned specifically from there.

The first would be household of Stephanus who are listed as the first to be saved in that city (1 Cor. 16:15).

The second would be Phoebe, the deaconess from Cenchrea which was a port in Corinth (Rom. 16:1).

### **Grace and Peace**

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

Of course, we’ve all heard that ***“grace”*** and ***“peace”*** are the Siamese twins of the New Testament.

They are practically in all of Paul’s epistles.

As a matter of fact, it is one of the strongest arguments against Paul being the author of Hebrews.

The word ***“grace”*** is the Greek word “charis”, however it literally refers to “divine favor.”

That of course leads to the word ***“peace.”***

In order to have peace, one must first experience the divine favor of God.

### **Blessed be God**

*v.3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*: With all of the problems that Paul had been through, he now expresses a note of praise.

Barnes says, this is the language of a heart that is full of joy, and that bursts forth with gratitude in view of mercy.<sup>ii</sup>

There is no doubt that Paul wanted this church to be positive.

Unfortunately, most of Paul’s letters up to this point had been negative.

Bear in mind that Paul wrote a total of four letters to this church, but apparently only two of them were inspired by God.

Had they all been inspired, we would be studying the book of 4<sup>th</sup> Corinthians right now.

### **The First Letter**

We know that there was a letter written before our 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians because of 1 Corinthians 5:9-12.

We also know that Paul had received a report on that first letter from the family of Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Paul also mentions a response to that first letter that he received from the Corinthians themselves (1 Corinthians 7:1) which was most likely delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17).

We also believe that he had received an account of what was going on there from Apollos himself (1 Corinthians 16:12). He apparently, though innocent, was part of the original problem (I Corinthians 1:12-14).

This letter is often referred to as “The Lost Letter”.

### **The Third Letter**

Many feel that Paul, after sending Timothy, visited Corinth again for a second time (2 Corinthians 2:1).

The first time would have been the church plant and the second would have been the “sorrowful” visit referred to here.

It was then that he wrote what is called “The Severe Letter” after that visit that is referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:4, 9.

He cannot be referring to our current 1 Corinthians because it is not that severe.

Also, 2 Corinthians 7:8 is most likely referring to that letter and also proves that it was uninspired.

Had either “The Lost Letter” or “The Severe Letter” been inspired, God would have made sure that it was included in the Canon of Scripture.

***“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”***: This speaks to the fact that Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

It’s called the hypostatic union.

***“God of all comfort”***: The word comfort does not simply mean to soothe.

“Fortis” in the Latin means to “strengthen”.

“Paraklesis” in the Greek means to “comfort” or “consol.”<sup>iii</sup>

### **Comforted by God**

***v.4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.***

***“that we will be able to comfort”***: We are to comfort others as God has comforted us.

One of the best ways to do that is with his Word as Paul did when speaking of the rapture in 1 Thess. 4:18 when he said, ***“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”***

### **The Suffering of Christ**

***v.5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.***

***“the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance”*** The lives of the apostles were filled with suffering.

This was true especially in the life of Paul.

Cf. II Cor. 11:23-28

Notice that he realized that the *“sufferings of Christ are ours.”*

As Christ suffered, so will we suffer in this life.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:24 *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.*

That’s what Paul meant when he told young Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:12 *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*

*“our comfort is abundant through Christ”*: The more suffering we go through, the more consolation we receive.

It’s kind of a two-edged sword in that to receive the comfort and consolation, there must first be suffering.

### **For Your Comfort and Salvation**

v.6 *But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;*

*“we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation”*: Paul realized that his suffering was a necessary part of his being able to reach the Gentiles with the gospel of Christ.

I see in this that the more Paul suffered the more consolation that he received and the more consolation that he received, the more encouragement he had to preach the gospel.

It’s been said that the most dangerous prayer is the one in which we say, “Lord, us me.”

*“which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer”*: In other words, he is encouraging them that just as he received consolation from the Lord during his suffering, so would they.

He was indeed a living epistle!

### **Suffering**

I find it interesting that the word for *“suffering”* is “*thlipsis*” in the Greek which means “physical pressure.”

Criminals used to be “pressed to death” as weights were slowly added to them.

That’s the kind of suffering that Paul is speaking of here.

A pressing suffering that is unrelenting.

### **Patient Enduring**

However, God wants our sufferings to be *“effective in...patient enduring”*.

### **Enduring**

*“Enduring”* in the Greek is the word “hupomone” which means “to not only make it through the suffering but to triumph over it.

Suffering is an inseparable part of the Christian experience.

Acts 14:22 *“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”*

1 Th. 3:3 *“That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.”*

Ph. 1:29 *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”*

Rom. 5:3 *“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;”*

### **Firmly Grounded**

v.7 *and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.*

In spite of the problems that Paul had experienced with this church, he was very optimistic about their future.

He knew that God would comfort them as He had him in his sufferings.

### **Affliction in Asia**

v.8 *For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;*

***“our affliction which came to us in Asia”***: We don’t know for sure what Paul is talking about here.

It could have been the “wild beasts” at Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32).

It could have been the 39 stripes that he received before the Jewish court (2 Cor. 11:24).

It could have been a riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41).

Some have also suggested that it was merely a reference to a physical illness that Paul was apparently struggling with.

***“we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.”***: Whatever the problem was, it was bad, but God delivered them as He also delivers us ***“from so great a peril of death”*** (v.10a).

### **Trusting God**

***v.9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;***

***“the sentence of death”***: The word “sentence” literally means “answer” or “judicial decision”.

He felt that he had already been condemned to die.

***“so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead”***: They had no choice but to trust God with their lives.

It seems like when we do have a choice, we many times don’t trust God with our lives.

It just seems that most of us have to hit the bottom of the well before we look up.

However, we need to trust God at all times.

### **Three Tenses**

***v.10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,***

The KJV says in more accurately, ***“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;”***

We see God’s work in our lives in three tenses: past, present and future.

## **The Power of Prayer**

*v.11 “you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.”*

Paul also knew the power of prayer!

*“so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us”:*  
The favor bestowed was the prayers!

Many times I hear people say, “Well, the least I can do is pray for you” or “All we can do is pray!”

What’s wrong with those statements? They underestimate the power of prayer.

Prayer should not be the last resort, but the first!

The word *“persons”* literally means “visages” or “faces”.<sup>iv</sup>

It speaks of faces that are upturned in prayer.

## **Testimony of Conscience**

*v.12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.*

*“testimony of our conscience”*: Paul is simply saying that he has a clear conscience before God in regards to what he does and says.

*“not in fleshly wisdom”*: In other words, he was not trying to manipulate them or have hidden motives.

Some had stated that was his intent because he did not follow through on his visit (1 Cor. 16:5).

## **No Hidden Meaning**

*v.13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end;*

Again, there is no hidden meaning in Paul’s letter.

He said what he said and meant what he meant.

## **Division**

v.14 *just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.*

**“partially”**: These indicates that the church was apparently divided over Paul.

Some were in favor and others were not.

## **Twice the Blessing**

vv.15-16 *In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; (16) that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.*

**“I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive blessing”**: Again, Paul is defending his inability to follow through with his visit like he said he would in 1 Cor. 16:5-7.

He did visit with them on his way to Macedonia, but it was apparently a very painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1).

At some point after that visit, someone was further insulted (7:12).

However, at that time Paul figured that a second visit was not wise, so he didn't go like he said he would in 1 Cor. 16:5-7.

It can indeed be wise to not force an issue.

It was then that he wrote what is called the “severe letter” which was delivered by Titus (2:3-9) who was to be there anyway to collect the offering that they promised.

It wasn't until Paul returned from Asia to Macedonia that Titus gave him the good news about the favorable response to that “severe letter”.

## **“No-Show” Sledgehammer**

v.17 *Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?*

Paul's enemies were already using his “no-show” in Corinth as a sledgehammer against him.

They were accusing him of being fickle and a coward to not come and send a letter instead (10:10).

Paul, denies that allegation in v.18.

v.18 *But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.*

### **God is Reliable**

vv.19-20 *For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. (20) For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.*

Paul is saying that just as the Savior that he taught is reliable, so is he.

### **The Work of the Holy Spirit**

vv.21-22 *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, (22) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.*

Here we see three aspects to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

***"anointed"***: That means that we have been prepared and established for service.

Cf. 1 John 2:20, 27

We are anointed just as the prophets, priests and kings were in the Old Testament!

***"sealed"***: A seal was used to identify and to protect.

Also, everyone knew who it belonged to.

So is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

***"a pledge"***: It's also translated "guarantee".

It means a down-payment.

One day, God Himself will come and take us off layaway!

### **To Spare You**

v.23 *But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.*

***"I call God as witness to my soul"***: That's a pretty serious oath.

Jesus said in Matt. 5:33-37 that we should live our lives in such a way that oaths are not necessary.

However, even God Himself takes oaths (Heb. 6:13).

*“that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth”*: Paul must have felt that that second visit would have done more harm than good.

### **Not as Lords**

v.24 *Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.*

Paul is very quick to point out that they would answer to God and not him.

Quite, the contrary, he is a fellow worker with them.

## **Chapter 2**

v.1 *But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.*

Again, Paul is referring back to the reason that he did not come as he said that he would.

It was to spare them (1:23).

*“for my own sake”*: Sometimes we all just need a break.

We can only give from the overflow.

Sometimes the best thing to do is take a step back.

Sometimes nothing is the best thing to do.

### **Mad and Glad**

v.2 *For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?*

If he made them all sad, who would make him glad?

### **All Things Considered**

v.3 *This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.*

With all things considered, Paul knew that a letter would be better than a personal visit.

Hopefully, the letter would fix things and his next visit could be a joyous one and not like the previous.

### **Much Anguish**

v.4 *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.*

***“out of much affliction and anguish”***: Who in the world enjoys conflict!?

It was hard for Paul and he did it *“with many tears”*.

He didn't want them to *“be made sorrowful”* but that *“they might know the love”* that he had for them.

Sometimes, the only solution is to risk the relationship.

Pro 27:6 *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”*

It takes maturity to receive correction from any one and most of us are not very good at it.

Oh, we can give it, we just can't take it.

It's been said that my criticism of you is constructive and yours of me is destructive.

### **Caused Sorrow**

v.5 *But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree--in order not to say too much--to all of you.*

Paul is referring to a specific individual here in this verse.

Most, like me, believe that he is referring to the young man in 1 Corinthians 5 who was having an incestuous relationship with his stepmother.

Others disagree and say that it is someone who insulted Paul during his “painful visit” second visit.

However, that doesn’t make sense in lieu of 2 Cor. 2:10.

If he insulted Paul, why would they have to forgive him first?

### **Sufficient Punishment**

v.v.6-7 *Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, (7) so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*

Like most, I believe that this is referring to what happened in 1 Cor. 5:1-7

**“Sufficient for such a one”**: Paul felt that his punishment by excommunication was sufficient.

**“by the majority”**: That tells me that there was most likely a minority as is the case always.

In other words, there wasn’t total agreement with the punishment.

Dr. Adrian Rodgers used to say, “I would rather be in the minority and be right than in the majority and be wrong.”

**“forgive and comfort him”**: All discipline should be aimed at reconciliation.

That means that the relationship in the end should be as good or better than when the offense took place.

That is true reconciliation, however it’s rare.

**“overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”**: This man was obviously repentant and they needed to restore him quickly

### **Reaffirmation**

v.8 *Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.*

After all, he had apparently repented and the purpose of excommunication was complete.

### **To the Test**

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

In other words, they did what was right then and they need to do what is right now.

### **Forgiveness**

v.10 *But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,*

In other words, you do the right thing and I'll go with it.

Cf. Luke 17:3-5

### **The Devil's Schemes**

v.11 *so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*

Satan uses things like this to destroy a church.

I.e. the majority that he spoke of and the minority he implied.

The Devil wants to cheat the church and its members out of all that God has for them.

The best way to do that is division.

Mar 3:24-25 *“And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. (25) And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”*

### **Open Doors**

v.12 *Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,*

Troas was on a regular trade route from Ephesus to Macedonia.

Paul had apparently taken that route because he did not want to go to Corinth as he had planned.

I guess that this is where we get the expression about “open and closed doors.”

## **No Rest**

v.13 *I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.*

He was obviously worried about Titus.

It may be because he had information that he needed or that he simply longed for his fellowship.

## **Triumphing in Christ**

v.14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.*

**“who always leads us”**: I can’t but help that Paul is again expressing that he is being led by Christ and not by himself.

In other words, the Lord is calling the shots in my ministry and not me.

Again, this is just a hint of a defense.

**“in triumph in Christ”**: The picture is of an ancient Roman Triumph.

It was a processional through the streets of Rome that ended at the Capital.

First in the processional came the state officials and senate, then the trumpeters, the spoils of war, pictures of models of the conquered land, a white bull for sacrifice, captives to be enslaved or executed, musicians, priests with censers containing a sweet-smelling incense, the conquering general and his army. <sup>v</sup>

**“leads us”**: Jesus is our general and we will always triumph through him!

**“manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him”**: Our lives should smell like Jesus.

## **Fragrance of Christ**

v.15 *For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;*

Our lives are a **“fragrance of Christ”** to God and to others.

cf. Romans 12:1-2

v.16a *to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.*

To the victors in the triumph, the aroma of the incense carried by the priests meant victory and life.

To the conquered in the triumph, it meant defeat and death.

v.16b *And who is adequate for these things?*

In other words, who's worthy of all of this?

He answers his own question in v.17

v.17 *For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*

We are the ones who are worthy!

***“peddling”***: It means to corrupt, adulterate or water-down.

The picture is a wine-seller watering down the wine to make a bigger profit.

It's what many do with the gospel today.

***“sincerity”***: The Greek word “eilikrineia” means “pure or transparent...to stand the test of the sun”.

Paul's ministry had no hidden motives.

Cf. the broken statue

***“we speak in Christ in the sight of God”***: He recognized that God was listening.

## Chapter 3

v.1 *Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?*

***“letters of commendation”***: These letters were necessary in the early church and I believe today as well.

They were the equivalent of what we would call a letter of recommendation.

Some have read this and used it as a launch pad to blast the “assumed” need for ordination and licensing in the ministry.

However, that simply is not the case.

In those days, and now, there were false apostles and prophet going from city to city preaching heresy.

Therefore, to ensure that they were legit, they carried papers of recommendations from recognized churches.

Cf. Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:3, 16:10-11; 2 Cor. 8:16-24.

Again, letters of recommendation are wise and necessary to protect the body.

No wise pastor would allow just anyone to walk into their churches without knowing a little bit about them.

The way you find out about them is by contacting their sending church.

### **Live Letters**

v.2 *You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;*

However, Paul says that instead of a letter of recommendation on paper, they are his letter of recommendation.

In other words, they were living letters of recommendation.

They were truly the validation of his ministry.

They were living, breathing walking letters of recommendation.

They were the proof that his ministry was from God.

**Illustration:** It is very true that you can tell what kind of man he is by his congregation.

## **Tablets of Human Hearts**

*v.3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

*“being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us”*: In other words, their lives proved that they belonged to God and God had entrusted that ministry to Paul.

*“written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God”*: Not a physical ink but a spiritual one: the Holy Spirit himself.

*“not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts”*: This is a glimpse back into the Old Testament when the Law of God was written on tablets of stone.

Cf. Jer. 31:33; Eze. 11:19, 36:26

## **Proof of Ministry**

*v.4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.*

They are the proof of his ministry and not letters written on paper with ink.

