

**A Layman's Look At
Second Corinthians**

A Church in Consolation

**By
Jerry W Jones PhD**

**Biblical Transcribing Service
Irene, South Dakota**

Second Corinthians – A Church Calmed

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Second Corinthians

A Church Calmed

Chapter One Comforted

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ (1:1-5). As was Paul's custom, he opens his letter to these in Corinth with his usual salutation, as well as his name and God's authority as *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Such was his custom in all his letters, and for this reason, there is much speculation as to who may have written the letter to Hebrews, since there is no mention of the author. He had stated in First Thessalonians 3:17, *The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write*. And even though he had used an amanuensis on certain occasions, it was still under his authority and with his own words, given by the inspiration of God.

Having sent a first letter to Corinth to correct many errors in judgment they had made concerning the doctrine of Christ, he now wanted to send them a letter to let them know he had been encouraged by their willingness to correct their mistakes, and to also give them *comfort* and *consolation*, the same Greek word meaning *imploration, exhortation, solace*--*comfort, consolation, exhortation, intreaty*. It comes from two root words, *παρὰ* meaning along side, and *καλέω*, to call. This is also the same word used in First John 2:2, speaking of Christ as our *advocate*, or heavenly attorney, to stand before Almighty God when the devil accuses us and demands we be condemned to Hell. Jesus points to the wounds in His hands, feet and side and simply tells God how He has already taken our Hell for us, and the case is closed. We do not stand condemned, because Jesus took our condemnation for us. The word *comfort* is used in 1:3, 4; 2:17; 7:4, 13; and 13:11, with the word *consolation* used in 1:5, 6, 7, and 7:7. The word *comforteth* is used twice, in 1:4 and 7:6.

It is wonderful to know that no matter how far we may stray from the Word of God, He is always there to bring consolation to our heart, and bring us back into harmony and fellowship with Christ, as well as with the saints.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ (1:5). We may have tribulation brought upon us because of our testimony for

Jesus Christ, but it is notice here that Paul did not condemn such attacks on his message and upon himself as well, but rejoiced that such had been appointed to him on the road to Damascus, when struck blind and hearing Jesus Christ call him into the ministry. Later, God had spoken to Ananias, who had heard of the havoc Paul had placed upon the believers. ***But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*** (Acts 9:15-16). Today, we have the mistaken belief that we do not have to suffer because of our faith. If we do happen to go on visitation and a door gets slammed shut in our face, we feel that we have been terribly humiliated, sulk away and quit witnessing. That was not the case with the New Testament apostles. Instead, after being threatened, they came together and reported their persecution, then prayed, ***And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus*** (Acts 4:29-30). Today, we would be praying, *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and stop the persecution that we are facing. We don't know how much more of having doors slammed in our faces and being called names that we can take. All this persecution is too much for us to handle.* Not so with the disciples. Shortly after this, they were threatened by the same council, ***And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*** (Acts 5:41-42). They “kept on keeping on.” They could not be intimidated by threats or even imprisonment or death.

And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation (1:6). Then Paul speaks of their own persecutions that they will face, in also being called to suffer for Christ, as he had suffered so many things in witnessing to various people, of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

When we witness for Christ, we should not expect that the message will be received with open arms. Today's society has hardened itself to the Gospel, and as Paul had stated in First Corinthians, it is foolishness to the Hebrew nation, and the so-called “intellectual” look for facts, yet refuse to accept the fact of creation, the virgin birth of Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection, and least of all that He is returning one day to set up His earthly kingdom. And through all this, they scoff, ridicule and even arrest those who seeking the best for their souls. In foreign nations still today, they are seeing persecutions, imprisonment and even death for seeking to give the Gospel to a dying world. Yet in this, the Christian needs to endure and rejoice in the consolation of Christ.

And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation (1:7). Again, if we would suffer for our testimony concerning salvation through Christ, we should rejoice in the comfort He gives and the reward laid up for us in Heaven.

A recent article from Wichita, Kansas reflects the attitude of our law enforcement officers today. A pastor was preaching on a street corner, and there were homosexuals there who protested the message that Christ loved the homosexual but hated the sin. So they called the police and the preacher was arrested for “disturbing the peace,” and spent

time in jail, simply for exercising his freedom of speech guaranteed by our Constitution. Videos were taken of the incident and he was soon released.

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf (1:8-11). How many times did Paul face persecution, simply because he shared the Gospel with the lost. Three times beaten with thirty-nine stripes, shipwrecked, stoned, imprisoned and hunted like one would hunt for a ravaged dog. Yet in all, he did not trust in his own flesh, but in the power of God for deliverance. Have you faced such persecution? Next time a door gets slammed in your face, be thankful to God that you were not arrested, thrown in prison and shackled. Yet in all this, Paul thanked God. Can you?

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end (1:12-13). Here was a man who described himself as ***a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*** (Acts 23:6), and yet he did not rely on his learning, nor on his ability to speak many languages. Instead, he relied on the simplicity of the Gospel to preach the Word of truth.

Too many today think we need an “intellectual Gospel” to reach the lost. The problem with intellect is, we rely on our own wisdom rather than the wisdom of God. As Paul stated in First Corinthians 1:21, ***For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,*** and in verses twenty-five to twenty-eight, ***Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.*** Why was this so? He explains in verse twenty-nine, ***That no flesh should glory in his presence,*** and verse thirty-one, ***That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.***

As one preacher stated it, “All these MDs, DDs and LLDs are just a bunch of Mercy dotes, dosi dotes and little lambsi divies.” The moment we rely on our intellect is the moment we are seeking our own glory, not that of Jesus Christ.

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus (1:14). They had not only read Paul’s epistle, but acted upon it evidently by correcting some of the errors they had made concerning the doctrine of Christ. But there were still some doubts about his intended purpose, and for his delay in visiting them first.

And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea (1:15-16). His design was to pass through Corinth and Achaia on his journey. This was not the direct way from Ephesus to Macedonia. His intention was, it seems at first, to stop in his journeys in Corinth and then to go on to Macedonia, but for some reason, most likely the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he went through the coast of Corinth and then to return to the city of Corinth to visit these believers.

When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay (1:17-18). “Do I perform my duties out of my own self-gratification? Am I operating under my own will or the will of God?” Paul’s concern for those in Corinth was not that they would think of him as seeking his own honor, but that of Jesus Christ alone. God never changes, and His Word states that specifically. Hebrews 13:8 says, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. Malachi 3:6 says, ***For I am the LORD, I change not***. This is why the Word of God is never contradictory. Anyone who says, “Well, there are many contradictions in the Bible,” do not even know the Bible. One on occasion I had a young girl say this to me, so I took out my pocket size Bible, held it out and said, “Okay, show me where there are contradictions.” She of course stumbled, stammered and tried to ease herself out of the situation, because she knew she was caught where she had no answer. God’s word is always true.

“Well, what about Psalm 26:4-5, which state, ***Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit***. There is no contradiction whatsoever. It just plainly states two different perspectives. On the one occasion, it is better not to answer someone who has made a stupid remark, lest you look as stupid as they. On the other, there is a time when someone needs to be corrected and they will accept such correction. So you see, there is no contradiction in this sense. I presume there are other places that someone might say shows a difference, but there is none that contradicts Almighty God.

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (1:19-20). God is always true to all the promises He has made, not only in things prophesied concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, not only to those made to His chosen people, the nation of Israel, but to all the world. If He promises eternal life, then it does not mean that some time in the distant future, we may lose that salvation. For those who think they need to work to maintain their salvation, then it is not by the grace of God, but by their own feeble efforts to do something that they think God cannot do. “Well, the Bible does say, ‘Hold fast till I come.’” That does not regard our eternal place in Heaven, but our earthly service for the Lord. “Well, the Bible does say, ‘Work out your own salvation.’” Friend, you cannot work out something that is not worked in first. Read the entire text. Philippians 2:12-13 says, ***Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure***. You cannot work out something that is not worked in first of all, and

once we have it, we never lose it. Eternal life is eternal life, and eternal means forever, without end. Everlasting life is mentioned no less than eleven times, from the book of Daniel to Revelation, and in every case, it means just that, eternal, everlasting, without end. Thank God that salvation is not in do, but in done. It was all accomplished in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, from time immemorial to time immemorial (Ephesians 3:21, ***Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.***). The words ***world without end*** are the Greek words “from eternity (past) to eternity (future).” Friend, we are held secure in the hands of Jesus, and He has said, ***And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand*** (John 10:28-29).

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2:20-21). Once again it seems as if there is a subtle hint to an attempt to authenticate Paul's ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ. It was not something that he took upon himself, or even wished for himself, but that which God, through Christ, placed upon him, when he met the Lord in brilliant glory on the road to Damascus. Here was a man who had been a major instigator in the arresting and even killing of Christians prior to being called of God. Now he was the major minister of Christ, willing to lay down his life for the purpose of giving the Gospel to all the regions of Asia. Paul is telling these Corinthian believers, “If you are concerned about my ministry, I want you to remember that it was God Himself who anointed us to be preachers of the Word of God.”

The term, ***earnest of the Spirit*** is a bookkeeper's term, speaking of “down payment” for a final purchase. You and your spouse are house shopping and come upon the one you desire, and then speak with the realtor of the house, who draws up the necessary papers to finalize the contract. But before that, you have to put down “earnest money” on the property, showing your commitment to own the property. That, my friend is what the Holy Spirit has done for you, the moment you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. It is His guarantee that He will deliver you into the hands of the Savior when Jesus Christ returns in the clouds to take home His saints. It is also used in the sense of setting a mark on anything, or a seal, to denote that it is genuine, authentic, confirmed, or approved--as when a deed, compact, or agreement is sealed. It is thus made sure; and is confirmed, or established. Hence it is applied to persons, as denoting that they are approved, as in Revelation 7:3: ***Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads*** It denotes that He and He alone has given us the blessed assurance that we are His, and that the deceiver of the brethren, Satan, has no bounds no hold on us.

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand (2:23-24). One final time in this chapter, Paul speaks of the reason for not coming directly to Corinth, but that they would stand fast in their faith of the Gospel of Christ.

In Albert Barne's Commentary, he states, "The course which we have pursued has been chosen, not because we wish to lord it over your faith, to control your belief, but because we desired to promote your happiness. had the former been our object, had we wished to set up a lordship or dominion over you, we should have come to you with our apostolical authority, and in the severity of apostolic

discipline. We had power to command obedience, and to control your faith. But we chose not to do it. Our object was to promote your highest happiness. We, therefore, chose the mildest and gentlest manner possible; we did not exercise authority in discipline, we sent an affectionate and tender letter."

We could just wonder what Paul would have done, had he known that on the road to Damascus, he was to meet the Jewish Messiah and have his course changed for the rest of his life on earth, not as an opponent of "the way," but as an ambassador for Christ, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Here Paul is telling those in Corinth that they had no reason to try and lord themselves over others, as though faith in Christ was theirs alone, but that they would be helpers and witnesses to others, showing by their faith that Christ alone was the answer. So ends Paul's discourse on the comfort that was to be theirs through the Savior.

Chapter Two

Forgiveness and Restitution

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? (2:1-2). Paul opens this epistle speaking of the comfort that the Corinthian Christians could have in Christ, and now, having previously corrected them on their attitude toward the incestuous member, begins to give the correction in their attitude towards forgiveness and restitution of the wayward Christian. They had obviously taken Paul's advice and confronted the man in his sinful act with his mother-in-law, and now, seeing he had shown an attitude of repentance, begins to show them how they must regard this man. Paul did not want to come to them and see that they were still in an act of ostracizing the man, and having had much sorrow of heart in the man's actions, now wanted to come to them and see they had not only corrected the man, but were now going to show an attitude of fellowship with him.

And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you (2:3-4). It may seem strange that a person who had shown so much comfort and joy in his letter to the Philippians could have such anguish of heart in this letter. Here was a congregation that he had to correct over and over again in the first epistle because of their many wrongs, not the least was the correction of a man who was openly living in sin. His first epistle must have been one that brought great sorrow to him and to these Christians, not that it was to cause them to be sorrowful, but to show them how to take corrective measures in the ways they had gone wrong. He had to correct in the area of use of miracles, namely that of speaking in tongues; he had to correct them in the area of marriage or staying single; he had especially to correct them in this matter of the man living in open incestuous sin, and also in the area of collections for the saints. Now he was once more correcting them, not to bring sorrow, but to show his love toward them.

But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many (2:5-6). There is doubtless here an allusion to the incestuous person. But it is very delicately done. He does not mention him by name. There is not anywhere an allusion to his name; nor is it possible now to know it. Is this not a proof that the names of the offending brethren in a church should not be put on the records of sessions, and churches, and presbyteries, to be handed down to posterity? Should an offending person's identity be made known to the entire congregation, if some in the congregation are unaware of all

that had been going on? And when restoration is made, is it necessary for all to have a part in bringing the man back into fellowship? There are times when it is best not to make known something that has obviously been overlooked in the first place, possibly even laughed at by some, but now that corrective measures have been taken, it is not necessary to prolong the punishment.

But one might ask concerning service. Where does this person stand in being able to be of service to those in the church? Does his sin make him unable to be of any further use in either teaching, or leading in songs, or singing in a choir, or any other area of the services? Far too often, God can forgive a wayward sinner, but people can't. Perhaps this was one of the areas that Paul expressed in saying that he had been punished long enough, and now it was time to forget his past offenses and bring about full forgiveness and restoration.

So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow (2:7). Friend, grant forgiveness **and** comfort. If he desires to serve the Lord in some capacity, and is capable of doing so, then why cause further hardship and sorrow on the person. But again, too often, congregational leaders impose so many restrictions that it makes a fellow to just want to give up and stop trying. Edward Barne's Commentary says, Since the punishment was sufficient, and has answered all the purpose of bearing your testimony against the offence, and of bringing him to repentance, you ought again to admit him to your communion. Admittance is not alone allowing him to attend, but to participate. Sadly, though, this does not seem to be the case in many of our so-called "fundamental" churches of today, but rather, they impose a greater burden by ostracizing to the point of futility.

Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things (2:8-9). Give him the fullest proof that you do love him; by forgiving him and restoring him to his place in the Church. If he has shown full repentance, then he should be allowed to not only attend, but to participate.

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2:10-11). Here is the supreme reason for forgiveness and restoration. If anyone has sinned to the point of church discipline, and then there is shown remorse and repentance, then restoration becomes a necessity, lest the devil cause that person to have sorrow heaped upon more sorrow, and fall into greater sin because of the actions of Christians toward him. He may give up in his efforts to prove himself worthy, if such worthiness is not allowed to be made public. And then, frustration or anger may set in and cause him to fall back into that sin or even greater sin. One could ask the question, if a person desires to serve the Lord, and is not allowed to do so, at the Bema Seat of Christ, who is going to answer for rewards that were not permitted to be given? Will the congregation, the deacons or even the pastor be held accountable for their rejection of the man's desire to serve? Perhaps it may serve as a warning to everyone to look into their own hearts and see why they were not willing to entrust once again the ability to serve, not for the man's own glory, but for the glory of Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia (2:12-13).

Leaving the discussion of forgiveness and restoration, Paul now returns to his reasons for going first into Macedonia, before his trek into Corinth. The Lord had opened the door for him to preach in Troas, but was distressed that one of his brothers in Christ was not to be found, so leaving Troas, he proceeded onto Macedonia. He had hoped that Titus would have returned a letter from Corinth, showing their willingness to comply to the requests and recommendations of Paul, so he went on his journey.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (2:14). A *triumph*, as the apostle alludes to here, is the public honor conferred upon someone by a higher authority, for a victory that they had won. Here, the victory is the defeat of the devil in trying to destroy the life of a repentant sinner. Evidently, Paul had found Titus and received the report of the Corinthian Christians being submissive to his recommendations as he had written to them in his first epistle. Acknowledgment of honoring them was to him a joy, knowing that not only had they corrected their errors, but now he hoped they would also correct their attitude toward the man.

For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? (2:15-16). Someone once said, “Well, you know, the Bible says ‘Judge not lest ye be judged.’” They fail to realize that this is just what we are supposed to do every time we witness to someone about their soul’s situation, and to warn them of the impending doom that the unsaved will face in Hell for all eternity. Jesus said in John 20:23, ***Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*** Do you know what that means? If you witness to someone and they refuse to get saved, you have the obligation to tell them, “Then according to the Bible and the words of Jesus Christ, you are heading to Hell.” My friend, if that is not judging or condemning, then I don’t know what is. We are supposed to warn the lost and let them know how they may be saved. And if they refuse, then they have a far greater judge than we ever would be, and that is the very Word of God that they refuse. They will stand before the Great White Throne and their words of rejection will ring in their ears as they are hurled into the eternal lake of fire.