Such is true today. Fruit is still the proof of ministry.

**Illustration:** I heard a man say one time that he was faithful to his past three churches in that he stayed with them until they all died!

## **Nothing without God**

*v.5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,*

In other words, it's only because God is working through them and it is not they themselves.

John 15:5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

God shares his glory with no man.

Pastor Chuck Smith says that God will bless until we began taking bows.

## **Servants of the New Covenant**

*v.6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

***“made us adequate as servants”***: God has indeed chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1:27).

***“of the new covenant”***: This was the “new deal” that was prophesied in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31) and put into motion by Christ (Luke 22:19-20).

***“not of the letter but of the Spirit”***: In other words, this new covenant comes not through the Law of Moses but through faith in Christ.

***“the Spirit gives life”***: The letter kills but the spirit gives life.

Cf. Ex. 32:28 w/ Acts 2:41

Cf. Romans 7:5-6

### **Ministry of Death**

v.7 *But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,*

***“the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones”***: This is referring to the Law that kills.

Cf. Romans 7:5-8

***“came with glory”***: The Law did indeed come with glory but it was a glory that brought fear.

Cf. Heb. 12:18-22

This rest of this verse is referring to Moses when he brought the Commandments down Mt. Sinai.

Cf. Ex. 19:16-25

***“fading as it was”***: In other words, the Old Covenant was destined to pass before it was ever even given just as the glory on Moses’ face was destined to pass.

Cf. Ex. 34:29-35

### **Even More Glory**

*vv.8-9 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? (9) For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.*

If the Old Covenant that brought death was glorious, how much more so is the New Covenant that brings life?

### **Boldness of Speech**

*v.12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech--*

**“Therefore since we have such hope”**: We have such hope because of all that the New Covenant offers: communion and reconciliation with God!

Now we are no longer separated from God.

When Christ died on the cross, he gave us boldness to come to the throne of grace.

Cf. Heb. 4:16; Eph. 3:12; 1John 4:17

### **Unlike Moses**

*v.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.*

Of course, the people could not look at Moses without the veil because of the brightness.

However, it did eventually fade just as the Law did to the Law of Christ.

The Law was temporary until it was fulfilled (and continues to be) in Christ.

Cf. Matt. 5:17-18

### **They Could Not See**

*vv.14-15 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. (15) But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

The Jews could not see that the New Covenant was more glorious than the old.

They could not see that the glory of the Law was passing away before their eyes in Jesus.

## **The Veil Removed**

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

When one comes to Christ he sees the truth in the New Covenant.

## **Access to God**

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

Why did he bring the Spirit into the conversation? – Not sure.

Either way, he is saying that through Jesus we now have free access to God without the need for a Aaronic high priesthood

He is continuing to build off of what he said in 2 Cor. 3:12.

## **Unveiled Face**

v.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.*

***“We all with unveiled face”***: He is speaking of those who have accepted the New Covenant.

***“beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord”***: The point here is that it is not totally clear at the moment.

Mirrors then were simply polished metal; nowhere near what we have today.

As a result, the reflection was not totally clear.

1 Cor. 13:12 *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”*

In other words, we can see it but not perfectly yet.

***“being transformed”***: The more in focus he is in our lives but more like him we become.

Cf. Romans 12:1-2

Transformation requires ***“beholding”*** which means a “careful study”.

**Illustration**: The song “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

***“from glory to glory”***: It is a process.

**Illustration**: I am closer to God today than I was yesterday, but I’ll be closer to God tomorrow than I was today.

***“by the Spirit of the Lord”***: All of this can only happen by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Zech. 4:6 *“So he answered and said to me: ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.’”*

## Chapter 4

### **The Ministry of the New Covenant**

v.1 *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.*

***“Therefore”***: This means “as a result” or “in lieu of the aforementioned”.

***“this ministry”***: The ministry of the New Covenant.

***“as we have received mercy, we faint not”***: The mercy that God had given Paul encouraged him in his ministry as it should in ours.

### **In the Sight of God**

v.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.*

***“the hidden things of shame”***: The Greek word for “shame” here is “aischune” (ahee-skhoonay) which means “dishonesty”.<sup>vi</sup>

***“not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully”***: The Greek word for “deceitfully” is “doloo” (dol-o-o) which means to “dilute” or “adulterate”.

In other words, Paul did not teach a corrupted or watered-down gospel.

He did not preach to accommodate his audience.

He did not add or subtract anything from the gospel.

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:17

***“but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience”***: The truth of Paul’s message was born out in his listeners’ consciences and ***“in the sight of God.”***

### **It’s Their Fault**

v.3 *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

In other words, it’s no one’s fault but themselves.

It’s not like Paul or the gospel came up short in any way.

### **The God of this Age**

v.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.*

***“the god of this age”***: The god of this age is the Devil.

He is indeed the good of this age because man made him such when he willingly and knowing rebelled against the true God in the Garden of Eden.

It was then that he forfeited his dominion and authority over to Satan.

Gen. 1:28 *“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

Cf. Psa. 8:1-6

This is proven in the fact that Jesus did not correct Satan in Luke 4:6-7 when the Devil said, ***“All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. (7) Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”***

Bear in mind that the entire process of redemption is to regain what man has lost including himself.

This will culminate at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ.

That’s the whole point of the title deed in Revelation.

***“has blinded”***: This does not imply in some way that they are not at fault.

They willingly choose to darkness over the light.

John 3:19 *“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.”*

***“lest the light of the gospel should shine on them”***: Satan has done an excellent job today in corrupting the gospel.

**Illustration:** I was listening to Pastor Tullian Tchividjian of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale when he said this, I was blown away by the truth of it. "What would things look like if Satan actually took over a city? The first frames in our imaginative slide show probably depict mayhem on a massive scale: Widespread violence, deviant sexualities, pornography in every vending machine, churches closed down and worshipers dragged off to City Hall. Over a half-century ago, Donald Grey Barnhouse, pastor of Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church, gave his CBS radio audience a different picture of what it would look like if Satan took control of a town in America. He said that all of the bars and pool halls would be closed, pornography banished, pristine streets and sidewalks would be occupied by tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The kids would answer "Yes, sir," "No, ma'am," and the churches would be full on Sunday ... *where Christ is not preached.*"

Cf. the seeker-sensitive movement, etc...

If the true Christ of the Bible is not preached ... what is the point?

### **Simply Jesus**

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

The message Paul preached was simply Jesus plus nothing else.

The world doesn't need me or you, it needs him!

**Illustration:** I used to tell our worship team, "Your job is to lead people past yourselves and into the arms of Jesus. If they see you, they're not seeing him."

***“ourselves your bondservants”***: When Paul did speak of himself, it was as a servant and not some master over them.

### **Light out of Darkness**

v.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.*

**“God who commanded light to shine out of darkness”**: The first part of this verse refers to Creation when God said, “Let there be light” in Genesis 1:3.

Well, what do you know, Paul wasn't an evolutionists!

The analogy is that just as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness in Genesis 1:3, so he commanded the light of the gospel to shine **“in our hearts”**.

Some have said that Paul was sharing his experience on the Damascus Road.

Act 9:3-4 *“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. (4) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?””*

**“the glory of God in the face of Jesus”**: Jesus is the glory of God!

That why John said in John 14:9 *“Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”*

### **The Shekinah Glory of God**

Jesus is the Shekinah Glory of God.

- a. He was the One who rested between the wings of the Cherubim in the tabernacle.

Lev. 16:2; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:14-15

- b. He was the one who led them through the wilderness

Ex. 13:20-22; 23:20-23; 1 Cor. 10:8-10

- c. He is the one who filled the Temple

2 Chr. 7:1-3

- d. He is the one who left the Temple

Eze. 9:1-5, 10:1-4; 18-19; 11:14-23

The Jewish Targum (a translation in the Chaldean language) says it this way, "from the mercy seat to the cherub; from the cherub to the cherub; from the cherub to the threshold; from the threshold to the court; from the court to the altar; from the altar to the roof; from the roof to the

wall; from the wall to the city; from the city to the mountain; from the mountain to the wilderness; and from the wilderness it ascended and sat in its own place.”

e. He is the one who tried to return to the Temple, but was rejected.

Eze. 43:4-5; Matt. 21:1-5; 10-12

f. He is the one who will return to the Temple one day.

Hos. 5:15; Zech. 14:1-5;

### **Treasure in Earthen Vessels**

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

The **“treasure”** that he is speaking of is **“the knowledge of the glory of God”** (salvation) that he spoke of in the previous verse.

The **“earthen vessels”** is referring to our bodies which contain the Spirit of God which gives eternal life.

It reminds me of Isa 64:8 which says, *“But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.”*

Cf. the potter’s house in Jer. 18:1-6

Lest we forget, Adam’s name does mean “dirt”!

Cf. Romans 9:20-23

**“that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us”**: In other words, it’s not so that we can receive the glory upon ourselves but for Him.

1Co 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. (27) 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; (28) 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, (29) that no flesh should glory in His presence.”*

## **Hard-Pressed**

vv.8-9 *We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--*

**“hard-pressed”**: Guzik says that this phrase has the idea of “hunted”.<sup>vii</sup>

Act 23:12-13 *“And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. (13) Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.”*

**“yet not crushed”**: Even though the “hunted” life that Paul lived must have been very stressful at times, he could still declare that he had not been crushed by it.

I believe that the same should hold true for you and me as well.

Jesus did say in Matt 11:28-30 *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

I.e. All counseling is ultimately the result of spiritual drought.

I don't think that any of us have an excuse for “caving in” under lives pressures as much as Paul did and yet he didn't.

Notice the adjectives that described Paul's life where “hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down.”

Sadly, many a Christian's life is exactly that way but it's not because of the cross, but because of the flesh.

Instead, as a child of God, we are not crushed, not in despair, not forsaken and certainly not destroyed!

## **The Dying of the Lord Jesus**

v.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.*

In other words, the glorious life comes only through death to self.

Cf. John 12:23-28a

That's why Paul said in Phil. 3:10, *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,"*

Sadly, many long for the power of the resurrection, but very few long for the fellowship of his suffering!

Unfortunately, there must first be fellowship before there can be power and true fellowship comes with good times and bad.

### **For Jesus' Sake**

vv.11-12 *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.*

Paul knew that the only reason he was able to bring such spiritual riches to the Corinthians was because of the suffering that he had endured in his own ministry.

Suffering does indeed bring power to our ministries.

### **Death in Us – Life in you**

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

Through Paul's suffering and thus power of the resurrection working in his life; they were the beneficiaries!

Col. 1:24 *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,"*

Barnes says that Paul is saying, "ours is the sorrow, the trouble, the affliction, and death itself, yours is the gain, the joy, the pleasure, and life; what we get by preaching the Gospel are reproach, persecution, and death; but this Gospel we preach at such expense is the savour of life unto life to you."<sup>viii</sup>

### **I Believe**

vv.13-15 *And 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, (14) knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. (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.*

***"I believed and therefore I spoke"***: Paul really did believe what he preached.

It would be very difficult for anyone but a liar to speak things that are false as true.

**Illustration:** G. Campbell Morgan once said, “That is one of the great secrets of power and success in the ministry. If you do not believe, shut your mouth. That is a word for young ministers. If you do not believe, do not talk.”<sup>ix</sup>

**“know that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus”:** Paul knew that his sufferings would one day be rewarded when his mortal body would be raised to eternal life.

**“all things for your sakes”:** His heart was to serve the Corinthian believers.

That is pretty amazing after all of the pain that they had caused him.

### **Don’t Lose Heart**

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

Paul was able to rejoice and not lose heart because he knew what the Lord had called him to in this life and in the next.

**“our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed”:** Paul knew as the outward man was decreasing, the inward man was increasing.

### **Light Affliction**

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

**“our light affliction”:** How can he possibly call everything that he had been through as “light”?

Cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-28

Those are just a list of physical things that he suffered without even a consideration given to all that he had mentally, emotionally and spiritually went through with the churches.

Harris said, “This rich theology of suffering was forged on the anvil of his own experiences of the sufferings of Christ.”<sup>x</sup>

**“but for a moment”:** Anything that we go through in this life is nothing in the light of eternity.

Even if we lived a thousand years and were terribly tormented every single day; it is nothing compared to eternity where awaits the **“weight of glory”:**

## **Things that are not Seen**

*v.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.*

I believe that Paul is comparing his own life and ministry.

To the world, his life and ministry were an utter failure because of all that he had suffered.

He had seemingly walked away from a very prosperous and lucrative career as a Pharisee for what?

After all, Paul seemingly had nothing but pain, suffering, hardship, disrespect, persecution and eventually martyrdom.

However, Paul was looking past the temporary to the eternal.

He was looking at through spiritual eyes and not physical.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Our Earthly House**

*v.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”**: Paul is still contrasting the *“light affliction, which is but for a moment”* that he mentioned in the previous chapter (4:17).

Now, he is going to take a closer look at this temporary verses eternal issue (4:18).

**“our earthly house”**: Notice that Paul compares our earthly house to a tent.

In other words, they are only temporary structures and nothing to be compared to the **“building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

**“destroyed”**: It’s interesting that this word means “to loosen down” which is exactly what you would do to a tent when you done with it!

**Illustration**: Spurgeon once said, “Many people are in a great fright about the future, yet here is Paul viewing the worst thing that could happen to him with such complacency that he likens it to nothing worse than the pulling down of tent in which he was making shift to reside for a little season.”

***“not made with hands”***: Jesus said in John 14:2-3 *“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*

The word “mansion” is better translated “dwelling places”.

### **In This We Groan**

vv.2-4 *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, (3) if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. (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 in this we groan”***: In other words, we groan because while we are here, we are looking there.

While we are here in this tent, we want the heavenly body that awaits us.

The Greek word is “stenazo” which means to “sigh, murmur, or pray inaudibly”.

Rom 8:26 *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

***“earnestly desiring to be clothed”***: The only reason that we would not desire what awaits us is if we are comfortable where we are. God forbid!

I’ve heard the expression, “He is so heavenly minded that he is no earthly good.”

While I understand the expression, I don’t think most fall into that category!

***“having been clothed, we shall not be naked”***: This speak of how our mortal will be changed to immortal, how our corruptible will put on incorruption and how our terrestrial will put on celestial.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:40-45

### **Disembodiment Issue**

Also, “naked” in this context speaks of disembodiment.

“Paul is setting straight the misunderstanding that when a person dies, he becomes a disembodied spirit—an idea completely contradictory to Scripture. Buddha was wrong. The goal of man is not to reach Nirvana, the “state of the snuffed-out candle.” Rather, it is to inhabit the body prepared for us that will make the one we’re living in now a tent by comparison. John Courson<sup>xi</sup>

For some reason man has always seen the body as evil. It’s not evil, it’s just fallen and one day God will resurrect it!

Php 3:20-21 *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

***“that mortality may be swallowed up by life”***: In other words, our new bodies will not be subject to death!

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-54

### **The Guarantee**

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

***“He who has prepared us for this very thing”***: All that we go through is this life. The pain, the sorrow, the suffering, the “light affliction”, is preparing us for what God has for us next!

***“who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee”***: In other words, when the trials of the life weight in on us, we can take comfort in the fact that God has given something to us as a guarantee that He will be faithful to His word: The Holy Spirit.

The word ***“guarantee”*** means “pledge” or a “partial payment”.

In the Greek, it’s where we get the word “engagement ring”.

God has placed a pledge or partial payment on us (the Holy Spirit) as a guarantee that He will redeem us one day!