Then on the other hand, when someone accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, we have the authority to tell them, “According to the Word of God, if you were now to die, where would you spend eternity?” Their own answer is that God has promised them eternal life, through Jesus Christ their Lord.

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ (2:17). We must be careful that we answer both the saved and the lost, those serving Jesus Christ and those who are out of fellowship, in sincerity of the Word of God. This refers doubtless to the false teachers at Corinth; and to all who mingled human philosophy or tradition with the pure word of truth. Paul’s design in the statement in this verse seems to be to affirm that he had such a deep sense of the responsibility of the ministerial office, and of its necessary influence on the eternal destiny of man, that it led him to preach the simple gospel, the pure word of God.

Chapter Three

Commendation and Care

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? (3:1). Are we so destitute of ministerial abilities and Divine influence that we need, in order to be received in different Churches, to have letters of recommendation? Certainly not. God causes us to triumph through Christ in every place; and your conversion is such an evident seal to our ministry as leaves no doubt that God is with us (Adam Clark's Commentary). Since when has it become a necessity to have letters of recommendation from some visiting evangelist to prove his authority to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Here was a man who had been instrumental in bringing these Christians to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they seemingly now had to question the veracity of his ministry. And was it also necessary for them to give him recommendations to others?

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart (3:2). The *tables of stone* Paul infers here no doubt is to those given to Moses by God, but the ministration of the Gospel to the Corinthians was by the Spirit of God. Evidently, there must have been Jews among the Gentile Christians there in Corinth who were seeking to corrupt the message Paul had delivered to them, and Paul wanted to make plain to them that they try to introduce once more the law of the Old Testament was contrary to the law of the Spirit of God.

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (3:4-6). In verse four: Paul had no success which he did not trace to Christ; he had no joy of which He was not the source; he had no confidence, or trust in God, of which Christ was not the author; he had no hope of success in his ministry which did not depend on the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse five: He well knew that he had no such self-sufficiency; and he would, not insinuate, in the slightest manner, that he believed himself to be invested with any such power. Verse six: This would seem to look as if Paul was boasting, not of his own merit, but that of which was bestowed upon Him by the Lord Himself. The moment we boast in ourselves, we lose all effort in our ministry of the Gospel. We cannot, and must not, trust in what we think we accomplish, but fully rely upon the Holy Spirit and the Word for any so-called "success" we have in witnessing to others. As Paul stated it, *our sufficiency is of God*.

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (3:7-8). Some have mistakenly thought that Moses put the veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not see the glory of God shining on him. But it was when the *glory was to be done away*, or when it started to fade, Moses did not want them to see it fading. We too should allow the glory of God to be seen, not our own. It is interesting how Paul refers to the tables of stone as being *the*

ministration of death. This shows that the law could not save, but only pointed to man's sinful condition, of which the law could not take away. It was only the blood of the many bulls, sheep and goats that "atoned," or temporarily covered their sins, and it was the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who did not "cover" our sins, but as John the Baptist said, *taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29).

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth (3:9-10). Paul had referred incidentally to the institutions of Moses, and to the superiority of the gospel. He had said that the former were engraven on stones, but the latter on the heart, (2 Corinthians 3:3;) that the letter of the former tended to death, but the latter to eternal life, (2 Corinthians 3:6.). The law could do nothing but show man's sin (Romans 7:7), but the law of Christ that man could be forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious (3:11). Pardon the analogy, but this reminds me of Al Jolsen's famous reply, "You ain't seen nothing yet." If they thought that the Old Testament commandments and laws were something spectacular, then the law of Christ would overwhelm them. Its glory so far out surpasses the Old Testament law that Paul could only state as he did earlier, *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (First Corinthians 2:9). The law could only point to man's failure; the law of Christ shows the perfection of God through the blood of His precious Son.

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ (3:12-14). The veil that Moses wore was only symbolic of the veil that is over the eyes of Jews today. They refuse to look into that which their Messiah perfected for them on the cross of Calvary. Moses put the veil over his face so they could not see the glory diminish, but today, God has openly revealed His Son to them and they still refuse to see. Christ fulfilled and abolished the tenets of the law, and Jews still seek salvation through their works and "keeping the law." By the way, the word **keep** in the Scriptures does not refer to obedience, but preservation and protection. When Jesus said, *If you love me, keep my commandments*, He was referring to making sure His Word was not corrupted, as it is in so many of today's perversions that men call "bibles," which are only their thoughts and not those of Almighty God.

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away (3:15-16). One day soon, their eyes and hearts will be open, and they shall recognize that Jesus is indeed their Messiah. But as of this day, when you attempt to approach someone from the Hebrew race, you will find there is opposition, because they are still blinded to the truth of all that Christ has accomplished on Golgotha hill for them and for the sin of the world.

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (3:17). There is freedom in Christ; freedom from the oppression of Satan upon us; freedom from the weight of sin that condemns us; and one day soon, freedom in His presence for eternity, as we glory in His splendor for ever and ever. What a day that will be, when our

Jesus we shall see, and we look upon His face, the one who saved us by His grace. And He takes us hand in hand, and leads us through the Promised Land. What a day! Glorious day, that will be!

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (3:18). Paul had stated in his first epistle, as we have quoted previously, ***Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*** Now we glimpse at His glory through His eternal Word. But one day, we shall be in His presence, not hindered by finite eyes, minds and hearts. First John 3:2 says, ***Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*** As of now, we live in bodies that are corrupt by the weight of sin causing aging, pains and terrible memories of things we have done, even though we may have asked for forgiveness and received it because of His promise (I John 1:9). But one day, we shall glory in His presence, being without sin, living in perfection of our glorious body, as Paul stated it in Philippians 3:21, ***Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*** To think we shall be like Him, and to know the beauty of His presence. My friend, are you ready for that day?

Chapter Four

Blinded Eyes That Shall One Day See

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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 (4:1-2). This chapter is intimately connected with the preceding; and is, indeed, merely a statement of the consequences or results of the doctrine advanced there. In that chapter, Paul had stated the clearness and plainness of the gospel as contrasted with the institutions of Moses, and particularly that the Christian ministry was a ministration more glorious than that of Moses. Again, as previously stated, the law could never deliver anyone from the penalty, power or presence of sin, as Christ gained in His death, burial and resurrection.

The Greek word here for *dishonesty* means shame or disgrace. The have deceit is a shameful act of craftiness for one's own gain. Never should a minister of the Gospel seek monetary profit in the office of pastor or evangelist, but he should not have to live in poverty either, as seems to have been the case at times for Paul (Read Philippians chapter four). This seems to be a cloaked reply of Paul to the charge by some in Corinth that he was using their offerings for his own personal use, not forwarding them as he had stated he was doing.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (4:3-4). This leads us back to First Corinthians 1:23-24, which state, *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* The unsaved can never understand the truth of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ if at first their hearts are not touched by the Holy Spirit of God. Only when man becomes convicted of his sin will he realize that someone has to pay the penalty for their sin, and that was Jesus Christ. There is no other way to Heaven; no idols, no Mary or Joseph, no feeble attempt to work our way there. As First Timothy 2:5 reads, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* Salvation is not in **do**, but in **done**. It has all been accomplished and perfected in the finished work on the cross of Calvary. But the unsaved cannot understand this as long as Satan has his grasp on their minds and hearts.