Eph 1:13-14 *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*

Eph 4:30 *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

I.e. We are on the layaway plan!

### **Always Confident**

v.v.6-7 *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. (7) For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Because of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are always confident!

The Holy Spirit is the pledge, the down-payment, the proof that God has indeed called us.

*“while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord”*: Right now the presence of God in our lives (I.e. the Holy Spirit) is a matter of faith.

Therefore, for the present, we must indeed *“walk by faith and not by sight”*.

That, of course, can be the hardest thing about the Christian walk and yet it is necessary while we are here in this tent.

### **We Are Confident**

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

We should always be confident based on the guarantee of the Holy Spirit that one day we will indeed be with the Lord.

This verse proves two false doctrines to be wrong.

1. Soul Sleep which is the belief that the believing dead are held in some sort of suspended animation until the resurrection happens.
2. Purgatory which is the belief that the believing dead must be purified through suffering because they are worthy of Heaven.

**Illustration:** Spurgeon once said, “I do not expect to be roasted alive for the next thousand years, and then to leap from purgatory to Paradise; but he did expect to go, as soon as ever his earthly house was dissolved, into his eternal house which is in the heavens. He had not even the thought of lying in a state of unconsciousness till the resurrection.”

## **Temporarily Bodiless**

It also brings up the issue of whether or not we'll be in Heaven, at least temporarily, without our bodies.

Cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 1 Th. 4:16

Oh, the questions of life!

## **Pleasing to God**

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

*“Therefore we make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him”*: In other words, since we know what awaits us; our aim should be to please God and not men.

**Illustration**: We report to headquarters. It doesn't really matter what others think of us. Our business is to please God and not men.

It's the old adage, “If you fear God, you'll not fear men. If you fear men, you'll not fear God.”

## **The Judgment Seat**

*v.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.*

One day we will all give an account of what we did in this life to God.

The Bible describes two places from which that can happen for each of us.

### 1. The Judgment Seat of Christ

This is where believers will give their accounting.

It's literally means “bema” which speaks of a raised platform from which a Roman magistrate would set and judge.

To the Roman's it was a place of reverence and fear.

Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-15

### 2. The Great White Throne Judgment

This is the judgment of the unbelieving in which they will be tried by their works.

Cf. Rev. 20:11-15

## **The Terror of the Lord**

v.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...the terror of the Lord”**: Those who have not placed faith in Christ will experience this. Those who have placed their faith in him have been delivered from this.

**“we persuade men”**: Our goal is share the message of salvation to men so that they too can be delivered from the *“terror of the Lord.”*

Cf. Eze. 33

The word **“persuade”** literally means to “convince by argument, true or false.”

## **Not Commending Ourselves**

v.12 *For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.*

Is Paul bragging here? No, instead he is just giving them an opportunity to be proud of him.

He is speaking ironically, in that the Corinthians were the very ones who accused Paul of not “really” being an apostle.

So, Paul gave them a little bit of proof using irony.

Irony is “sarcasm via witty language used to convey insults or scorn.”

**“an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart”**: Again, they were looking at the outward appearance of Paul and not the inward.

1Sam 16:7 *“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

Cf. 2 Cor. 10:8-11

## **Beside Ourselves**

vv.13-15 *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. (14) For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all*

*died; (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.*

**“beside ourselves”**: This is a way of describing crazy or irrational behavior.

We all would think that someone was crazy who appeared to take job in pain.

Paul is not along in this though.

Cf. Mark 3:20-21; John 10:19-21

Even Festus accused Paul of being a little whacked!

Act 26:24 *“Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"*

**“if we are of sound mind, it is for you”**: This is just Paul way of saying, “Everything that I do is for you even if it does indeed look crazy!

**“for the love of Christ compels us”**: Paul served the Lord out of response to all that the Lord had done for him.

Again, the church many times spends too much time telling people what they should be doing for God instead of what He has already done for them.

**“because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; (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.”**: It is what God has done for us that makes us want to do for Him and others!

When we come to Christ, we die to the self-life.

J.O.Y means Jesus, Others and then Self.

Our lives should become selfless.

### **Things Have Changed**

*v.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.*

In other words, we no longer look at things like we used to.

Our eyes have shifted from the temporary to the eternal.

We no longer look at the external but the internal.

Why? – Things are different now.

Yes, *“even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer.”*

Those days are gone.

We are not walking in the physical any more but the spiritual!

### **A New Creation**

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

*“anyone”*: That is indeed a good word!

It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from or the color of your skin.

*“anyone...in Christ...is anew creation”*: This is only a promise for those who are in Christ only.

It's not for those who are in themselves, a church or religion.

*“old things have passes away; behold all things have become new”*: Here we find the doctrine of regeneration.

Regeneration is the forming again usually with improvements and removal of defects.

This is a promise for all who are truly in Christ!

Jesus changes those who come to him. He is not content that we stay the same.

**Illustration:** He loves us enough to receive us just as we are, but he loves us too much to let us stay that way.

Of course, being a new creation does not mean that we're perfect.

It means that we are changed and are still being changed.

This isn't just "turning over a new leaf" or "getting our acts together".

It's something that God does for us because we cannot do it for ourselves.

### **Reconciled to God**

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

**"all things are of God"**: Paul wants to make sure that they understand that this message that he is teaching is from God Himself and not just Paul.

Also, he wants them to know that it is all the work of God and not of man.

**"who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ"**: The word "reconcile means to be "made compatible or consistent"

It's interesting that God is the one initiated this reconciliation yet he is not the cause of it.

I.e. the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve.

God did it temporarily in the Garden with the sacrifice and shedding of blood of an innocent animal.

He did it permanently on the Cross with the sacrifice and shedding of blood of his innocent Son.

Heb 9:22 *"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."*

**"and has given us the ministry of reconciliation"**: God having reconciled us desires that we share this ministry of reconciliation with others.

### **Reconciling the World**

v.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 the Father worked through God the Son to reconcile the world back to Himself.

This was done through the propitiatory death and the shedding of the innocent blood of the Son.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that Jesus became a sinner for us.

Instead, it says that he bore (carried) our sins to Calvary for us.

This was the “cup” that Jesus dreaded that the Father was to make him drink.

Cf. Luke 22:39-46

Jesus drank that cup for us!

*Psa 75:8 “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down.”*

That cup was poured out on Jesus at the cross so that we would not have to drink it ourselves.

But, the entire time, God the Father and God the Son were working together to make it possible.

### **It Pleas'd the Father**

Isaiah 53:10 says, *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, ...”*

The NASB says it this way, *“But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, ...”*

And then Isaiah 53:11 says, *“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.”*

***“not imputing their trespasses to them”***: The word “impute” means to “attribute or give credit to.”

In other words, our sins and the penalty that came with them were attributed to Jesus. It was the only way because we could not pay!

One author wrote, “If God had set aside His wrath or His justice to save sinners, then the Cross, instead of being a demonstration of love, is instead an exhibition of unspeakable cruelty and injustice, and of one man’s misguided attempts at do-goodism. If sin could just be *excused*, then it never needed to be *satisfied* in the first place!”

## **We Are Ambassadors**

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

In other words, we are serving our Lord in a foreign land.

We have a message from our King and it's the gospel.

Our King uses us to plead His cause.

What a responsibility to speak for the King!

There are several important things that we should know about an ambassador.

1. He does not speak to please his audience but the one who sent him.
2. He does not speak on his own authority but the one who sent him.
3. He only says what he has been commissioned to say and not his own opinions.
4. He is more than just a messenger; he is a representative and the honor and reputation of his country are in his hands.

*“as though God were pleading through us”*: God does indeed use us to pass along the message.

Our message is simple, *“be reconciled to God”*!

## **The Righteousness of God**

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

How is this reconciliation possible? - Because God *“made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”*

Again, he did not say that God made Jesus a sinner, but that he became sin .

Jesus never was a sinner and yet for our sakes, he was treated as one.

The sin was “outside” of Jesus, not “inside” of him like you and me.

Spurgeon said of this, “Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty.”

One author well said, “We obviously stand at the brink of a great mystery and our understanding of it can only be minimal.”

## Chapter 6

v.1 *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Notice that Paul sees that we are all co-workers with Christ.

We are working together in this ministry of reconciliation that has been given to us (5:18).

That’s our primary role as ambassadors (5:20).

I think that it neat that it says that we are “workers together” with Christ.

It’s not us helping God but God helping us to work with Him.

That is our primary ministry as ambassadors of good will on this earth.

***“also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain”***: This speaks of receiving the goodness and favor of God, yet not to do anything with it.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:10

To not serve the Lord with all of our hearts, minds and souls is to receive the grace of God in vain.

It is not using the blessings that He has given to us for His purposes.

However, understand that grace is freely given and is not passed on past, present or future works.

However, we should take that freely-given gift and share it with others.

God has blessed us with salvation; how dare we hoard it upon ourselves!

To do so is not ***“workers together with him”***.

## Acceptable Time

v.2 *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

This is a quote from Isaiah 49:8.

He is trying to give the Corinthians a sense of urgency.

God has predetermined an **“acceptable time”** for us to work with Him by his grace.

However, that time and the **“day of salvation”** will not last forever.

We are to use that timely wisely and not foolishly.

We need to remember that it’s all going to come to an end and many will perish.

Act 1:8 *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

## No Offense

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

Paul was not afraid to offend anyone with the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:18-25), but he did not want his lifestyle of ministry to offend anyone.

Paul went through extremes sometimes to make this happen.

1. He did not receive a salary (1 Cor. 9:3-15)
2. He became all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:19-22)
3. He didn’t do some things that he would have liked to (1 Cor. 10:23-11:1)

He was also willing to let others be more prominent and to work harder than some others as well.

He just did not want to offend others with himself.

I think that we covered that pretty much this morning in devotions.

What personal rights are we willing to put aside so that we might reach other with the gospel of Christ?

***“that our ministry may not be blamed”***: Of course, his ministry had been blamed for many things, especially by the Corinthians.

However, his point is that his ministry should not be rightly blamed.

There is no way around accusations in the ministry, however, we need to make sure that they are not correct.

I personally believe that every accusation should be taken seriously because there may be a true perception problem.

I.e. “Life is 99% perception and 1% reality”

Just use the time to evaluate the accusation to see if you can learn something from it.

### **Paul’s Credentials**

vv.4- 10 *But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, (5) in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; (6) by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, (7) by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, (8) by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; (9) as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; (10) as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

***“in all things we commend ourselves”***: Now Paul is going to give a bit of a resume to commend himself as a true minister of God.

Again, this is not bragging on Paul’s part, but defending his apostolic authority.

***“in much patience”***: The idea here is not to wait around for something to happen, but to endure.

It’s the Greek word “hupomone”

Barclay says, “It does not describe the frame of mind which can sit down with folded hands and bowed head and let a torrent of troubles sweep over it in passive resignation. It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them.”

***“tribulations, needs and distresses”***: These are the things that Paul endured as a servant of Christ.

The word “tribulations” here is the word “thlipsis” again, which means “constant pressure” that he used earlier in 1:6.

The word **“distresses”** literally means “not knowing what to do or which way to turn.”

**“Stripes, imprisonments and tumults”**: Now he points to suffering that he endured that was directly inflicted upon him by his fellow man.

Barclay says, “Nowadays it is not the violence but the mockery or the amused contempt of the crowd against which the Christian must stand fast.”

**“labors, sleeplessness and fastings”**: He further describes self-inflicted hardships that he endured.

No one made him work hard, not sleep or fast, but he chose them willingly for their sakes and his own.

**“by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,”**: Now Paul describes the resources that he took advantage of in triumphing over these adversities.

He listed the trials; now he listed how he overcame them!

In reality, Paul probably endured more trials than most men, but, as a result, he was blessed more than most men.

**“by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left”**: This has an illusion of battle to it.

It has the idea of both advancing and being attacked with the shield in the left hand and the sword in the right.

**“by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”**: He concludes his resume by comparing what the world thinks of him as compared to what God thinks of him.

The world saw him with *dishonor, evil report, deceivers, unknown, dying, chastened, sorrowful, poor and having nothing.*

God saw him with *honor, good report, true, well known, behold we live, not killed, always rejoicing, making many rich and possessing all things.*

Which view of himself should Paul be more concerned with?

### **Pointed Appeal**

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

After going through all of this defending of himself and ministry; this is his pointed appeal to them.

***“We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open”***: In other words, he has been totally honest and open with them on some tough issues, but it was out of love and no other mixed motive.

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

The insinuation here is that the Corinthians were playing the victim.

Paul had been firm with them (1 Cor. 4:18-21, 2 Cor. 1:23), but it was for their good and not to simply hurt them for the fun of it.

Now, they were probably saying that because of hurt feelings that they were just unable to continue on in the relationship.

The real problem lay with the Corinthians themselves.

As we will see, their problem lie in their love for the world and themselves.

### **Be Open**

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

Paul wants to see the same honesty in the Corinthians toward him that he has given them.

In essence, he is saying, the rift between us can be fixed, but you’re going to have to meet me at least half way.

## Unequally Yoked

vv.14-15 *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*

Now, Paul is getting into their real problem.

They had apparently joined themselves with unbelievers and that was negatively affecting their relationship with Paul.

***“do not be unequally yoked”***: This is based on Deut. 22:9 which prohibited the yoking of two different animals.

It, of course, speaks of joining two things that should not be joined.

Clark says, “A very wise and very holy man was given his judgment on this point: ‘A man who is truly pious, marrying with an unconverted woman, will either draw back to perdition, or have a cross during life. The same may be said of a *pious woman* marrying an *unconverted man*. Such persons cannot say this petition of the Lord’s prayer, *Lead us not into temptation*. They *plunge* into it of their own accord.’”

However, Paul is speaking about much more than simply marriage.

It applies really to anything that is not of God being allowed to influence our thinking.

The issue at stake is influence.

I.e. books, movies, television, magazines and relationships.

We all like to think that we can be around ungodly things and not be influenced.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:33

To be honest, most Christians are far too indiscriminate about the things that they allow to influence their minds and lives.

The Corinthians Christians were worldly in their thinking because of their associations.

***“What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?”***: The Corinthians were too accepting of lawlessness with righteousness and darkness with light and Belial with Christ.

Cf. 1 Cor. 5

***“What communion has light with darkness?”***: Paul uses the word communion to denote that it was impossible for them to become one with each other such as in communion.

***“Belial”***: It is the Hebrew word for worthlessness or wickedness.

***“what part has an unbeliever with a believer”***: The Bible asks, *“Unless two be agreed, how can they walk together?”*

### **The Temple of God**

***vv.16-18 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.” (17) Therefore “COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU.” (18) “I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY.”***

***“What agreement has the temple of God with idols?”***: Apparently they were struggling with idolatry still.

Cf. 1 Cor. 8-10

This was influencing their thinking as well.

***“You are the temple of the living God”***: In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, he refers to individuals being temples, but here he is referring to the church as a whole.

Temples are supposed to be holy places and should be protected against things that defile them.

Cf. Ez. 37:26-27

Isa 52:11 *“Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the LORD.”*

***“come out from among them and be separate”***: This deals with the problem of allowing too much influence from non-believers.

***“I will be a Father to you”***: This is a quote from Jer. 31:9

Paul is showing the benefit of separating from worldly influence for a more intimate relationship with Him.

***“says the Lord Almighty”***: The word “Almighty” in the Greek means “the one who has his hand on everything.”

It’s a reassurance that God will indeed take care of them if they will separate.