Paul uses the word *mind* thirty-eight times and *minds* six times to refer to the darkness that must be brought to light through the Gospel of Christ. It is the one area of which man does not realize Satan has control. If he can corrupt our minds, he has control over every area of defeat, whether it be circumstances (Philippians chapter one), (Philippians chapter two), things (Philippians chapter three) others or worry (Philippians chapter four), he has defeated our joy. I would recommend you read a copy of my book,

Philippians, The Book of Joy, and see how when we realize how Satan has control of our mind, we have a way to defeat him, through the Word of God.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6). Someone once said, “Thank God for conjunctions.” How often we see, ***But God, And God***, and ***For God*** after what seemed defeat. We have those who are blinded, but God can open their minds to see the glorious Gospel. First John 1:5 says, ***This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all***. James says there is no variableness or shadow of turning with Him. Wherever darkness of Satan has its hold, the light of the Gospel can shine through to the heart of the unsaved, when they have ***the light of the knowledge of the glory of God***. That is where we come in; it is our duty and responsibility to take the Gospel to a dark and dying world.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (4:7). Here, the ***earthen vessels*** refers to a common shell which is fragile and easily broken and discarded. Such an analogy to our bodies, which will one day be laid aside to we can take upon ourselves a body of incorruption that will never fade away. Paul alludes to the fact that even though the body is weak, it is so that he may be a fit ***vessel*** to show that ***the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us***. He wanted no glory for anything that he did in his flesh, but that all glory would go to Almighty God.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (4:8-10). All three verses make up one sentence, depicting some of the trials and tribulations and troubles that Paul had to suffer, that he may be able to show the world the life of Christ. Later, in chapter twelve, he would speak of the sufferings he was to have for the sake of the Gospel, and yet all so that Jesus Christ would be seen in his ministry. Paul here refers to some of the trials to which he and his fellow-laborers were subjected in making known the gospel.

For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you (4:11-12). Here was a man who had hazarded his life time and again for the sake of the Gospel, and these at Corinth seemed less interested in his ministry than the fact that he delayed coming to them first, and then questioned his authority to preach the Word of God to them in the first place. Paul says, “We suffer seemingly daily for the sake of giving the Gospel to others as well as to you, and do it all for the glory of Jesus Christ, so that through salvation, others may see the work of Christ in your own life. Life eternal is seen in you, but only because of the persecutions we endure for the sake of the Gospel.”

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you (4:13-14). Paul, as he had done on many occasions, quotes from the Old Testament, in this case from Psalm 116:10, “We having the same spirit of faith. As David had when he wrote Ps 116:10: ‘I believed, therefore have I spoken:’ we also believe that we shall

receive the fulfillment of all God's promises; and being fully convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, we speak and testify that our deliverance is from God; and that He does not fail those who trust in Him, and that He saves to the uttermost them who come unto Him through Christ Jesus." You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart." Our confidence in preaching the Gospel, despite persecutions is that someone will hear and be saved. And even though we die for the sake of the Gospel, He will raise us up to stand in His presence.

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God (4:15). Paul's soul reason for giving the Gospel to these Gentile believers was so that through the grace of God, they may by their own testimony ***redound*** be "abundant, be the better, enough and to spare, exceed, excel, increase." Their joy in the Lord should have been such that others would look at them and say, "There is something different about you. What do you have that makes you so joyful?" Then and only then could they explain and expound to them the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Others should have been able to say, "I want what you have." Friend, can others say that to you? Can others look at you and see there is something different about you, because of your joy in the Lord?

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (4:16). To the church in Galatia, Paul said, ***And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*** (Galatians 6:9). To the church in Thessalonica, he said, ***But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing*** (II Thessalonians 3:13). It was, I believe, the missionary to the Indians who said, "Let me burn out for their souls." And then he died of a very young age, giving out the Gospel of Christ so they might be saved. It was another foreign missionary who buried his wives and numerous children on the mission field, rather than live the life of luxury in the states. Living for the Gospel may mean dying to self, and indeed dying itself, if it means the propagation of the Word of God and salvation of souls.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (4:17-18). "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase. So bravely run the race, till we see Christ." What glorious words were lived in the life of the Apostle Paul, as he endeavored to give the Gospel to a lost and dying world. God designs to secure the promotion of his own glory in the manner in which salvation is spread in the world. For this purpose, and with this view, he did not commit it to angels, nor has he employed men of rank, or wealth, or profound scientific attainments to be the chief instruments in its propagation. He has committed it to frail, mortal men; and often to men of humble rank, and even humble attainments--except attainments in piety. In fitting them for their work his grace is manifest; and in all the success which attends their labors, it is apparent that it is by the mere grace and mercy of God that it is done.

One noble woman of England once said, "I'm glad there is an 'm' in the Bible." When asked what she meant, she replied, "The Bible says in First Corinthians (1:26), it says, ***For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*** If there was no 'm,' the word would be

”any,” and that would rule me out of salvation. But thanks to God putting the ‘m’ in the Scriptures, it means I can be saved also.” It seems hard for the wise and noble to come to Christ, for it rules against their self-sufficient attitude, having to realize they too are in need of a Savior from their sin. We do not understand the why of the Scriptures, but we do know the how, and it is because of Christ we can have salvation of our souls, no matter who we may be, rich, poor, noble or humble. The foot of the cross is level to all who would come to Him.

Chapter Five

Death Holds No Terror

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (5:1). This old body one day will be laid in the grave. But one day, Christ will return to catch away those who have repented of their sins and received Him as Lord and Savior, and we all shall be caught away, taken into Heaven to glory in His presence forever and ever.

This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through.
My treasure is laid up, somewhere beyond the blue
The Angels beckon me, to heaven's open door.
And I can't feel at home, in this world any more.

Oh glorious day, when my Jesus I shall see. There was a popular song once sang, which said, "There is no death, though eyes grow dim. There is no fear, when I'm near to Him. I'll lean on Him forever, and He will hold me ever." We may not know the future, but we do know who holds the future, and He has promised to build us a place in Heaven to ever be with Him (John 14:1-6).

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked (5:2-3). Solomon, in all his wisdom, depicts the weakness of this body in Ecclesiastes 12:1-5; *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.* Keepers of the house? How about our physical strength? Grinders? How many today wear false teeth? Windows that are darkened? Our eye sight dims with age and we wear glasses. Sound of grinding is low? Hearing aids can do wonders in our old age. How about when desire shall fail? Our vitality and ability to satisfy the desires of our spouse diminish with age. And one day, *man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.* Death brings a burden and sorrow to the heart of those left behind. But resting in the comfort of the arms of Jesus,

Have you ever wondered concerning the white robes that we shall wear in Heaven? It will be a perpetual sign that when sin entered the garden of Eden, Adam and

Eve were ashamed and covered their bodies with fig leaves, to be replaced by the skin of animals, showing the world that we shall forever be clothed and ***shall not be found naked***. For everyone that thinks there is validity to nudist colonies, the Bible has the answer. God does not intend us to run around naked, but to clothe our bodies. When we get to Heaven, He will cover us with robes, spotless and clean.

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (5:4). All the aches and pains of this world will soon be gone. It is as Paul stated in his letter to Romans, ***For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God*** (Romans 8:18-27). There is the pyramid of prayer. We pray and don't know what we should say; the Holy Spirit prays for us, interceding on our behalf to ***he that searcheth the hearts***, that is, Jesus Christ, who in turn ***maketh intercession for the saints*** to God Almighty. There is the answer to those who say we don't have to pray, "in Jesus' name." He is the one and only source by which we enter into the presence of the Father. As Paul told Timothy, ***For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*** (I Timothy 2:5). Joseph cannot answer our prayers. Mary cannot answer our prayers. Nor can any of the plethora of idolatrous statues answer our prayers.

We groan to be rid of this body of decay, that we might enter from mortality to the realms of immortality, ***that mortality might be swallowed up of life***. Paul goes on to explain this victory as only he, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit can.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit (5:5). Once more, the finality of the "contract" is held in the hands of the Spirit of God. He has sealed us until the day of redemption, as stated in Ephesians 1:14, ***Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory***. We are a purchased possession, by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a guilty stain. He washed it white as snow." God looks down from Heaven upon sinful man who has been redeemed, and He no longer sees the crimson stain of sin, but the blood of Christ which has cleansed us from our sin.

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (5:6). "Beyond the grave, there's life everlasting. There we'll live with Him, to face death's sting no more. No more sorrows. God shall

wipe all tears from our eyes. No more sadness, beyond the grave.” But while we are yet in our mortal bodies, we wait for our redemption and the day we shall be forever in His presence.

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (5:7). To anyone who thinks they can “work” their way to Heaven, here is the answer. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, by the mercy of God alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Anything else is not of faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, ***But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*** And to those who think they have to “hold fast,” or in other words, after Jesus saves, they have to keep from sinning or they will lose their salvation, they make God a liar, because then eternal life is not eternal life. It becomes temporal. Everyone sins, daily, and this is why God gave us First John 1:9. If we sin, we need but return to Him and ask forgiveness, not for salvation, but restoration of fellowship and cleansing of our heart. To walk by faith, is to live in the confident expectation of things that are to come

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him (5:8-9). The word ***accepted*** gives the meaning of well pleasing. In Ephesians 2:10, we are called His ***workmanship***, which is the Greek word ποημα, transliterated into English as “poem.” He are His poetry, something that is well pleasing to Him. The sense here is, that Paul was earnestly desirous of so living as to please God, and to receive from him the tokens and marks of his favour. And the truth taught in this verse is, that this will be the great purpose of the Christian's life, and that it makes no difference as to the existence and operation of this principle whether a man is on earth or in heaven. We should look forward to the day when Jesus says, ***Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*** For this purpose we work to serve Him, not for our own glory, but for the glory of God.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (5:10). The ***judgment seat of Christ***, the βημα, is not a judgment of sin, but the reward for service that we did for Him, for His honor and glory, not for self-merit. I fear that far too many who serve the Lord are doing it for their own prestige, to be recognized by man, and not for His glory. The story is told of a time when a pastor was talking to a visiting minister, when the office door opened, and a man stormed in with Sunday School books in hand, and placed them on the desk of the pastor. “I quit,” he said, and stood there, waiting for the pastor to reply, “Oh no! You can’t do that. What will we do without you teaching that class?” Instead, the pastor solemnly said, “Okay, brother, if that is what you desire to do. We will find someone to take your place.” The man stood there on one foot then the other, and then said, “Well, aren’t you going to ask me why?” The pastor said, “Well I wasn’t, but since you seem intent to tell me, what is the reason?” The man said, “For ten years I’ve taught that class and you never said thanks to me one time for doing so.” The pastor, rose from his chair, walked around to the man, put his arms around him and said, “I’m sorry brother, that happens to be one of my weaknesses, not recognizing what others are doing around here.” And then he said something that shook the man where he stood. “But is that the only reason you are teaching that class, to get earthly recognition?” The man stood there, and his chin began to waver, and tears came to his eyes. “I’m sorry pastor, but you are right. I was looking for recognition

instead of doing it for the Lord. Could I please have the books back?” The pastor looked at him, smiled and said, “I never asked you to bring them here in the first place,” and handed the books back to him. Now friend, don’t you imagine those students will have an entirely different teacher that coming Sunday? We don’t work for earthly honor and recognition. We serve Christ for His glory. That is the reason for the judgment seat of Christ, to reward us for our serving Him here on earth, and for the honor of casting our crowns back at His feet.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences (5:11). Jesus Christ has been given all authority to execute judgment, and here speaking of that which awaits the fate of those who are rejecting Him, the apostles use all their effort to ***persuade men***. Hebrews tells us, ***It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*** (Hebrews 10:31). If demons trembled in the presence of Jesus Christ on His earthly journey, can you imagine the terror that faces those who stand before Him at the Great White Throne of judgment? There will be no excuse for the lost, when they have their “works” reviewed, and God has to pronounce their final judgment and have them hurled into the lake of fire. Knowing this, it is the Word of God that persuades us to persuade men to accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Lord and Savior.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart (5:12). He here states the reason why he had said this. It was not to commend himself to them. It was not to boast of his own character, nor was it in order to secure their praise or favor. Some might be disposed to misrepresent all that Paul said of himself, and to suppose that it was said for mere vainglory, or the love of praise. He tells them, therefore, that his sole aim was necessary self-defense, and in order that they might have the fullest evidence that he, by whom they had been converted, was a true apostle; and that he whom they regarded as their friend and father in the gospel was a man of whom they need not be ashamed. Irregardless, their defiance of his authority was to be put in check, because they alone had heard the Gospel by his testimony, and through his witness to them of the Word of God, they had come to know Christ as Savior and Lord. That alone was enough for them to glory, not in anything he did, but all that the Lord Jesus Christ had done for them.

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (5:13-15). These three verses are pivotal in his defense of the Gospel. It is the love of Christ that compelled him to “keep on keeping on.” Regardless of their own attitude toward him, he was determined to continue preaching the Gospel as long as the Lord gave him breath. If they fail to recognize his authority, he still was going to reach out and preach the Word of God. Verse thirteen was probably designed to meet some of the charges which the false teachers in Corinth brought against him, and to furnish his friends there with a ready answer, as well as to show them the true principles on which he acted, and his real love for them.

Paul had not lived for himself or to accumulate a mass fortune through ministering to others. His sole purpose for preaching was because he had personally seen

the Lord, been taught the Old Testament Scriptures in the desert after his conversion, and nothing was going to hinder the Gospel, as long as he had an audience who would listen to him. Whether Jew or Gentile, Christ died for all, and Paul was going to tell the world of saving grace through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more (5:16). Paul no doubt must have been a witness to the life of Christ prior to Jesus' death, for how else could he have known the Him ***after the flesh***? He had also been witness to the Lord on the road to Damascus, but in Christ's resurrected body, which was so glistening that it struck Paul blind. Yet now he states that he no longer knows Jesus after the flesh. there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul refers to the time when he first obtained correct views of the Messiah, and that he means from that time. His mind seems to have been thrown back to the period when these new views burst upon his soul; and the sentiment is, that from the time when he obtained those new views, he had resolved to know no one after the flesh.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (5:17). Whenever you see a ***therefore***, find out what it is "there for." It always points to something that precedes the sentence, in this case, knowing Christ, and looking forward to one day being with Him. The moment we are saved, we have an entirely new being that dwells within us. When once before, our soul was dead to sin, it is now full of life, and that life is eternal in Jesus Christ. To be ***in Christ*** means to partake of all the fullness of His benefits and promises. He has said, ***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee***, and we can rest assured in our salvation. He has promised to supply all our need, therefore we can rest assured He will be there to provide when we need Him the most. Just as a small child is nourished and sustained by the parents, we have a Heavenly Father who watches over us with a love that surpasses any love of a mother or father here on earth. It was so great a love that He would not spare His only Son, but sent Jesus Christ to die in our place (Romans 5:8).

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. The Greek word *καταλλαγή*, as used here and in Romans 8:10-11. (***For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement***), means to be looked upon with favor, despite our sins. He sees our lost condition, and when we repent and ask Jesus Christ to come into our heart as Lord and Savior, God Almighty reconciles us to Himself. The word ***atonement*** is also from the same Greek word, and even though in the Old Testament referred to the yearly sacrifice to appease God's wrath, this wrath is now completely satisfied (propitiated) through His Son.

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (5:18-19). McGuffey's Reader, in its alphabetic opening, stated it in words easy to understand. "In Adam's fall,

we sinned all.” That was the beginning of the downfall of the human race. And because of his sin, we all are under condemnation. Romans 3:23 says, ***For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*** And the second Adam, Jesus Christ, came into the world and ***taketh away the sin of the world.*** By Adam’s disobedience, we are all sinners. By Jesus Christ’s full obedience to His Heavenly Father, we are made righteous through His blood being offered in our place. Literally understood, he compares the consequence of Adam’s offence and Christ’s obedience, only so far as the one is commensurate to the other, yet his reasoning, Ro 5:15-17, plainly shows that it is his meaning and intention that we should take into his conclusion the whole of the gift, so far as it can reach, to all mankind (Adam Clarke’s Commentary).

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (5:20-21). Paul concludes the analogy concerning the two Adams, the first who failed in obedience miserably, and the second Adam, Jesus Christ who fulfilled all the law and its condemnation of man. Where sin reigned over us, Jesus Christ, as King of the Universe, has brought immortality to life through His righteousness. Jesus as our Mediator and full propitiation for our sins, took His own blood into Heaven, presented it to the Father at the Heavenly mercy seat, thereby providing a way to come straight into the presence of God. Sin condemns; Christ gives life, and that life is eternal.

Chapter Six

Trials, Tribulation and Troubles

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (6:1). We should act as if we were in the immediate presence of God, because since He lives within our hearts, we are. We should realize that we shall present ourselves and our works before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and give an account for what we have done in our body for His glory, and not our glory. We should realize the depth of sin that the lost world has, that only Christ can forgive. We should always be ready to depart, for we know not when our Lord will return. What if it were when you were in an act of sin? Perhaps this is why I John 3:22 says, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*. Far too often we love to quote the first part of this verse, but fail to see the “fine print,” of the latter part, *and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*. The new birth is a great and important thing. The declaration of the Gospel is an immense charge and responsibility.