## Chapter 7

*v.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.*

***“Therefore, having these promises”***: This is the natural conclusion of the previous chapter’s vv.14-18 on the issue of separating from the influences of the world.

The promise is that if we separate ourselves from the world, he promises us a relationship with Him.

### **Filthiness**

Notice he says that we are to ***“cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.”***

This implies a sanctification that God wants to do in our lives, but we must be willing participants.

A perfect example of this is 1 John 1:9 ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”***

Clark says, “How can those expect God to purify their hearts who are continually indulging their eyes, ears, and hands in what is forbidden, and in what tends to increase and bring into action all the evil propensities of the soul?”

***“perfecting holiness in the fear of God”***: Paul is not talking about sinless perfection, but about a completion that God wants to do in our lives.

I think that Paul includes himself when he says ***“let us cleanse ourselves”***.

We all need a continuous state of cleansing because it’s not just a one-time thing.

Eph 5:26 ***“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,”***

## **Open Your Hearts**

*vv.2-3 Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. (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.*

Cf. 6:11-14

Again, Paul is saying that he has been completely open and honest with them and they need to do the same with him.

Sadly though, because of the influences that were in the Corinthian church, they had come to believe things that were simply not true about Paul.

Their hearts were open to what the world was telling them but not to what Paul was telling them.

**Illustration:** I've seen this so many times in church life. A member hears something and immediately assumes that it is true without using the slightest of discernment on the issue.

We must consider the source!

***“We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one”***: Many people feel that Paul was being accused of defrauding the churches out of money instead of raising it for the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-4)

That's way I stay out of the money.

I don't help count it, track it or spend it.

The pastor who does is sitting himself up for an accusation that the many will believe whether its true or false.

Many times, you are simply guilty until proven innocent.

Sadly, most church members will not stick around for the trial.  
Stay out of the money!

It's been said, ““Ministers must so live that they may, if need be, glory of their innocency and integrity, as did Moses, Samuel and Paul.”

I do not say this to condemn”: Paul did not seek condemnation in this.

If he did, he would have had plenty of ammo, but that was not his heart.

**Illustration:** If we dig around long enough in anyone's closet, you are bound to find something.

We generally do find what we're looking for even if it's a figment of our imagination.

I think that we do it to justify ourselves.

### **Great Boldness**

*vv.4-7 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. For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. (6) Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, (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 was in essence saying, "Yes, I was bold to correct you and point out your wrongs, but I was also bold to boast about you as well."

***"I am filled with comfort...exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation"***: In spite of everything that Paul had been through; he found joy.

Sadly, I've been through far less than when Paul went through and I find it hard to be joyful.

Paul is not talking about "keeping a stiff upper lip" during trials.

He is talking about having a sincere joy during trials.

Cf. Rom. 5:1-4

We discussed this in our Romans class the other day.

For the believer, tribulations work for us and not against us.

Cf. Rom. 8:35-39

They draw us closer to the Lord by building within us character.

The word ***"experience"*** means "character that has been proven".

I.e. Tribulation produces patience, and patience produces experience (proven character), and experience (proven character) produces hope.

It's interesting that the word **"tribulation"** comes from the Latin word "tribulum" which is a tool that was used to thresh grain which separated the wheat from the chaff.

**"the coming of Titus"**: Paul is actually picking up where he left off in 2:13.

I guess that would be an inspired rabbit trail!

**"our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side"**: He means that he was really worrying about them, but now that worry has been put to rest by the coming of Titus.

**"outside were conflicts, inside were fears"**: That can indeed describe the ministry.

Paul was in constant conflict with those inside and outside of the church.

I testify that the pressure will absolutely wear you out physically, mentally and emotionally.

### **The Severe Letter**

vv.8-9 *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. (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.*

Again, the letter that Paul is referring to hear is not 1 Corinthians, but the severe letter.

**"though I did regret it"**: This may be an indicator of why this letter was not deemed to be inspired.

**"but your sorrow led to repentance"**: Notice that Paul makes a clear distinction between sorrow and repentance.

Sorry describes feeling, but repentance describes a change.

Smith says, "Sorrow alone accomplishes nothing. Peter was sorry he denied Christ, and he repented. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but, instead of repenting, he killed himself."

Repentance is a requirement of the gospel.

Some of the first words of John the Baptist were, *“Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 3:2)

Some of the first words of Jesus were, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 4:17)

Peter’s words on the day of Pentecost were, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin.”* (Acts 2:38)

The bottom line is that without repentance, there can be no forgiveness.

Cf. Luke 17:1-4

Notice the process to receive forgiveness, rebuke, if there is repentance, forgive.

Now this is speaking of your relationship with your brother or sister, but is also is speaking of our relationship with the Lord.

He rebukes us, we remember, we repent, and He forgives.

Repentance is the requirement for forgiveness.

That is being *“sorry in a godly manner.”*

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

This does not mean that repentance is salvation, but that it lays the necessary ground work for salvation.

It could be better said that repentance is “unto” salvation.

Spurgeon once said, “Repentance must never be thought of as something we must do *before* we can come back to God. Repentance describes what coming to God is. You can’t turn *towards* God without turning *from* the things He is against. “People seem to jump into faith very quickly nowadays. I do not disapprove of that happy leap; but still, I hope my old friend repentance is not dead. I am desperately in love with repentance; it seems to be to be the twin-sister to faith.”

## **Godly Sorrow**

*v.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.*

In other words, all of this meant that the Corinthians were truly repentant.

*“what clearing of yourselves”*: Godly sorry produces change.

*“what indignation”*: Godly sorry produces a slight anger and disappointment in ourselves for allowing ourselves to go that far in our sin.

*“what fear”*: Godly sorry produces a healthy fear of God.

*“what vehement desire”*: Godly sorry produces a strong desire to not do it again.

*“what zeal”*: Godly sorry produces renewed commitment to God and our walk with Him.

*“what vindication”*: Godly sorry produces a feeling of relief for coming clean with God.

*“proved yourself to be clear”*: Godly sorry is proof that we are clear of guilt and sin!

The Godly actions of the Corinthians were proof to Paul that they were truly repentant.

Redpath says, “Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, therefore, is a sorrow that leads to a change of purpose, of intention, and of action. It is not the sorrow of idle tears; it is not crying by your bedside because once again you have failed; nor is it vain regret, wishing things had never happened, wishing you could live the moments again. No, it is not that. It is a change of purpose and intentions, a change of direction and action.”

## **Not Taking Sides**

*v.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.*

Paul purpose for writing the severe letter was not to take sides, but to demonstrate his concern for everyone.

## **Praising Them**

*vv.13-16 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. (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. (15) And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. (16) Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.*

One writer said, “Thus by praising them, he further winneth upon them, whom before he had more sharply handled. Sour and sweet make the best sauce.”

**“his spirit has been refreshed”**: The Corinthians received Titus very well in spite of the guy that he was working for: Paul.

**“For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed”**: Paul had apparently been boasting in the Corinthians to Titus. This might have been in all hope that they truly would receive his message and repent.

## **Chapter 8**

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

**“the grace of God”**: Notice that he calls the gifts from the other churches for the church in Jerusalem “the grace of God”.

God does indeed use the body to bless the body!

**“the churches of Macedonia”**: Macedonia was the northern part of Greece, but Achaia was the southern part of Greece.

Churches in the area included in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

## **Great Trial of Affliction**

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

In other words, even though the churches in Macedonia were suffering and in deep poverty, they still gave generously.

Wiersbe points out that **“deep poverty”** means “rock-bottom destitution”.

## **Beyond Their Ability**

*vv.3-4 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

These gave in two ways: 1. *“according to their ability”* and 2. *“beyond their ability”*.

The sense here is that while they gave out of what they had and it wasn't very much.

However, because how little they had; they gave out of their poverty.

Cf. Luke 21:1-4

*“freely willing, imploring us”*: This means that instead of Paul begging them to give; they were begging him to let them give.

Sadly, it is true that oftentimes, those with the least give the most.

**Illustration:** The problem is that the exceptional philanthropy of the super wealthy few doesn't apply to the many more people defined as rich in the current debate over the Bush tax cuts — individuals earning over \$200,000 and couples with revenues over \$250,000. For decades, surveys have shown that upper-income Americans don't give away as much of their money as they might and are particularly undistinguished as givers when compared with the poor, who are strikingly generous. A number of other studies have shown that lower-income Americans give proportionally more of their incomes to charity than do upper-income Americans.

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

The Macedonian churches gave far beyond what Paul was expecting them to give.

Paul was most impressed with the way that they *“first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God”*.

To be honest, the real issue in giving is not the money.

Instead, it's totally trusting God with ourselves.

## **Complete the Grace**

*vv.6-7 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 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.*

Paul had asked Titus to collect the gift that the Corinthian church had promised as well.

This had apparently been the agreement before they fell “out of sorts” with Paul.

“When a church is not spiritual, it is not generous.”

Paul is now encouraging them to *“complete this grace”* as they had initially intended to do.

Some see Paul’s statement about the abounding *“in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us”* as his being sarcastic with them.

Of course, Paul is certainly not above this for sure.

I.e. “You say that you’ve arrived in these things; arrive in your giving as well.”

### **Not By Commandment**

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

Paul isn’t commanding them to give or it wouldn’t be giving at all.

I think that’s called taxation!

Instead, he says that he is *“testing the sincerity”* of their love to *“the diligence of others”*.

He was openly challenging them to give like the Macedonians did.

The Bible actually teaches that it’s impossible to love without giving.

Cf. 1 John 3:17-18

Mat 6:21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

### **Another Example**

*v.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.*

From the context, we must assume that Paul’s line of thinking is in regard to the issue of giving.

He first used the example of the Macedonians and now he uses the example of our Lord as well.

***“though He was rich”***: Our Lord was rich before he came down to earth in the form of a man.

Paul is also inserting the doctrine of the deity of Christ in this verse as well.

If Jesus had never been to Heaven before His natural birth; this argument would not make any sense.

Hughes points out, “Notice that it says that Jesus ***“became poor”*** when ***“He was rich”***. Just as Jesus added humanity but never lost His deity, so He also “added” poverty but never “lost” His riches. “For He assumed poverty, yet did not lose His riches. Inwardly He was rich, outwardly poor. His deity was hidden in His riches, His manhood apparent in His poverty.”

Jesus lived his life on earth as a humble and poor man.

***“yet for your sakes he became poor”***: Jesus lived his earthly life as a poor man.

He was not a destitute beggar, but he was indeed poor.

cf. Luke 2:21-24

cf. Lev. 5:1-11

***“became poor”***: Prior to his incarnation, Jesus was with the Father in Heaven and He was hardly poor.

However, he became poor ***“for your sakes”***.

Jesus did it for us!

Heb 12:2 *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

***“that you through His poverty might become rich”***: Because Jesus became poor, we can become rich!

We now have a share in Jesus’ eternal heavenly wealth!

**Good Advice**

vv.10-11 *And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 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.*

***“you must complete the doing of it”***: Apparently, before the trouble started, the Corinthian church had agreed to give to church in Jerusalem fund.

Now Paul says, ***“you must complete the doing of it”***.

Barclay says, “The Devil will let you resolve as much as you like; the more the better, just as long as you never carry it out. “The tragedy of life so often is, not that we have no high impulses, but that we fail to turn them into actions.”

***“a completion of what you have”***: We can’t give what we don’t have.

God only holds us accountable for what we have and not what we want.

So the issue is what we have and what we do with it.

Sadly, most people overspend and then turn around and tell God that they don’t have anything to give.

God will hold us all accountable for what He has given to us.

v.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.*

***“if there is first a willing mind”***: The true marks of a generous heart to God is a willingness to give.

***“it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have”***: Again, God does not expect us to give what we do not have.

Cf. Luke 21:1-4

True Christian giving is not measured by amount, but by willingness.

One man may be able to give a million dollars and never suffer for it; while another man gives only a dollar with tremendous sacrifice to oneself.

The issue at hand is obedience.

## **How Much Should I Give**

Many ask at this point, “How much should I give?”

While the Old Testament does indeed speak of a tithe; the New Testament is not that clear on the subject.

However, we do know that Jesus did scold the Pharisees for not given with the right heart (Luke 11:42).

The New Testament does speak clearly about the principles of giving though.

Most will turn to 1 Cor. 16:1-4 and point to the fact that giving should be done regularly, planned, proportional and private.

However, it is obvious from the text that He is speaking specifically of the collection for the Jerusalem Church and not necessarily the issue of tithing.

Also 2 Cor. 9:1-7 points out that our giving should be generous, freely given and cheerful.

Most who argue against tithing do so with self-interest at heart.

However, based on the principles that we’ve mentioned; giving should be a priority for the Christian.

I believe that 10% is a good place to start.

To some, that’s too little and to others, that may be too much.

Cf. \$70.68

Unfortunately, many people ask themselves, “How little can I give and still be right with God?”.

That only proves that your heart is not in the right place!

Giving, or lack thereof, is always a spiritual issue, period.

Mat 6:21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Cf. Luke 16:11

## **That God Might Be Glorified**

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

In other words, he wasn't taking these offerings so that the church in Jerusalem would be rich, but so that they could merely survive.

Some have said, "Give till it hurts!"

However, I do not see that principle in the Bible.

The goal of giving is not so that anyone can hurt, but that God might be glorified.

Calvin once said, "This teaching is needed to refute fanatics who think that you have done nothing unless you strip yourself completely and put everything into a common fund."

## **An Equality**

v.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 saying that considering all that the church in Jerusalem has given them spiritually; it should be no great thing for them to return the favor with physical things.

In many respects, it was the sacrifice of the church in Jerusalem that made it possible for the gospel.

The equality that Paul is speaking of is not meant to imply communism or socialism.

Calvin said, "I acknowledge indeed that we are not bound to such an equality as would make it wrong for the rich to live more elegantly than the poor; but there must be an equality that nobody starves and nobody hoards his abundance at another's expense."

**Illustration**: I like what Les said this morning in regards to setting \$50.00 on the side for his renters when they leave.

**"now at this time"**: Paul is reminding them that now is the time to give this already promised gift.

The church in Jerusalem needed the money yesterday!

## **None Lacked in the End**

v.15 *As it is written, "HE WHO GATHERED MUCH HAD NOTHING LEFT OVER, AND HE WHO GATHERED LITTLE HAD NO LACK."*

This is a quote from Exodus 16:18 when the Israelites picked up the manna from Heaven.

I.e. Everyone gathered what they could, some more and some less, but they all shared what they had gathered and none lacked in the end.

The point is that they were not permitted to hoard.

Cf. Ex. 16:17-30

### **Titus' Recommendation**

vv.16-17 *But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. (17) For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.*

Paul is basically recommending Timothy as a trusty person to take their money.

Back to Les' lesson this morning, because of Judas' position at the table; it is probable that Jesus washed his feet first.

**Side Note:** It's interesting that no suspected Judas.

### **What Brother?**

vv.18-19 *And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, 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,*

Who is this brother that went with Titus?

We don't know.

### **Stay Out of the Money**

vv.20-21 *avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us-- (21) providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Paul wanted to stay away from the money so that he and his ministry might be blameless.

***"in the sight of men"***: All things in the church must be handled "above board".

It's been said that Paul "could write like a poet, and think like a theologian; but he could also act with the meticulous accuracy and integrity of the best accountant."

It's hard to find these qualities in one person.

**Illustration:** Pastor's have to put a team around them that can complement them because very few of them have the entire package.