The word *vain* has been defined by one evangelist as a “soap bubble, to pretty and fleeting, but gone in an instant.” We are here for just a brief flicker of time in the light of eternity. How many have received the grace of God, but have done nothing to show for their salvation? Job calls it what it is, salvation by *the skin of my teeth* (Job 7:5). Some are saved from the penalty of sin, only to live a life that no one knows they have been saved. How ashamed will you be, when you stand before the Savior?

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed (6:2). This verse actually precedes the whole meaning of evangelization, as is followed in the next few verses. Preaching the Gospel is not supposed to be an easy task. Having a door slammed in our face is nothing compared to the persecutions of the saints of God down through the years. So don't be offensive, but declare the love of God through the love He has put in your heart for others.

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, 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 not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things (6:5-10). These verses, along with verse four, all make up one paragraph, all having to do with one subject, the patience in persecution. God has given us the promise of His protection to fulfill His will. We may wonder and ask why it is that sometimes it seems we are standing alone in our desire to witness to the lost, while others

seemingly have no troubles. God did not promise us a smooth past, but He has promised us a glorious landing. He did not promise us a steady road, but strong feet to walk with Him. As one minister had stated it, "No ship is proven worthy as long as it is in dry dock, but only after it has been subjected to a strong storm." We look at the lives of the apostles and see they all suffered persecution, from Stephen the first martyr, to Peter who historians tell us was hung upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as the Lord. There were others who were tied between teams of horses and pulled apart, and of course, Paul himself who was eventually beheaded for the cause of Christ. We think we have it rough when we get a door slammed in our face, or someone sneers at us and throws a tract back at us. Consider those listed in Foxe's Book Of Martyrs, who were burned at the stake, had boiling hot oil poured over them, tossed in a ring of lions, placed on the stretching rack until their limbs were literally torn off their bodies. And yet, through it all, they suffered through patience, knowing there awaited a far greater glory and a body of perfection.

Paul spoke of stripes, imprisonments, tumults, and also spoke of the power of God, the armour of righteousness, honor and dishonor, evil and good report. And yet, in all of this, he never wavered from preaching the Gospel. He was stoned and left for dead, yet rose up, went back into the very city where he had been rejected and continued to minister to those who had received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. My friend, you may be called upon some day to suffer for the cause of Christ. Make sure you have on the *armour of righteousness*.

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged (6:11-13). Once again, Paul has to correct these wayward believers. The metaphorical sense of *Ye are not straitened in us* is the sense of being caught up in a very narrow place, where there is hardly room to turn around. It is a statement of Paul's compassion for these to whom he had brought the message of salvation. "Recompense, or repay me for the kindness I had shown you by returning the love I have toward you and show me you have the same love toward me and others."

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (6:14-16). For those who would compromise their position of authority, whether it be in preaching from other than the King James, or music that is anything but the old hymns of the faith, this is a clear renunciation that such is not to be allowed in the house of God. Remember the compromise of Moses, when he was told to speak to the rock the second time, and smote it twice instead? Yes, the people were refreshed with the water, but Moses lost out on the blessing by not being allowed to go into the Promised Land. Remember Balaam, when Balak called upon him to curse the people of God and God would not allow it? What did he do instead? He got the people to intermarry and worship the gods of the heathen. He got God's curse on the people, but in the same way, he was himself cursed by God and died with the heathen nation that he had compromised his position. Any time you compromise the Gospel, it is you who will

suffer the loss. Oh yes, there may be some who get saved, but what kind of life will it be for them, and what will be the consequences for you? Only that, when you kneel in the presence of the Judgment Seat of Christ, you will not receive the rewards you thought you had “earned.” Your compromising efforts for the sake of crowds (hear that, Billy Graham), will be looked upon by Jesus Christ with the uttermost of contempt and all your works will be burned up as wood, hay or stubble. It is best to remain true to the Word of God and the glory of God, than to seek large audiences for the sake of popularity, position or profit.

Compromise is idolatry. To invite a visiting “minister” who preaches that you can be saved by baptism, or lose your salvation if you don’t “hold on,” and then you also be invited to go to their church is in God’s sight the same as idolatry. And to join in the ecumenical movement of your city is a move toward the “one world church,” which is the devil’s tool to water down the Gospel. You can’t preach eternal security, because you may offend the Salvation Army or Pentecostal groups. You can’t preach salvation solely by grace through faith, because of others there who think you can be baptized as a baby, or “work” your way to Heaven. God never condones compromise, so ***Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?***

Paul continues his argument against compromise in closing out the chapter, by stating the purpose of the Gospel.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (6:17-18). The word ***separate*** is the Greek word, ἀφορίζω, which means to sever, as if to cut off and discard as something that is saved from something else that is useless. It is like taking a sharp knife and removing all the useless fat from a choice piece of steak. It is not good for the body, hence, you separate the good from the evil. And compromise with the ungodly is always evil.

Old Testament Jews had a strict kosher law concerning that which was not to be used or in some cases, even touched. If they touched a dead carcass, they were to clean themselves and their clothing before coming back into the camp, and then to offer a sacrifice to restore themselves to fellowship with God and others. When someone had a Nazarite vow, they were not even allowed to touch, eat or drink anything that came from the grape vine, as grapes could ferment and cause drunkenness. And by the way, Jesus was **not** a Nazarite, but called a Nazarene, because of coming from the city of Nazareth. He was not under the rules of Samuel, Samson or John the Baptist.

We must never allow ourselves to be caught up with those who compromise the Gospel. God specifically and strongly warns us to flee from idolatry, and to take a stand with those who water down the Gospel is displeasing and dishonorable to Him.

Chapter Seven

Comfort, Sorrow and Repentance

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (7:1). Once again, Paul uses the *therefore* to refer to that which had just been stated, compromise and grief to the name of Jesus Christ and His holy Word. We must *cleanse ourselves* from that which God calls *filthiness of the flesh and spirit*. Compromise and idolatry are not only against the Holy Spirit and bring grief to the godhead, but is in itself a sin against our own bodies.

This verse probably should have been in the previous chapter, and it is an exhortation made in view of the promises there referred to, to make every effort to obtain perfect purity, and to become entirely holy. Holiness is to be separate from the filth of the world and its sin.

Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you (7:2-3). The phrase, *receive us* is a statement of desire by Paul, that the Corinthians “give place in your hearts” or affections for us. Show a genuine desire to have us come into your presence. Their attitude towards him because he did not come to them first shows an impatience and unwilling heart, thinking that they were more important than anyone else. Paul’s sincere desire was to come to them first, but the providence of God intervened, so that he went first into Macedonia to find his friend, Titus, and then to come on to Corinth.

Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation (7:4). It might seem to us as strange that Paul said he could be *joyful in all our tribulation*. To the saints in Philippi, he wrote one of the happiest of epistles, even though at the time he was in a prison for preaching the Gospel. No doubt they thought, “My! This is the worse thing that could happen to Paul. Why did God allow him to be in jail?” But through that, and this letter to Corinth, Paul could only state that the troubles that came upon him were nothing compared to what Jesus Christ had suffered on the cross of Calvary. He told the Philippians, *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel* (Philippians 1:12). His imprisonment brought about a boldness on the part of others who were witnessing for Christ, even causing some to witness out of envy of Paul. But either way, he rejoiced that the Gospel was preached, and the salvation of souls made him joyful, despite the tribulation brought his way.

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears (7:5). It seems that when Paul arrived in Macedonia, he was met with conflicts there also, having those who

opposed the Gospel, as they had in Thessalonica, where he was permitted to remain only three days preaching the Gospel. Wherever you go to give out the Word of truth, you will either start a revival or a riot, and in Paul's case sometimes it was both. There were those who accepted the message of salvation and gloriously were saved, while others were to oppose and even persecute the messages of Christ. Such is that which is our promise in the Word of God; ***For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know*** (I Thessalonians 3:4). The time will come when we might, even must, face the same fightings and fears that awaited Paul wherever he went. I know, today's so-called "TV evangelist" gives a glowing pronouncement; "Something **wonderful** is going to happen to you today." Friend, God didn't promise you anything wonderful except a home in Heaven for all eternity. In this world, we must face the fact that tribulation, trouble and trials may await us.

Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more (7:6-7). As Paul had stated in the first chapter, God's consolation awaits us when we are seemingly defeated. When you seem cast down, then look up. Titus, when he came to Corinth, had seen their desire to see Paul and how they had responded to Paul's first letter. Such had cause Paul to rejoice and be further comforted.