### **Bragging Justified**

*vv.22-24 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. (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. (24) Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.*

It is saying that when Titus and his friend arrive; they should give a good offering.

A good offering will be proof of their love and of his bragging on their behalf!

## **Chapter 9**

*vv.1-2 Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; (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.*

Again, Paul is dealing with the collection for the church that is in Jerusalem.

Some will point out that the reason the church had fallen on hard times there was because of their apparent zeal to have all things in common.

Cf. Acts 2:40-45

This is apparently what gave rise to the need for deacons.

Cf. Acts 6

Some will point out that this is not the first time the church in Jerusalem needed help.

Cf. Acts 11:27-30

***“it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness”***: Some see this as Paul once again being sarcastic.

If they were really that willing, he wouldn't have to be reminding them!

**Application:** Ask any missionary, it is very hard sometimes to remind people of their commitment to give.

A little advice for those of you that want to be missionaries: keep in touch with your supporters.

“Out sight usually equals out of mind!”

***“I boast of you to the Macedonians”***: This may be a playful way of encouraging them to give by saying that he had already bragged about them to the Macedonians.

***“your zeal has stirred up the majority”***: This is either sarcasm or playful.

### **Boasting in Vain**

*v.3 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;*

Again, we see here playful sarcasm.

I.e. “You guys are so ready to give that I know that you want to bring the offering to me, but I'll go ahead and send some of the brethren to get it.”

### **Not Grudging Obligation**

*vv.4-5 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.*

The playful sarcasm continues.

Paul wanted the giving of the gift to be “out of the way” before he got there so that it would be truly an act of generosity and not a grudging obligation.

Imagine if God gave to us out of grudging obligation.

Redpath said, “When God gives grace, He does not reluctantly open a little finger and maintain a clenched fist full of gifts. I would tell you today that God’s hands are nail-pierced hands and they are wide open. This fountain of grace is always pouring itself out with no limitation on heaven’s side at all.”

Again, it’s not how much we give but how we give that is important with God.

### **Sowing and Reaping**

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

A farmer sowing seed may feel he is losing seed as it falls from his hand to the ground, and we may feel we are losing when we are giving. But just as the sower gives the seed in anticipation of a future harvest, so we should give with the same heart.

It’s also proportional.

If a farmer were to sow few seeds because he wanted to “hold on” to as much seed as he could, he would have more seed in his barn after sowing time. But at the harvest, the one who sowed more seed would have much more grain in his barn.

### **Physically and Spiritually**

This promise not only has application to the physical, but also to the spiritual.

Calvin once said, “This harvest should be understood both in terms of the spiritual reward of eternal life and also referring to the earthly blessings with which God honors the beneficent. Not only in heaven does God reward the well-doing of the godly, but in this world as well.”

Matthew 19:29 *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”*

Obviously Jesus was not speaking about a return on houses!

I.e. “If we give up one wife, He’ll give us a hundred more!”

### **As He Purposes in His Heart**

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

Notice that he says, *“let each one give”*.

Every Christian should be a giver.

***“as he purposes in his own heart”***: Giving should always be motivated by the purposes of our own heart.

In other words, it should never be coerced or manipulated out of us.

We should give because we want to and not because we have to.

Our giving will truly reflect the purpose of our heart.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

**Illustration:** Show a man’s checkbook, planning book and Facebook and I’ll show you the man!

***“not grudging or of necessity”***: In other words, our giving should not be reluctant and regretful.

It has been noted that that kind of giving is called taxation!

***“for God loves a cheerful giver”***: Our giving should be done so cheerfully.

The Greek word for “cheerful” is “hilaros” which is the root for the English word “hilarious”.

A great example of two people who did not give hilariously was Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

Kruse puts it this way, “It is not difficult to suggest why God delights in the cheerful giver. He himself is such a giver and desires to see this characteristic restored among those who were created in his image.”

### **God is Able**

vv.8-9 *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (9) As it is written: "HE HAS DISPERSED ABROAD, HE HAS GIVEN TO THE POOR; HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."*

***“God is able to make all grace about toward you”***: The thought is that as we give, God will reward us for doing so.

I.e. God is able to make a great harvest out of anything that we give by faith.

Think about it for a moment: God says that we are to give to Him in proportion to what we have.

That means that he gives to us in proportion to what He has!

This thought is seen in Matthew 10:42 when Jesus said, *“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”*

In other words, you cannot out give God!

Of course, that does not necessarily mean physical return in that it could be spiritual as well.

*“having all sufficiency in all things”*: The word “sufficiency” can be translated “contentment”

It’s the same word in 1 Tim. 6:6 when it says, *“Now godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

In other words, if we faithfully love and serve God; we will be content with what He gives us. What is the end result of not being faithful with what God has given to us? – Materialism.

Notice *“may have abundance for every good work”*: God bless us so that we can be a blessing to others.

God wants us to be channels and not reservoirs.

Harry Emerson Fosdick once said, “The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are made of the same water. The water flows down, clean and cool, from the heights of Hermon and the roots of the cedars of Lebanon. In return the Sea of Galilee makes beauty of it in that it has an outlet. It gets to give. It gathers in its riches that it may pour them out again to fertilize the Jordan plain. But the Dead Sea with the same water makes horror of it in that it has no outlet. It gets to keep.

*“His righteousness endures forever”*: This is a quotation from Psalm 112:9.

Paul is not saying that generous giving makes us righteous, but that it does signify that we are in a right standing with God.

### **Prayers for Blessing**

*vv.10-11 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, (11) while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

Paul is praying for blessings for the Corinthians.

He recognizes that God is indeed the great supplier.

***“increase the fruits of your righteousness”***: His prayer is that God would multiply their supply so that they can give more.

### **Thanksgivings to God**

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

So, first of all, their giving would indeed supply the needs of the Saints in Jerusalem, but it would also be ***“many thanksgivings to God”*** in that they would be answering other people’s prayers.

### **Liberal Sharing**

vv.13-14 *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, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.*

This is the only place in the Bible where the word “liberal” is good!

To the saints in Jerusalem, their liberal gift would be a reason for rejoicing.

***“liberal sharing”***: The word here in the Greek is “koinania” which is the same word used with the idea of fellowship or communion.

### **His Indescribable Gift**

v.15 *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

Some think that Paul is talking about salvation here and others the gift that the Father gave us in His Son.

“I’ll go with both for a \$1000.00 Bob!”

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.”*

Jesus is God’s gift to us and He is indeed indescribable!

The KJV uses the word “unspeakable”.

Barnes says that means that no words can properly express the greatness of the gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than the mind can conceive; higher than language can express

Clark said, “JESUS CHRIST, *the gift of God’s love* to mankind, is an *unspeakable blessing*; no man can *conceive*, much less *declare*, how great this gift is; for these things the angels desire to look into. Therefore he may be well called the unspeakable gift, as he is the highest God ever gave or can give to man.”

He is the gift that we are told to offer a lost and dying world.

Spurgeon said, “If you preach Christ, you will never run short. If you have preached ten thousand sermons about Christ, you have not left the shore; you are not out in the deep sea yet. Dive, my brother! With splendour of thought, plunge into the great mystery of free grace and dying love; and when you have dived the farthest, you will perceive that you are as far off the bottom as when you first touched the surface.”

It’s also interesting that the word translated “indescribable” or “unspeakable” here is not found in any ancient Greek writings before this time.

That would lead us to believe that Paul made it up!

## Chapter 10

### Introduction

Paul begins this chapter with a change of tone.

The tone is so different that some have speculated that they represent a completely different letter altogether.

Some will even argue that chapters 10-13 are actually part of the lost severe letter.

That, of course, chronologically speaking would make them before chapters 1-9.

However, this cannot be the case because they refer to Titus’ visit as a past event (12:18).

Others suggest that it is possible that chapters 10-13 represent a separate letter that Paul wrote after chapters 1-9.

In the end, the best explanation is that chapters 1-9 are written with a repentant majority in mind while chapters 10-13 are written with the unrepentant minority in mind.

## **Pleading With You**

*v.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.*

In regards to the tone change, I believe that Paul was simply through talking about the collection for the church in Jerusalem and now resumes where he left off talking about the false apostles.

**“by the meekness and gentleness of Christ”**: These next few chapters are going to be pretty direct, yet Paul wants them to know that he is doing

John MacArthur points out that **“meekness”** is the humble and gentle attitude that expresses itself in patient endurance of unfair treatment.

A meek person is not bitter or angry and he does not seek revenge when he has been wronged.

Also, **“gentleness”** when applied to someone in authority refers to leniency.

Gentle people refuse to retaliate, even when it is within their power to do so.

**“who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you”**: This touches on a bone of contention with Paul.

The Corinthians had already accused him of being reserved in person and yet bold in his letters.

Is it possible to **“lowly”** and **“bold”** at the same time? – Of course it is.

Jesus did this all of the time.

## **Apostolic Credentials in Question**

*v.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.*

Paul’s desire is to not have to come to them with boldness, but in gentleness.

However, that was going to be their decision to make.

Again, there was a minority in Corinth who questioned Paul’s credentials as an apostle.

**“I intend to be bold against some”**: Again, we must remember that those referred to here were the minority and not the majority.

***“who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh”***: Again, this accusation represents the minority who made accusations against Paul.

These are that bunch that Paul accused the majority of being ***“unequally yoked”*** with (6:14).

### **Not According to the Flesh**

***v.3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.***

When Paul refers to the flesh here; he means it in a physical sense and not a spiritual sense (cf. Rom. 8:4).

### **Weapons of Our Warfare**

***vv.4-6 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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, (6) and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.***

In other words, when Paul went to battle; it was not in a physical sense but a spiritual one.

Bear in mind that Paul is still defending himself against his accusers who questioned him.

He is not necessarily talking about swords and spears, but that he would not use their manipulative and deceitful ways as they did.

He refused to use their carnal weapons to defend himself.

***“mighty in God for pulling down strongholds”***: In Ephesians 6, Paul lists the spiritual weapons that he did use: to rely on these weapons took more faith than relying on the carnal methods of the Corinthians.

David Guzik points out in his commentary that the Corinthian Christians tended to rely on and admire carnal weapons for the Christian battle.

Instead of the belt of truth, they fought with manipulation.

Instead of the breastplate of righteousness, they fought with the image of success.

Instead of the shoes of the gospel, they fought with smooth words.

Instead of the shield of faith, they fought with the perception of power.

Instead of the helmet of salvation, they fought with lording over authority.

Instead of the sword of the Spirit, they fought with human schemes and programs.

### **Jesus Used Spiritual Weapons**

Jesus relied on spiritual weapons when he fought for our salvation.

Cf. Phil. 2:6-8

This kind of battle through humble obedience offended the Corinthians because they saw it as weak.

The carnal, human way is to overpower, dominate, manipulate and out-manuever.

The spiritual way to humble yourself, die to yourself and let God show His power through you.

***“strongholds”***: The strongholds that Paul is referring to here are referring to anything that contradicts the true knowledge and nature of God.

I.e. carnal ways of thinking and doing things as compared to spiritual ways of doing things.

Paul calls this kind of thinking as ***“arguments...that exalts itself against the knowledge of God”***.

It is a worldly thinking that goes against the mind and methods of God.

It is a way of thinking that wants to debate God and insist that we have a better way.

In the end, it is us thinking of ourselves as wiser than God.

Calvin said, “For nothing is more opposed to the spiritual wisdom of God than the wisdom of the flesh, and nothing is more opposed to His grace than man’s natural ability.”

***“bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”***: Every thought that we have in regards to our carnal way of thinking must be brought captive and made obedient to Jesus.

### ***“Topical Study on Hearing the Voice of God”***

I want to share some things that I have learned over the years in “Hearing the Voice of God”...

#### **1. Don’t make guidance complicated.**

I've learned that it's actually hard not to hear God if you really want to please and obey Him!

John 15:21 *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **manifest** Myself to him."*

If you are trying to obey God, He promises to show Himself to you.

If you stay humble, He promises to always guide you.

Proverbs 16:9 *"A man's heart **plans** his way, but the **LORD** **directs** his steps."*

Here are three simple steps that have helped me to hear God's voice:

A. Submit

B. Resist

C. Expect.

#### **A. SUBMIT** to His Lordship.

James 4:7a *"**Submit** yourselves therefore to God."*

Submit means to "to yield to the action, control, and power of another."

What this means is that you and I must submit in seeking God's guidance.

In other words, before we go into our prayer closets, we need to ask God help us to submit to His predetermined will in this particular situation.

It's also a good time to ask Him to help silence our own thoughts...desires...and the opinions of other people, which may be filling our mind.

II Corinthians 10:5 *"**Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**"*

Even though we have been given a good mind by God...at this point, we want to hear the thoughts of the Lord...and not our own.

Proverbs 3:5-7a *"**Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes:**"*

**B. RESIST** the enemy.

We must resist the enemy when seeking God's guidance.

Our enemy is clever and he wants nothing more than to deceive us.

James 4:7-8a *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.**”*

Notice that the prerequisite for being able to “resist the Devil” is by submitting ourselves to God!

That means in every area of our lives, not just the ones that are convenient, but the ones that are not.

I.e. Money, resources, time, etc...

The word “resist” means to “withstand; oppose; fend off; or to stand firm against.”

Ephesians 6:10-20 and the pieces of the armor

**C. EXPECT** an answer.

After asking the question that is on our mind, we must wait for God to answer.

He will!

John 10:27 *“My sheep **hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:**”*

I believe that many times God is answering our questions; it's just that we're not listening!

Listening to the voice of God takes patience and practice.

Cf. the sheep in Israel

Cf. Luke 10:38-42

**Illustration:** The statue of Jesus with no face.

Psalm 69:13 *“But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, **in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.**”*

## Conclusion

So, first, don't make guidance complicated, but simply resist, submit and expect an answer.

### *“End of Topical Study on Hearing the Voice of God”*

*“and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled”*: Paul was merely saying that he was going to confront them to pull down the strongholds if they were not willing to do it themselves.

*“punish all disobedience”*: Some commentators feel that this phrase comes from the Roman Military Court.

In other words, Paul was acknowledging that we are all in an army and some of the troops need to be punished.

*“when your obedience is fulfilled”*: He is speaking to those who had already obeyed and renounced their carnal weapons that they were using against him.

In other words, once everyone has firmly picked a side in the debate; he will step in and deal with those who've chosen the wrong side.

Indeed, sometimes the best thing to do is wait.

Poole said, “Herein the apostle hath set a rule and a pattern to all churches, where are multitudes that walk disorderly; not to be too hasty in excommunicating them, but to proceed gradually; first using all fair means, and waiting with all patience, for the reducing them to their duty, who will by any gentle and fair means be reduced; and then revenging the honour and glory of God only upon such as will not be reclaimed.”

## The Outward Appearance

*v.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.*

The Corinthians had a carnal reliance on the outward appearance.

I believe that Paul is speaking of himself here as well as those who were causing the problems in Corinth.

In regards to the troublemakers, Paul warns them that not everything that looks like a Christian is necessarily a Christian.

Again, outward appearances can be deceiving.

It's basically the same thing that Jesus said in Matthew 7:15-20.

In regards to Paul himself, they were looking on Paul's outward appearance and thus judging him to be weak and unimpressive.

Indeed Paul was most likely an unimpressive fellow to look at.

An ancient description of him says, "a man of small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked."

Paul is in no way saying that the Corinthians were wrong in testing an apostles credentials, but that they were using the wrong test: outward appearance.