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing (7:8-9). Paul had seen that his letter had been able to bring about that which he had hoped the Corinthians would perform, not only in changing their attitude concerning the spiritual gifts, but about restoration of someone who had sunk into sin, bringing him back into fellowship. Having to write such a scathing letter had been sorrowful for Paul, and most likely brought sorrow to those in Corinth, but it had performed its purpose. Paul could have said, "Though I had many doubts in my mind concerning the success of my letter; and though I grieved that I was obliged to write with so much severity, the case absolutely requiring it; yet now I am not sorry that I have written that letter, because I find it has completely answered the end for which it was sent." Any time someone can reprove, rebuke or exhort a Christian in their walk, and see such brings about that for which it was intended, it is a time of joy, not only to the one doing the correcting, but to those who needed the correction.

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death (7:10). Sorrow for lost goods, lost friends, death of relatives, &c., when it is poignant and deep, produces diseases, increases those that already exist, and often leads men to lay desperate hands on themselves. This sorrow leads to destruction, the other leads to salvation; the one leads to heaven, the other to hell. There is a sorrow when a person's sin is found out, but most of the times, that sorrow is "I'm sorry I got caught," not a true sorrow or contrition for the wrong they had done. Far too often, when a prisoner is confronted with his crime, he will say he is sorry, but as stated, it is sorry for being caught. There have been a great many "jailhouse conversions"

by prisoners, but mostly because they hope to gain something from their religion, not because of true repentance for their sin, confession to God and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And far too often also, when the prisoner gains freedom, their “jailhouse religion” gets lost in the wayside, and they return to their former way of life. This is a sorrow that works toward destruction.

For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter (7:11). Here, Paul again speaks of their sorrow for not correcting the fault in the incestuous man, but when they were confronted with the wrong, they not only were sorry for the wrong they had done, but were proven to be able ***to be clear in this matter***, in other words, not only had brought about correction and expulsion of the individual, but when he repented, they then returned him to fellowship, after being told this was the proper thing for them to do.

Again, in today’s church society, how often is the sinner not permitted to forget his sin, but it is constantly brought before him, not only in sometimes being expelled from fellowship, but then, when he is allowed to attend their services, is not permitted to contribute, by being allowed to be of service? And who is at fault in such a matter? Was it the incestuous man in this scenario, or the congregation for, first, expelling him, and then by not allowing him back into fellowship?

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you (7:12). Paul had written, not just for the sake of the man, nor for the sake of his father and his wife, but for the sake of the congregation, and that Paul’s own care for them might be seen, in having the love of heart to correct them, out of love for them and the man.

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all (7:13). When Titus arrived in Corinth, he found that the Christians had not only read Paul’s letter with eagerness, but had acted upon it with Christian love. This was a joy to Titus which he in returned reported back to Paul. The phrase, “your comfort,” here seems to mean the happiness which they had, or might reasonably be expected to have, in obeying the directions of Paul, and in abe repentance which they had manifested. Paul had spoken of no other consolation or comfort than this; and the idea seems to be, that they were a happy people, and would be happy by obeying the commands of God. This fact gave Paul additional joy; and he could not but rejoice that they had removed the cause of the offence, and that they would not thus be exposed to the displeasure of God. Had they not repented and put away the evil, the consequences to them must have been deep distress. As it was, they would be blessed and happy (Albert Barne’s New Testament Commentary).

For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him (7:14-15). The statement here of ***inward affection*** is the same as “tender mercies” or in Philippians chapter two as ***bowels of mercy***, speaking of loving care and admiration for them. This was the love Titus had for those in Corinth when he saw how they received him and of their obedience to Paul’s letter. It is always difficult when someone has to show obedience to another in regards to their attitude, especially when it comes to being

corrected for something they were doing wrong. Some of the three hardest words in the English language are “I was wrong,” “I am sorry,” “Please forgive me.” When someone can honestly say that, they are on the road to being more obedient to the will of God and Christian growth. Here were those in Corinth who had to expel a man from their group, and then to bring him back into fellowship following his sincere sorrow and obedience. They had done this in such a manner that when Titus reported this to Paul, it brought joy to Titus, Paul and the congregation.

I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things (7:16). What a way to end a section of writing, to let them know that he felt that in whatever he would ask them, they would be obedient, not only to his will, but eventually seeing it was the will of God in what Paul was writing. Oh that our congregations today had that kind of growth that their pastor could have confidence in whatever he said to them, that they would act accordingly.

Chapter Eight

Giving And Receiving

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality (8:1-2). I can hear the liberals now in their complaint concerning the English language that was used in this opening two verses. “What do you mean by ‘I do you to wit?’” The problem with those who want to water down the English language of today, they fail to realize that when the King James Bible was written, the style of writing was archaic even in that day. The writers used old English of Shakespeare’s day for a specific purpose; so that it would be unlike any other book that was written, and was guided by being sure that God’s Word would be complete, correct and concise in its meaning. *...we do you to wit...* plainly means, “I hope you fully understand.” Anyone with a proper study of the English language would know this, and yet people will argue for the more “modern” day bibles, which are nothing but the thoughts of man, not the inspiration of God.

Here, Paul begins to speak of other congregations which had given to support the missionary efforts of those who accompanied him, along with support of the “poor saints” in places that were under persecution. Here was *the churches of Macedonia*, obviously suffering from their own need and yet were happy to support others through their gifts.

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints (8:3-4). They asked of us to take part in the labor of conveying it to Jerusalem. The occasion of this distress which made the collection for the saints of Judea necessary, was probably the famine which was predicted by Agabus, and which occurred in the time of Claudius Caesar. The saints in Jerusalem were in such dire need, that other saints took it upon themselves to supply to their need, through distributing such need to Paul and his travelers to convey on their way.

And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (8:5). This reminds me of the generality of the Old Testament times, when Moses had to compel the people to stop bringing in for the erection of the tabernacle, because what they had brought was *too much* (Exodus 36:7). Here was the same willingness to give, not only of what they could afford, but above and beyond; not only in giving of their gift, but themselves as well.

Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also (8:6). Here begins the “find print” of the conversation. “I would trust that what others had done, you will find it in your heart to do also.” Some in the Corinthian congregation were causing strife, saying Paul was taking of the bounty for himself, rather than taking it to where it was supposed to be distributed.

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also (8:7). Show just how much love you have, not only in your works, but in your giving. What good is “good works,” if it is not accompanied by supplying for the need of the saints of God, who are in need? From those who had so many eminent characteristics of true religion, he had a right to expect much; he therefore exhorts them to manifest a symmetry of Christian character. ***In faith***. In the full belief of the truth and obligation of the gospel. ***And utterance***. In the ability to instruct others; perhaps referring to their so-called power of speaking foreign languages, (1Co 14:1-40). ***And knowledge***. The knowledge of God, and of his truth. ***And in all diligence***. Diligence or readiness in the discharge of every duty. Of this, Paul had full evidence in their readiness to comply with his commands in the case of discipline to which so frequent reference is made in this epistle. ***And in your love to us***. Manifested by the readiness with which you received our commands. See 2Co 7:4,6,7,11,16. See that ye abound in this grace also. The idea here is, that eminence in spiritual endowments of any kind, Or in any of the traits of the Christian character, should lead to great benevolence, and that the character is not complete unless benevolence be manifested toward every good object that may be presented. If you are going to abound in these areas, show your full assurance by abounding in your giving also.

I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love (8:8). There were things that Paul had written that were by direct revelation of the Lord, while other times he spoke what he felt would be the will of the Lord, even though given no specific direction by God. Such was the case when speaking of marrying and staying single because of the tribulation on the saints (First Corinthians chapter seven). Here was an occasion where, because of the will of others, he felt it well for those in Corinth to also be willing to give, to show their love for others. This does not mean that he had no express command of God in the case, but that he did not mean to command them; he did not speak authoritatively; he did not intend to prescribe what they should give, but that they willingly give.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (8:9). Then Paul writes of the ultimate gift that anyone could give, and that was of Jesus Christ, giving His own life for the sin of the world. Here was the one who owned the universe, and yet he laid aside all his splendor of Heaven, became a man, and died on the cross for your sins and mine.

After all He's done for me; after all He's done for me.
How can I do less than give Him my best?
And live for Him completely;
After all He's done for me.