1 Samuel 16:7 *"For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"*

**Illustration:** Here is an illustration if man had picked the Twelve Apostles and not Christ.

TO: Jesus, Son of Joseph  
Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop  
Nazareth

FROM: Jordan Management Consultants  
Jerusalem

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the résumés of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have not taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully. As part of our service and for your guidance, we make some general comments, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have team

concept. We recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your comptroller and right-hand man. All the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely Yours,  
Jordan Management Committee

### **Paul's View of Authority**

v.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--*

***“even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority”***: It's obvious that Paul did not feel comfortable boasting about himself.

Some people have absolutely no problem with it, but Paul apparently did.

***“which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction”***: Paul realized that his authority that had been given to him by God was to build them up and not tear them down.

God has established both levels of authority and levels of submission.

It was to edify and not destroy.

### **Terrified by Letters**

vv.9-10 *lest I seem to terrify you by letters. (10) "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."*

Again, we see those who were against Paul looking to the outward appearance.

They were accusing Paul by saying that he was like a dog that barks at a safe distance, but is a coward when confronted face to face.

### **A Threat**

*v.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.*

This can be perceived as nothing less than a threat!

### **Measures of Ministry**

*v.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.*

Paul here is speaking directly to those who look to the outward appearance as the measure of a ministry.

It's interesting how that the "outward appearance" has become so very important in the church today; especially among those who desire to pastor them.

However, Paul says here that he will not class or compare himself with these carnal, worldly people who stood in judgment of him.

***"measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves"***: This speaks to making oneself the measure of all others.

This was wrong in Corinth for two reasons.

1. There were apparently not many spiritual people in the Corinthian church so a good comparison would have been hard to come by.
2. Their comparison was on a human scale that focused on the outward instead of a God scale that would have focused on the inward.

We all need to stop measuring ourselves by ourselves!

Our measuring is always for the purpose of superiority.

Why else would we insist upon doing it?

Paul says that those who do this *“are not wise”*.

### **The Sphere Appointed**

vv.13-14 *We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us--a sphere which especially includes you. 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;*

Now Paul says that he will not take his boasting beyond measure *“but without the limits of the sphere which God has appointed”*.

In other words, God had given Paul a lot of latitude but it still had limits.

The sphere of influence certainly did include the Christians who were at Corinth because he had founded that church.

*“limits of the sphere”*: Many believe that this is a reference to lanes in which a runner would face.

The Corinthians would have certainly identified with it because of the famous “Isthmian Games” that took place in Corinth.

The point that Paul is making is that he is running in the lane that God had given to him and not someone else’s.

**Illustration:** I have authority at this Bible College but not at the Union Church of Lima.

### **Greatly Enlarged**

v.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,*

*“boasting of thing beyond measure...in other men’s labor”*: Why is Paul trying to make this point?

Many believe that he is taking a shot at those who are indeed trying to boast in his labors among the Corinthians.

They were in essence they were behaving like “Johnny come latelies” in trying to boast in Paul’s sphere of accomplishment.

***“as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere”***: The point is that as the Corinthian church grew and expanded in its ministries; this would also increase the sphere of Paul’s ministry because he had a hand in that.

He is encouraging the church to be fruitful once they are fully restored and this nasty incident is behind them.

### **Another Man’s Foundation**

***v.16 to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.***

Paul says that he, unlike some of those in Corinth, was not trying to build on another man’s foundation.

Clark said, “It is base, abominable, and deeply sinful, for a man to thrust himself into other men’s labours, and by sowing doubtful disputations among a Christian people, distract and divide them, than he may get a party to himself . . . This is an evil that has prevailed much in all ages of the Church; there is at *present* much of it in the Christian world, and Christianity is disgraced by it.”

**Illustration:** That is exactly what Absalom did to his father David in 2 Sam. 15:1-6

Cf. Blowing the Whistle on the Wolves

### **Glory in the Lord**

***vv.17-18 But "HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD." (18) For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.***

Paul is quoting from Jeremiah 9:24 which says, ***“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.”***

This is a rebuke in that they were finding their own glory either in themselves or Paul.

Again, the only reason that I can glory is that I feel that I’m better than you, right?

Paul is saying, “We shouldn’t find glory in ourselves but in God only.”

***“for not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends”***: It doesn’t really matter what we think of ourselves, but what He thinks of us that really matters.

Hughes said, ““In the Christian Church, indeed, self-commendation should be viewed with suspicion as a mark of disqualification.”

## Chapter 11

### **Bear With Me**

v.1 *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me.*

He is not calling his defense of his apostleship foolish, but is saying that he does it reluctantly, knowing that he could be spending his time on far more important things.

v.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.*

Paul now expresses a godly jealousy for them.

He expresses this because they are being seduced by these false prophets who are begging for their affections and loyalty over his.

### **A Jealous God**

God is also jealous of us.

Cf. Ex. 20:3-5

God refuses to share us with anyone else.

He doesn't want 90%, but 100% of us.

God doesn't play well with others!

*“for I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”:*

Paul here sees himself as the friend of the groom in that he is protecting the bride until her wedding day.

Clark says, “In the Jewish culture, the friend of the bridegroom had the important job of “procuring a husband for the virgin, to guard her, and to bear testimony to her corporeal (having to do with the body) and marital endowments; and it was upon this testimony that the bridegroom choose his bride.”

He was the “internuncio” (diplomatic representative) between the two parties; carrying all messages between them. He also protected her purity so that he could vindicate her character to the bridegroom”

Also, it is important to remember that engagement was not taken lightly in the Jewish culture.

You were as good as married and any unfaithfulness would result in divorce and even capital punishment.

### **Example of Joseph and Mary**

Cf. Joseph who thought about putting Mary away “privately”

That called for a divorce, but he was going to do it in such a way that he did not accuse her of adultery because he knew the end result of that accusation.

Barnes says, “Adultery has always been considered a crime of a very heinous nature. In Egypt, it was punished by cutting off the nose of the adulteress; in Persia, the nose and ears were cut off; in Judea, the punishment was death by stoning. This punishment was also inflicted where the person was not married, but betrothed (Deut. 22:23-24). In this case, therefore, the regular punishment would have been death in this painful and ignominious manner. Yet Joseph was a religious man - mild and tender; and he was not willing to complain of her to the magistrate, and expose her to death, but sought to avoid the shame, and to put her away privately.

Anytime that we give our hearts to anything other than God; we too are guilty of committing “spiritual adultery” during our engagement as well.

### **The Simplicity of Christ**

*v.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.*

Again, bear in mind that Paul is still defending his apostolic credentials.

Remember context!

So, any deception that he is talking about will ultimately come back around to their being deceived about him.

*“as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness”*: He is comparing their having believed a lie in regards to him with Satan’s deception of Even in the garden.

He is also concerned that they are being led away by the lies of Satan just as Eve was.

Just a Satan’s lie caused a breaking of fellowship between God and Eve; so the lies of Paul’s enemies were causing a breaking in the fellowship between him and the Corinthian church.

In other words, just as Satan seduced the Bride in the Bible; he is capable of doing the same to the Church Bride: specifically the Corinthian church!

They were being seduced from the faith just like Eve by these false teachers.

How was this being done?

***“by his craftiness”***: the KJV calls it subtleness.

Craftiness means “to be shrewd in deception”.

The word implies that shrewdness, cunning, craft was employed.

A tempter always employs cunning and art to accomplish his object.

Barnes says, “The precise mode in which Satan accomplished his object is not certainly known. Perhaps the cunning consisted in assuming an attractive form - a fascinating manner - a manner suited to charm; perhaps in the idea that the eating of the forbidden fruit had endowed a serpent with the power of reason and speech above all other animals, and that it might be expected to produce a similar transformation in Eve.”

That is exactly what the false prophets were doing to them.

They were putting on false pretences and appearances to allure them away from the truth about Paul and ultimately Christ Himself.

Cf. vv.13-14

### **The Lie**

Paul understood that Satan’s deception of Eve was cloaked in a lie, ***“you will not surely die”***.

He told her a lie with a shred of truth to it.

It was 2/3 truth and 1/3 lie!

Gen. 3:4-5 ***“Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”***

It’s been said that “a lie that is all of a lie can be met with and fought outright; but a lie that is partly the truth is a harder matter to fight.”

## **Another Jesus**

*v.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!*

I found something interesting here about this chapter.

Bear in mind that this false prophets that Paul is dealing with here were accusing him of being weak and unimpressive in appearance (5:12, 10:7, 10).

However, that is exactly true of Jesus!

*Isa 53:2 "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him."*

Again, they were teaching another Jesus.

They were apparently teaching a Jesus who knew no weakness, persecution, humiliation and death.

That's not our Jesus at all.

Cf. Isa. 53:2-7

*"if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted"*: This is the same warning that Paul gave to the Galatians.

Cf. Gal. 1:8-9

## **If He Comes**

Notice something else at the very beginning of this verse, *"if he who comes"*.

Paul is taking a shot at these false apostles in that he is accusing them of coming on their own accord and not being sent from God as a true apostle will be.

*"you may well put up with it"*: Again, the problem wasn't really that these false teachers had come into the church but that they had accepted them.

The NASB translates this *"you bear this beautifully."*

The same problem exists in the church today as well.

There are false teachers out there and we all know it; and yet we put up with them.

### ***“Topical Study on the Kingdom Parables”***

#### **The Kingdom Parables**

Two of the Kingdom Parables speak of this happening.

Cf. Matthew 13:31-34

#### **The Mustard Seed**

Matthew 13:31-32 The purpose of this parable is to show us what will happen to Christianity as we enter the last day’s right before the Second Coming of Jesus for His church (the wheat).

Unlike the first two, no interpretation is given by our Lord.

What does the mustard seed represent? - Faith (17:20).

Luke 17:6 *“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”*

#### **Wrong Interpretation**

However, this parable is very often misinterpreted because many teachers will say that since, the mustard seed represents faith, it represents the spread of Christianity throughout the world to become as the greatest tree.

This leads them to further teach that through the preaching of the gospel, we will bring in the kingdom of Heaven.

The result of this teaching is that it puts pressure on the church to spread the Word of God as quickly as possible, because Jesus isn’t coming back until we do.

Some will go so far as to say that the result of this spreading of Christianity is that everyone will ultimately be saved.

The Bible simply does not teach that.

Rev. 20:15 *“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

Let's look at the types found in this parable.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Association</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Mustard Seed	Faith	Matt. 17:20
Field	World	Matt. 13:38
Tree	Kingdom	Dan. 4:10-12, 20-22
Birds	Devils/Evil	Matt. 13:4, 19; Rev. 18:2

In conclusion, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, this parable cannot be about Christianity spreading throughout the world and thus, bringing in the Kingdom.

### **Correct Interpretation**

Now that we've looked at what this parable does not mean, "What does it mean?"

It shows us that as we near the coming of the Lord, Christianity is going into apostasy.

Apostasy by definition is "a total desertion of or departure from one's religion, principles, party or cause."

2 Th. 2:3 *"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition."*

We see evidence of this all around us today.

This is evidenced in several ways.

- a. The number of "professing" Christians is huge by comparison to the number of truly saved believers.
- b. It's estimated that only six out of ten are truly Christians in the average church today.
- c. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said that he has come to the conclusion that at least 50% of their members are lost due to the lack of evangelism that is taking place from the pews.
- d. The average American will identify themselves as Christian by virtue of birth.
- e. The largest single group of "Christians" in the world will not even refer to themselves as Christians (Roman Catholics) and claim salvation by virtue of keeping the sacraments and rituals of the church which is a clear violation of Scripture (1 Tim 4:1-3).
- f. Yes, the tree in this parable is large, but only because it is filled with devils.

## **The Parable of the Leaven**

Matthew 13:33-35 This parable, like the parable of the mustard seed, is often commonly mistaken as a parable about the spreading of the gospel throughout the world.

On the contrary, this parable is about the spreading of apostasy and not the true gospel of Jesus Christ as some would suggest.

Again, we must remember that leaven always has a negative connotation, so the Lord would never use it as a type of the gospel.

Leaven is a type of false doctrine or sin.

Cf. The Passover in Ex. 12:8, 15-20; Lev. 23:6-8

Cf. Matt 16:6-12

Cf. Gal 5:7-9

Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to *“purge out the old leaven.”*

1 Cor 5:6-8 *“Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (7) Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. (8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”*

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for letting a particular sin ruin the testimony of the church.

He compared the effect of this sin to the action of leaven in the lump.

### ***“End of Topical Study on the Kingdom Parables”***

## **Comparisons**

v.5 *For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.*

Apparently, he felt led to say this because there were some comparisons being made.

While some will say that Paul is speaking of Peter or one of the other original twelve.

Others agree that Paul is speaking sarcastically of the false apostles who had claimed to be better than Paul.

## **Oratory Skills**

*v.6 Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.*

During Paul's day, the Grecian culture highly favored great oratory skills.

That's the ability to speak in a polished, sophisticated and entertaining manner.

Cf. Acts 18:24

Paul was either unwilling or unable to do this.

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5

**Illustration:** A story is told about a dinner party where the guests were expected to stand after the meal and recite something for the group. A famous actor was present, and he recited the twenty-third Psalm with great dramatic flair and emotion, and sat down to great applause. Then a very simple man got up and began to recite the same Psalm. He wasn't very eloquent, so at first people thought it was a little funny. But his presentation was straight from his heart, so when he finished, the group sat in respectful silence. It was obvious that the simple man's presentation was more powerful than the actors, and afterwards the actor told him: "I know the Psalm, but you know the Shepherd."

Unlike the other "eminent apostles", Paul knew the Shepherd.

*"but we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things":* In other words, even though Paul could not or would not give the Corinthians a polished message that appealed to them; he did make himself absolutely transparent to them.

## **No Speaker's Fee**

*v.7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?*

In the culture of the day, just as today, a public speaker was expected to be paid for his oratory skills.

However, Paul refused to take money from them and was thus judged an unworthy speaker by some.

Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 1-15

### **Robbed Others**

vv.8-9 *I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. (9) And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.*

This word robbed in classical Greek is a word that was used for stripping a deal soldier of his armor.

Paul is referring to the fact that he received financial support from other churches while ministering in Corinth.

In essence, he is saying that he has “robbed” those churches because he is using their money to minister to someone else.

He is of course, referring to the churches in Macedonia.

Cf. Phil. 4:14-18

### **Boasting**

v.10 *As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia.*

He boasted in that he did not take any money from them.

### **God Knows I Love You**

v.11 *Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!*

Paul is asking them why he doesn't take money for them.

Is it because he doesn't love them? – No.

God knows that he does love them.

For some reason Paul felt that taking money from them was not wise to his calling to minister to them.

Maybe it was because he had already been accused of defrauding them?

Cf. 7:2

### **Accusations**

*v.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.*

He goes on to say that he doesn't take money from them so that he may prove his accusers wrong in their accusations against him.

### **False Apostles**

*vv.13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. (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.*

## ***“Topical Study on the Epistle of Jude”***

The purpose of Jude was that the church needed to fight against false teachers in the church.

He warns that false teachers have crept into the church.

Remember what God did to unbelieving Israel in the desert, the disobedient angels, and wicked Sodom and Gomorrah.

In the face of such danger Christians should not be caught off guard.

The challenge is great, but so is our God!

This is the message of Jude.

***Jude 1:** Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:*

The author of this book was none other the Jude the brother of Jesus.

***Jude 2-4:** Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. (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. (4) For certain*

*men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now we see why Jude was burdened to write this letter.

We see from verse 3 that he had originally intended to write this letter to “*concerning our common salvation.*”

But, because of the danger of “*certain men who had crept in unnoticed*”, he decided to write about that instead.

Who were these men?

We are told four things about them.

1. They are “*marked out for condemnation.*”
2. They are “*ungodly.*”
3. They “*turn the grace of our God into licentiousness*” (or lewdness, obscenity).
4. They “*deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

### **Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing**

These are the same men who Jesus warned about when He said, “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*”

### **Christian?**

From these verses we must conclude that not everything or everyone who calls themselves Christian is truly “Christian.”

Cf. Matthew 7:21-23

We need to be very mindful of this before we put our trust in anyone who’s words do not line up with their lives!

### **Past Judgment of False Teachers**

Jude 5-7 *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (6) And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; (7) as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves*

*over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

Now Jude gives three examples from the past of how God deals with False teachers and those who turn away from the faith.

### **1. The Children of Israel**

The children of Israel were saved miraculously out of Egypt only to die in the desert because of disobedience.

Some of you have been miraculously saved, born again, but you are dying in the desert because of disobedience.

God wants to bless you, but He can't, because of your freedom of choice.

You have chosen to seek and serve self and not the God of your salvation.

God will never violate your will; at least not in this life.

#### **Grace verses Law**

I've heard many Christians who are out of God's will say, "Well, I don't live under the law any more. I live under grace."

(Like that's supposed to be some kind of excuse for their disobedience.)

Well, that's not a completely true statement.

Yes, we do have the ability to live under grace through obedience, but, we also have the ability to live under the law through disobedience.

God when speaking to the children of Israel said, *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;"*

Choose life through obedience God will bless.

Choose death through disobedience God will curse.

## 2. Fallen Angels

Then we see the angels who kept not their first estate.

These angles are a certain group of angels who did something especially grievous.

Cf. Gen. 6:1-4

And as a result, they were cast from heaven and are “...reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day...”

## 3. Sodom and Gomorrah

Finally, we see the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah who had “given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh.”

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah had chosen to shake their fists in God’s face and live lives of sexual immorality, and perversion.

### The Commonality in all Three

The commonality that I see with these three is that while God offered them life, they chose death.

Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

### God Offers Life

The Bible says that “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

It is not the will of God that any should go through the punishment that Israel, the fallen angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah went through.

Cf. 2 Peter 3:9

It is the desire of God that everyone go to heaven.

Cf. John 3:16-17

You don’t have to make the bad decisions that Israel, the angles, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah made.

Luke 13:34 *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”*

### **Filthy Dreamers**

Jude 8: *Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.*

In other words, these men resemble rebellious Israel, the fallen angels, and Sodom and Gommorah. Their sins are the same.

Paul tells us four things about these guys.

#### **1. They are dreamers.**

They are called *“filthy”* in the KJV.

In other words, they dream things up as they go along.

They are not grounded in the Word of God.

#### **2. They defile the flesh.**

They pollute themselves with sin because of their corrupt passions and evil desires.

They do not live holy and separated lives.

#### **3. They reject authority.**

Men who despise authority despise the Bible...because the Bible regiments and regulates and exhorts a man and a woman to walk in holiness.

**Illustration:** Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.

2 Tim 3:16-17 *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Prov 12:1 *"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid."*

#### **4. Not only do they reject authority, but they speak evil of it.**

The KJV says that they *“speak evil of dignitaries.”*

When men speak evil of God, His Son, the prophets, or of God's men, they speak evil of dignities.

We are to esteem God, His Son Jesus, and His Church in holy awe!

cf. 2 Peter 2

All of this comes about because they reject authority.

**Illustration:** We do not stand in judgment of the Bible. The Bible stands in judgment of us.

### **Arm of the Flesh**

Jude 9: *Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

It is never wise to lean upon the arm of the flesh.

You and I are no match for the devil in and of ourselves.

We are foolish to even think that we can stand against the attacks that He is capable of bringing upon us.

The devil is a powerful enemy.

He is not omnipotent or omniscient like God, but never-the-less, he is no one to be toyed with.

Even Michael, the archangel, would not fight the devil in his own strength.

Like Michael, we must depend upon the Lord for the victory.

As we lean upon the Lord, the victory is ours!

Jude 10: *But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.*

I Cor. 2:14 *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

### **Woe To Them**

*Jude 11-13: Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. (12) These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; (13) raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

This is the judgment of God that is surely to fall upon these natural brute beasts or filthy dreamers.

Notice that he compares them to Cain, Balaam, and Core.

### **Way of Cain**

They go the way of Cain, which is a bloodless religion of works.

Genesis 4:1-8; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12

### **Error of Balaam**

They also, go greedily after the error of Balaam.

What was the error of Balaam.

Balaam is never spoken of positively in the N.T.

*2 Peter 2:15 "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;"*

Cf. Rev. 2:14-15

### **Balaam Account (Numbers 22-24)**

In Numbers we are introduced to a guy named Balaam that had a strange relationship with God .

The Israelites were camped in the plains of Moab and after seeing what they had done to the Amorites, Balak sent for a prophet named Balaam to curse them.

Cf. Num. 22:1-6

### **God Said No!**

Balaam asked the Lord about it, and God said, "No".

Cf. Num. 22:9-12

### **More Money**

But then Balak sent more guys and money.

Cf. Numbers 22:15-18

God had already said no, but he went and asked Him again, which was his first mistake, and the Lord angrily allowed Balaam to compromise and go.

God knew Balaam's heart.

However, he was to only speak what God told him to.

Cf. Num. 22:20

Just to show us that God was very upset with Balaam.

Cf. Num. 22:22-35

And, of course, three times Balaam opened his mouth and could only bless the Israelites.

Cf. Numbers 23:7-11, 18-26, 24:3-11

### **Balaam's Greed**

But then Balaam came up with an idea.

It makes it clear to us in Rev. 2:14 and in Num. 31:15-16 what Balaam's idea was.

He couldn't curse God's people if God wouldn't let him, but he could help Balak bring God's curse upon them by getting them to sin.

So, he told Balak, "Look, if you have your prettiest women camp out by the Israelite camp, then they'll fall in love, intermarry, fall into idolatry, and then the Lord will have curse them."

Amazing, isn't it?

That someone who can have spiritual gifts and say spiritual things, can be sucked into sin so easily by compromise and greed?

So the teaching of Balaam entailed intermarrying with the world and its ways in the church at Pergamos that had caused the church to fall into idolatry and immorality.

### **Ruin of Core**

They also will go to the same ruin and the same hell as Core and his bad went to when the earth opened up and swallowed them because they murmured against God's appointed leader; Moses.

Numbers 16:1-35

When a man turns away from the truth of God, then he becomes as these filthy dreamers that are described in verse 8.

### **The Second Coming**

*Jude 14-15: Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, (15) to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Wow! Enoch prophesied of the Second Coming of Christ!

So did Job in Job 19:25-26 *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:"*

### **Will Worship**

*Jude 16: These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*

These apostates find fault and complain.

Nothing seems to satisfy them.

They have no feelings for others.

They want their own selfish will to be imposed upon everyone else.

Cf. Col. 2:18-23

They are worshiping their own will.

## Complainers

On a personal note, a complainer cannot be right with God.

I don't care who it is.

There is something wrong with a person who will complain constantly.

### *End of Topical Study on the Epistle of Jude*

## May Boast a Little

*vv.16-17 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. (17) What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.*

He is basically repeating v.1 in that he feels uncomfortable having to boast on himself in an effort to defend his apostleship.

Barnes says that Paul is saying, "Hey, since others do it and are not rebuked, may I be permitted to do it also. There is something sarcastic in the words "a little." The sense is, "Others are allowed to boast a great deal. Assuredly I may be allowed to boast a little of what I have done."

***"I speak not according to the Lord"***: In other words, the boasting that I am forced to do because of your unbelief is not what I believe the Lord would have me to share with you.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:5

## You are So Wise

*vv.18-19 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. (19) For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!*

Again, Paul is using a bit of sarcasm by calling them ***"wise"***.

Obviously, they were being misled and he did not see them as wise at all.

## Bondage

*v.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.*

Obviously, Paul is speaking of these false apostles who were teaching things that were ultimately bringing them into bondage and destroying them.

He is accusing the false apostles of being legalists who were trying to place the Corinthians back under the Law.

***“devours you, takes from you...strikes you on the face”***: The Corinthian were apparently so deceived by these false teachers that they were allowing them to mistreat them: not necessarily physically but certainly spiritually.

**Interesting Note**: According to rabbinical tradition, it was the right of the teacher to strike the student who didn't listen to him or agree with him.

Cf. Acts 23:2-3

However, I'm pretty sure that Paul is just using this in the sense that they were taking advantage of them and not showing them respect by lording it over them.

Sadly, some people even today are more comfortable with leaders who “rule over them” harshly than with the freedom they may have in Christ Jesus.

### **I Am Bold Also**

*v.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.*

Again, Pau is using sarcasm.

In essence he is saying, “Maybe I need to come over there and smack you in the face as well because that’s apparently the kind of leadership that you chose to follow.”

### **So Am I**

*v.22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*

Paul knew very well that his ancestry did not qualify him as an apostle or even a servant of God, but apparently it was important to the Corinthians so he shares a little bit of it with them.

***“Are they Hebrews? So am I”***: Not only was Paul a seed of Abraham but he was also a Jew of Judean descent, as opposed to others who were born outside of Judea.

## **I Am More**

*vv.23-25 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 (24) From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. (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;*

The word “minister” comes from the Greek word “diakonos” which describes a humble worker or servant.

**“I am more”**: Paul’s point here is that these false teachers were arrogantly claiming to be servants and yet were exalting themselves over everyone else while Paul was indeed truly a servant to them.

Now Paul begins to list how he was more of a minister for the gospel of Christ than they were.

**“in labors more abundant”**: He said that he worked harder than the false teachers did.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:10

**“in stripes above measure”**: He had been beaten many times for the sake of the gospel.

He was beaten by the Jews (v.24).

He was beaten by the Romans (v.25)

**“forty stripes minus one”**: The rabbis would not allow someone to be given more than 39 lashes.

Cf. Deut. 25:3

They did this not out of mercy, but out of fear that they might miscount and exceed the forty by accident.

Clark describes this procedure from the Mishna (first part of the Talmud with interpretations of Scripture) , “The two hands of the criminal are bound to a post, and then the servant of the synagogue either pulls or tears off his clothes till he leaves his breast and shoulders bare. A stone or block is placed behind him on which the servant stands; he holds in his hands a scourge made of leather, divided into four tails. He who scourges lays one third on the criminal’s *breast*, another third on his *right shoulder*, and another on his *left*. The man who receives the punishment is neither *sitting* nor *standing*, but all the while *stooping*; and the man smites with all his strength, with one hand.”

The Mishna is the first part of the Talmud which gave oral interpretations of the Scripture.

The Talmud was a collection of writings on Jewish law.

***“in prisons more frequently”***: Paul was actually imprisoned several times.

Of course, we know that he was imprisoned in Rome, but other than that they only other recorded time was in Philippi (Acts 16:20-24).

***“in deaths often”***: We know that Paul either came close to death or possibly died outside of Lystra.

Acts 14:19 *“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.”*

That is what Paul is referring to when he says that he “was stoned” and may be what he is talking about in the next chapter.

***“shipwrecked ; a night and a day...in the deep”***: It has been noted that just in the Scripture there are 18 journeys taken by Paul on a ship.

We also know that one of them sank (Acts 27) and they ended up on the Island of Malta.

### **Perils**

*vv.26-27 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; (27) in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--*

***“in perils of robbers”***: One of the greatest dangers in travel the ancient Roman roads was the threat of muggers.

That is the real danger that Jesus referred to in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

***“in perils in the city”***: Paul knew what it was look to be at the mercy of an angry mob in several cities.

Cf. Acts 13:50, 14:5, 19; 16:19, etc...

***“in perils among false brethren”***: Paul had a great deal of problems with people who claimed to be brothers but were not.

We see the example of Alexander the Coppersmith in 2 Tim. 4:14-16.

2 Tim 4:10 *“for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.”*

*“in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness”*: In our modern world, we can hardly relate to this anyone.

How could Paul have traded a life of ease for this?

Cf. 4:17-18

Gal. 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.”*

Redpath says of this, “Such is the price that Paul paid. How does that react upon you? Do you congratulate yourself that you have escaped it? One week of such living and we would be done, but Paul went through it for a lifetime and gloried in his infirmities.”

One would think with all of the *“perils”* in Paul’s life that he would have perished many years before he actually did.

“You are immortal until God is through with you.”

### **Concern for the Churches**

v.28 *besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*

On top of all of this stress in Paul’s life, the churches that were under his care was a burden that he constantly bore.

*“what comes upon me daily”*: Redpath says of this statement, “I could not possibly convey to you adequately in the English language the force of that statement. I tried to picture it in terms of being smothered under a blanket, or by being attacked and crushed by some great animal, for he could not have used a stronger word when he said, in effect, ‘That which bears me down, that which is upon me as an intolerable load, that which is a burden, that which is something that I can never shake off day or night. It is with me always. I have no vacation for it ever. It is upon me daily. The care, the compassion, the concern of all the churches.’”

Paul had a deep concern for not only this church but all of them.

Hughes says, “This anxiety was based not only on disturbing reports which came to his ears, but on his knowledge of the savage subtlety of the enemy of souls who, he realized, would stop at nothing in his attempts to overthrow the work of the gospel.”

### **Indignation**

*v.29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*

I believe that he is acknowledging here that no one, not even himself, is beyond being led astray.

Thus, he burned with a righteous indignation for them.

Websters says that indignation is an “anger or extreme anger, mingled with contempt, disgust or abhorrence.”

However, Paul’s was a righteous anger.

It would be the equivalent of the indignation that Jesus felt when He went into the temple and found that they had turned it into a “den of thieves”.

### **Blessed Forever**

*vv.30-31 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. (31) The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.*

In essence Paul is concluding by saying, “If you want to see my credentials has an apostles, you need only to see my scars and the price that I’ve paid for serving my Lord.”

The proof of his love for the Lord was in the suffering in which is lived and the continual burden that he carried for God’s people.

*vv.32-33 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; (33) but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*

Paul goes on to give another illustration of how he had suffered to serve the Lord.

This escape is actually recorded in Acts 9:20-25.

This is actually a very important fact in that Paul mentioned the name of the king unlike the writer of Acts.

History places King Aretas between 37 - 39 AD which would mean that Paul was converted three years earlier on the Damascus road between 34 - 36 AD.

## Chapter 12

*v.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”***: Most see this as Paul’s way of saying that he is tired of having to write about himself.

***“visions and revelation”***: These are very common in the New Testament.

1. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist had a vision (Luke 1:8-23).
2. Jesus’ transfiguration was described as a vision for the disciples (Matt. 17:9).
3. The women at the tomb had a vision of angels (Luke 24:22-24).
4. Stephen saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:55-56).
5. Ananias saw a vision about Saul (Acts 9:10).
6. Peter had a vision on the rooftop (Acts 10:17-19).
7. Peter had another vision of his release from prison (Acts 12:9).
8. John had a vision on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1:1).
9. Paul had a vision on the Damascus Road (Acts 22:6-11; 26:12-20).
10. Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10).
11. Paul had a vision of encouragement in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11).
12. Paul had a vision that the ship was going to sink (Acts 27:23-25).

God can and does lead through visions for sure.

However, I believe that most, if not all, are for the benefit of the receiver only.

We need to be careful when applying our visions to others or having them apply there’s to us.

Morgan says of this, “How often people have wanted to tell me about their visions! I am always suspicious. I want to know what they had for supper the night before! If people have visions of this sort they are silent about them.”

### **Third Heaven**

*v.2 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.*

No doubt the false apostles had claimed to have visions and revelation from the Lord, so now Paul shares one of his own.

***“I know a man in Christ”***: Many find it strange that Paul describes this experience in the third person.

That has caused much confusion in that he may not have been speaking of himself.

However, he does transition into the first person in v.7 which again causes us to believe that he is speaking of himself.

***“fourteen years ago”***: This still doesn’t narrow it down for us, but many feel that he is referring to his experience in Lystra in Acts 14:19.

That seems to fit with what Paul said in Gal.1:21-2:1.

***“third heaven”***: There are three heavens: the sky where the birds fly, space where the planets and stars are and the abode of God.

### **In or Out of Body?**

v.3 *And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--*

In other words, Paul doesn’t know if he was dead or alive at this time.

If he was dead, he was in his body.

If he was alive, then it was a vision.

### **Caught Up to Paradise**

v.4 *how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

***“he was caught up into Paradise”***: Paul goes on to call this third heaven, Paradise.

The word “paradise” only occurs three times in the New Testament.

Cf. Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7

It is usually translated garden.

It is taken from a Persian word which denotes a pleasure garden that surrounded the homes of the monarchs and extremely wealthy.

In the New Testament it is used to describe the dwelling place of God.

Most do not feel that this is speaking of the paradise that was located in the center of the earth, but instead to God's dwelling place.

If refers to the place where Jesus came from.

***“heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter”***: Notice that Paul doesn't try to describe anything that he saw, but what he heard; however, he is unable to do so.

Paul is unable to relate anything that he heard there with anything that's he's heard here.

The word ***“lawful”*** can be actually translated “possible”.

1Co 2:9 ***“But as it is written: “EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”***

Courson points out, “This verse makes me a bit skeptical of those who write books and embark on speaking tours after “dying” on the operating table. Paul didn't even mention this experience for fourteen years—and only then to say he couldn't describe it.”

vv.5-6 ***Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. (6) For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.***

In essence, he saying, maybe the guy that died and went to heaven here had something to boast about, but not me.

Again, was he speaking of himself or just being modest?

Others see this as yet another shot at the false apostles in that they would take advantage of this even and write books and go on tour to brag about it, but he wouldn't.

One might ask, “Well, why would God give Paul this “experience” and Paul not use it to advance his ministry?”

Maybe, it is what sustained Paul through his ministry?

Very few, if any men, have suffered in the way that Paul suffered.

Maybe God knew that Paul was going to need just a little bit more confirmation to get him through those things.

### **Exalted Above Measure**

*v.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.*

Paul says that just on that vision alone; he could be **“exalted above measure”**.

He could have indeed had more reason to glory in himself and others in him because of this wonderful vision.

However, he says that **“a thorn in the flesh”** was given to him...lest he should be **“exalted above measure”**.

The root word that Paul uses here for **“thorn”** can actually be translated “tent stake”!

This was no small thorn.

Some are quick to say that Paul’s thorn was his inability to describe his heavenly vision.

However, v.8 seems to indicate otherwise.

### **Pleaded Three Times**

*v.8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

Paul apparently took his own advice that he gave in Philippians.

Phil. 4:6 *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”*

Notice that Paul **“pleaded with the Lord three times”**.

Some have suggested that Paul maybe using a figure of speech here instead meaning literally that he only prayed about it three times.

That would mean that he prayed continuously about it.

Barnes points out that some may teach that it is a lack of faith to pray a prayer more than once.

Trapp said, “God respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers.”

Some have suggested that Paul's prayer had three dimensions to it.

1. Physical in that was a thorn in the flesh.
2. Mental in that it was sent from Satan himself.
3. Spiritual in that God did not answer his prayer.

### **What Was It?**

However, in the end, we really don't know what Paul's thorn was.

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers thought that it was an earache.

William Ramsey believes that it was a form of malaria that Paul had contracted during his journey.

He said that those who suffer from this form of malaria experience a "loathing of self" and the pain is the equivalent of a "red-hot bar thrust through the forehead".

Others see his thorn as an eye problem.

Cf. Galatians 4:13-15; 6:11; 2 Th. 3:17 and Philemon 19

### **My Grace is Sufficient**

*vv.9-10 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. (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.*

Instead of removing the thorn, God tells Paul that He'll give him grace.

One writer says that there are two ways to take away a burden: 1. Remove the load or 2. Strengthen the shoulders carrying it.

God said that He would strengthen the shoulders that were carrying it.

**"my grace is sufficient"**: "We really don't truly believe that God's grace is sufficient until we believe that we ourselves are insufficient."

Spurgeon once said, "It is easy to believe in grace for the past and the future, but to rest in it for the immediate necessity is true faith. Believer, it is *now* that grace is sufficient: even at this moment it *is* enough for thee."

***“my strength is made perfect in weakness”***: I had a missionary put it this way, “God reached farther down than he could reach up”.

In other words, if it’s not beyond our strength, then we will never give God the proper glory.

We struggle with this in our American culture because we pride ourselves on the “self-made man”.

The problem with self-made men is that they tend to worship their creator: themselves.

***“Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”***: Because of Paul’s infirmity, he had no choice but to depend upon God.

When we are totally dependent upon God, we are no longer walking in the strength of our own flesh.

Redpath said, "God works through the man who has been wiped clean and turned inside out, his life emptied before the Lord until he is hopelessly weak, that no flesh might glory in His presence.”

***“therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities”***: Why? – Because now he has been forced to rely upon God and not himself.

He can now truly say without hesitation that ***“when I am weak, thou art strong”***.

Phil. 4:13 ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

Spurgeon said, “From all this I gather, that the worse trial a man may have may be the best possession he has in this world.”

### **You Have Compelled Me**

***v.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”***: Again, Paul feels compelled to apologize that he has spent so many time defending his apostleship and not speaking on the things of the Lord.

***“you have compelled me”***: He did it not for himself but for them.

Think about it for a moment, Paul knew who he was, but it was also important that they knew so that the gospel that he brought to them was accepted.

***“the most eminent apostles”***: Again, Paul is not referring to the original twelve, but to the false teachers who apparently had so influence among them.

*v.12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Again, Paul points to these things as evidence of his apostleship.

*v.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!*

Again, we see a little bit of sarcasm from Paul by him referring back to the issue of not asking them for money (11:6-7).

### **The Third Trip**

*v.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 Paul announces his third trip to visit with them.

On his first visit, he stayed there for a year and half and founded the church

His second visit was painful and brief during which time he rebuked the church strongly between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians.

And now he plans a third visit.

***“I will not be burdensome to you”***: The point is that while he does intend upon receiving the collection from them for Jerusalem, he will not take anything from them for himself.

He is still back in v.13.

In other words, he will continue in not taking anything from them as in times past.

Cf. 11:8-9

***“I do not seek yours but you”***: Every minister should be able to say this.

It is the difference between a shepherd and a hireling!

***“for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children”***: In other words, he was their spiritual father and they were his spiritual children and he did not want them to feel burdened to support him just as my children feel no burden to support me!

This is not a compliment in the least.

He is basically saying that unlike the other churches that supported him, they apparently were not mature enough to do the same.

### **Spent for Your Souls**

***v.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.***

In spite of the fact that they didn't feel the need to support him financially, he still says that he is more than willing to be ***“spent for”*** their ***“souls”***.

***“the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved”***: This can be interpreted as no less than hurt.

He is grieved that he is so willing to do so much for them and that they do not feel led to do the same in return.

### **Craftiness**

***v.16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!***

This is the ultimate in sarcasm.

He was apparently being accused by the minority as being crafty in his dealings with them.

***vv.17-18 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? (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?***

***“Did I take advantage of you”***: Again, Paul is referring to the previous verse and those who had apparently accused him of being crafty in his dealings with them.

Thus, he reminds them that neither he nor Titus had ever dealt thusly with them.

*v.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.*

Paul is Paul is calling Christ as his witness to what he is saying.

He further tells that them everything that he has done has been for their ***“edification”***.

Of course, he is still comparing himself to the false teachers who were doing everything for their own personal benefit.

Hughes says on this point that, “It is not his purpose to make the Corinthians squirm, but to bring them to their senses, to help them to rid themselves of the narcotic effect produced on them by the false apostles who had invaded their community.”

### **For I Fear**

*vv.20-21 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; (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 lewdness which they have practiced.*

Paul is concerned that when he returns to Corinth on this third visit, that he not find them the way that he did on his second visit.

The problems who saw on his second visit where ***“contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults”***.

He further warns them that if he does indeed find them this way, ***“I shall be found by you such as you do not wish”***.

***“And I shall mourn for many”***: This is the say that if he does have to come down hard on them again, it will break his heart.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Every Word Shall Be Established**

*v.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 is a quote from Deut. 19:15 which says, *“One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.”*

Many see this as Paul referencing his three visits to establish their ultimate outcome.

In other words, if the third visit (testimony against them) does not go well; he will be forced to pass judgment against them.

### **I Will Not Spare**

*v.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--*

Again, if the third visit goes badly, he will not hesitate to drop the hammer on them.

*v.3 since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.*

They did say that they wanted to see the strong Apostle Paul and not the weak one.

He is threatening to give them just that.

Cf. 10:10

*v.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.*

In other words, just as Jesus displayed weakness, yet now reigns in power; so Paul would do the same.

### **Examine Yourselves**

*vv.5-6 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified. (6) But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.*

Now Paul asks the Corinthians to really consider if they are Christians as they claim to be.

Spurgeon asked, “It should be one of our first cares that we ourselves be saved men”.

Redpath said, “We are often very ready to examine and test others. But first, and always first, we must examine and test ourselves. “That was the trouble at Corinth. They criticized Paul and failed to examine themselves.”

***“unless indeed you are disqualified”***: In other words, Paul knew that there were some in Corinth that couldn’t be saved based on the fruit that he saw in their lives.

Anticipating that some of them would recommend that Paul submit himself to that same examination, Paul says, ***“But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.”***

*v.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.*

I believe that Paul is basically saying, “Even if you ultimately reject me, I hope that you do what is right.”

*vv.8-9 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. (9) For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.*

***“we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth”***: Paul’s ministry was for the truth and not against it.

***“For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong”***: He is saying that if his weakness could strengthen the Corinthians; that would be his ultimate desire.

He wanted to see them ***“be made complete”***.

*v.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.*

Again, Paul’s ultimate desire was that the Corinthian’s repent and be of one heart toward him because desired to edify them and not destroy them.

### **Finally Brethren**

*v.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.*

The word ***“farewell”*** here can be better translated “rejoice”.

His desire was that they were able to rejoice with God and with him.

***“Become complete”***: The same statement as in 13:9.

Barnes says of this statement, “It was a wish that every disorder might be removed; that all that was out of joint might be restored; that everything might be in its proper place; and that they might be just what they ought to be.”

Some translations say, *“Be mature”* or *“grow up”*.

***“Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace”***: Guzik says, “By exhorting the Corinthian Christians to do these things, Paul proves an important point. These are at least partially in our power to do. We often think that our **comfort**, or being **of one mind**, and our being at **peace** with others just depends on them. In part, that is true, but it also depends on us. We need to let God worry about their part, and we can worry about our part!

v.12 *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

This was just the culture that Paul lived in: much like Peru!

The only day that it was not practice was “Good Friday” because that was the day that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

It is not a command that the church must obey by the way.

Western cultures are perfectly happy with a handshake.

### **Final Blessing**

vv.13-14 *All the saints greet you. (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.*

It has been pointed out that this is the only place in the Bible in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned in a blessing.

Hodge says, “For a Christian is one who seeks and enjoys the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”

## **Biographical Data**

I came to know the Lord at the age of nine at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina and was baptized by the late Dr. Harold B. Sigtler who is one of my great heroes of the faith. Much of my vision and expository style of teaching were shaped while sitting under this man's ministry as a young boy and later as a student in Bible College.

My background is varied. I was raised and educated an Independent Baptist. They are good people and they believe the Book without question. You'll never see them taking a vote on what they believe about the Scriptures and you'll never have to guess where they stand on something because they'll tell you. I respect that. As a child and young boy, I've sit at the feet of men like Dr's B.R. Lakin, Jerry Falwell, Oliver B. Green, John R. Rice, Curtis Hudson, Bob Jones, Lee Roberson, Harold B. Sigtler and the list goes on and on. These men have dramatically impacted my life and ministry and I love them and all that they stand for deeply.

Like many young people who struggled through the teenage years, I was no exception. After graduating from high school in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1985, I joined the Marine Corps. It was during this time while stationed at Camp Pendleton in California that I had the opportunity to attend Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, rededicated my life to the Lord and answered God's call to the ministry. Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa has also greatly influenced my ministry.

I have also pastored a Southern Baptist church and served at the state and the associational level on various committees. They are also good people. I deeply respect men like Dr's Paige Patterson, Adrian Rodgers, Charles Stanley and Judge Paul Pressler, and the list goes on and on. They were men who stood up and spoke out when the Southern Baptist Convention was going headlong over the cliff of liberalism to never return, but God used these men to pull them back from the precipice.

The end result is that I can feel very comfortable in either of these settings. I must admit that I don't necessarily agree with absolutely everything they all do or say, but I love them as brothers in Christ and appreciate the heritage that they have given me.

I was licensed to the ministry in 1991 by Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Greenville, South Carolina and ordained in 1995 by Calvary Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina and again by the First Baptist Church in San Benito, Texas in 2001.

In regards to education, I have a Bachelor of Theology in Bible, a Master in Religious Education and a Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical Studies. As a lifelong student, I am still in school pursuing a Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

I am married to the former Jannett Perez of New Orleans, Louisiana. She holds a degree in Computer Electronics Engineering and both a Bachelor and a Master of Religious Education. We have two sons; Dane and Brandon.

In the church, I have served as Assistant Pastor and Worship Leader at Calvary Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina (1991-1997); Missionary to Zacapa, Guatemala (1997-1998); Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church in San Benito, Texas (1998 – 2005); Senior Pastor of Borderland Calvary Chapel in San Benito, Texas (2005-2008); Missions Pastor and High School History Teacher at First Baptist Church and First Baptist School in Brownsville, Texas (2008-2009); Assistant Director of Calvary Chapel Bible College in Lima, Peru (2009-2010); and now I serve as Chaplain at the International Christian School in Lima, Peru (2010 – Present).

Outside of the church, I served in the U.S. Marine Corps as an infantryman with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines at Camp Pendleton, California from May 1985 until my Honorable Discharge in February 1990. After the military, I returned to Greenville, South Carolina and worked at Kemet Electronics in Fountain Inn as a Plating Technician from March 1990 until June 1995. I then worked at The Standard Warehouse Company in Simpsonville and Greenville as an Operations Manager from June 1995 until leaving for the mission field in Guatemala, Central America in March 1997.

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<sup>i</sup> Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries #G3874

<sup>iv</sup> Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries #G4383

<sup>v</sup> Barclay

<sup>vi</sup> Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries #G152

<sup>vii</sup> David Guzik, "Second Corinthians", p.45

<sup>viii</sup> Guzik

<sup>ix</sup> Morgan

<sup>x</sup> Harris

<sup>xi</sup> John Courson