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not (8:11-12). In verse twelve, it is evident that Paul recognizes that there are those who do not have the ability to give as others, but accepts the willingness of those who can

and will give. “Whatever you are capable of doing, be willing to do. I realize there are some who cannot give as much as others, but God looks on the giver, not the gift.” We can recall the widow who Jesus Christ said gave her all, because she gave out of her meager ability, while there were those who for their own honor made a big declaration of their ability, making a show of giving into the temple money box. Jesus had told them before to now let their left hand know what their right hand is doing, in other words, don’t give out of pretense of getting the praise of others. A man’s requirement is in proportion to his ability. If you can give and have the means to do so, then give out of love, not out of necessity to please others. And if you can’t give as much, then do what you can.

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack (8:13-15). This passage, in verse fifteen, was originally applied to the gathering of manna by the children of Israel. The manna which fell around the camp of Israel was gathered every morning. All that were able were employed in gathering it; and when it was collected, it was distributed in the proportion of an omer, or about five pints to each man. Some would be more active and more successful than others. But when it was gathered according to God’s command, each was sufficed. Then they tried to keep it until the next day, except for the Sabbath, they found that because of disobedience, it rotted and was useless. They were supplied by God for their want, and here, when they gave for the need of others, God would sustain them and give their need also.

But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you (8:16-17). A man who presents to the poor saints any offering from the heart of love not only sees others being supplied from their need, but in this case sees the same care being given to Titus, and his desire to come, visit and exhort them to greater acts of benevolence. Titus was more than ready to bring the gift that Paul had bestowed upon him, and to see how the Corinthian congregation was faring in regards to Paul’s first epistle, being more than happy to journey on to them.

And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (8:18-21). It is not mentioned in the Scriptures to whom *the brother* is referring, perhaps another of the many that followed Paul on his journeys. It has been generally supposed that this anonymous brother was Luke. Some have supposed, however, that it was Mark; others that it was Silas or Barnabas. It is impossible to determine with certainty who it was; nor is it material to know. Whoever it was, it was some one well known, in whom the church at Corinth could have entire confidence. But his journey with Titus was so that there could be no cause of culpability on the part of Paul concerning the offerings. Some had, as previously mentioned, supposed that Paul had taken from the offering for his own

personal use, and in this case, he sent Titus and *the brother*, along with others, to handle the distribution of the gifts, in order to keep any accusation being placed upon himself.

And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you (8:22). Again it is useless to speculate who *our brother* is referred to, but he was obviously sent for the reason previously stated, so that along with the confidence Paul had in the Corinthians, they could have confidence that he was acting in sincerity in everything he did.

Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ (8:23). Paul's partner, Titus, not only was used to deliver offerings from other congregations, but was also responsible for the establishment of other churches, not for his own glory but *the glory of Christ*. Here was a man whom Paul could confidently depend upon when the need arose, to sustain Paul as well as be one of *the messengers of the churches*. The word *messenger* is the Greek word *αποστολος*, (apostle), or one who is "sent forth" to preach the Gospel. The word is used at times in reference to those who had personally been a witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and in other instances as one who is ordained and sent out by other churches to be a minister of the Gospel.

Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf (8:24). Paul again concludes with encouragement for the saints at Corinth to not only show their love, but also admonishes them to have a willing heart of love in the matter of giving for the sake of others and the Gospel. The whole of this chapter and the following is occupied in exciting the richer followers of Christ to be liberal to the poorer, and for the poorer to do whatever they have the will and way to be of help to others also. "Show me your love by your actions. Let me be able to boast to others of your benevolence to the poorer saints. Prove to me that you truly have a heart of love."

Chapter Nine

Ministering To The Saints

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many (9:1-2). The whole of the Morea was anciently called Achaia, the capital of which was Corinth. The apostle means, not only Corinth, but other churches in different parts about Corinth; we know there was a church at Cenchrea, one of the ports on the Corinthian Isthmus. Though the contribution would be chiefly derived from Corinth, yet it is, probable that, the others also would participate in it. The phrase *was ready* means that they had been preparing themselves for this collection, and doubtless Paul had stated that the collection was already made and was waiting. It was just that this ability to give was such that others desired to give also, and waited the arrival of Paul to carry the gift to the other regions that were in need.

Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting (9:3-4). Here was the point that Paul had feared, that after telling others of the willingness and desire of the Corinthian believers to give, when he came to Corinth, he would find that they had not done so, and this would be an embarrassment. How could he explain to others that what he had boasted of never existed?

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness (9:5). Here was the progress that Paul had used in Corinth; instead of going to them and then taking up the offering for others, he sent *the brethren*, whoever it may have been, to go before he was to arrive, to make sure that the Corinthians were ready with their gifts, and so that there would not be the necessity for Paul to lay the burden on them to hurriedly get an offering ready to send on its way.

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver (9:6-7). Here was God's purpose for every congregation. It is the principle of rewards. You reap what you sow; what you so, more than you sow and later than you sow. This also holds true, not only in giving, but in sin. You sow in sin, you get what you sow. And sin also produces more sin than the original, and always later. As Moses stated it to the children who wanted to stay on the east side of the Jordan River, if they did not help their brethren conquer the land of promise, *...be sure your sin will find you out*. And when it comes to giving, you can be sure your gift will be rewarded by

God in accordance to the purpose of the gift; was it given out of love for God and others, or was it given for the praise of man? Whatever you sow, that is what you are going to get, whether it be sown for the praise of man, which will be a temporal reward here on earth, or whether it is sown for the glory and praise of God, which brings eternal rewards in Heaven.

...*for God loveth a cheerful giver.* The Greek word for *cheerful* is *ιλαρος*, which is where we get our modern day word “hilarious.” It puts one in mind of someone who is giddy with excitement. God wants us to be joyful when we offer unto Him, and for the opportunity to propagate the Gospel to other regions.

I can recall at a point in my life, when the congregation where I was a member was having a debate over the use of mission funds for a local missionary to the Jews in that region. They had not seen much progress in the man’s ministry and thought to discontinue their support in his missionary endeavor. A man in the auditorium rose to his feet and said, “If we were to spend a million dollars to support this man and only one Jew was to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, would it be worth it?” The people overwhelmingly agreed to continue their support. Within a month, there was a prominent Jewish man who accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior. It reminds me of the song so often sung:

It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus;
All trials will seem so small, when we see Christ.
One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will
erase.
So bravely run the race; till we see Christ.

We never know when our efforts in giving to missionary work might be used of God to win some soul to Christ. To make a play on a poem, “Ours is not to reason why. Ours is just to do [before] they die.” This holds true in giving of our finances or giving out Gospel tracts or door-to-door visitation. Maybe it is just living a life that others will see you have something different and question you about it, giving you the opportunity to witness to them of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever (9:8-9). Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9, in giving these in Corinth the promises God gives to His people for their giving out of love. There, it states: *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.* God cannot be out given, when it comes to honoring others with our substance.

The story is told of multi-millionaire R. J. LaTourneau, who was known for giving huge amounts of money to Christian organizations. When he was asked why he gave, and how it was that he seemed to always increase in wealth, his simple answer was, “I give out in scoops full, and God gives back in scoops full. The trouble is, God’s scoops are always bigger.” When we give out of love to others, God honors. Here, in this writing to Corinth, Paul is telling them that God would supply. As he stated later in Philippians 4:19, *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory*

by *Christ Jesus*. Remember, it doesn't say God will supply all our **wants**, but all our need.

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) (9:10). Paul finishes the quote from Psalm 112:10, concerning the sower of the field. Who is it that gives the seed to the sower? Who ministers bread for our food and multiplies what is sown into the ground? Remember, one plants, another sows, but it is God who gives the increase.

Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God (9:11). In writing of the grace that God would cause to abound to the Corinthian Christians, it brings comfort to know that they cannot out give God. This reminds me of the story of a pastor who was looking at the bills that needed to be paid, and knew there was not enough to meet the need. He spread the bills before him on his desk, got on his knees and prayed to God. "Lord, you know we do not have sufficient to meet these expenses. I know that the Scriptures say you own the cattle on a thousand hills. Could you possibly sell one and give us the money to pay these bills?" He had no sooner finished praying and was rising to his feet when his office door had a knock on it, and one of the members of his congregation came in. It was a farmer who had been in town. The farmer said, "Pastor, I just came into town to sell my cattle and want to bring this and give it to the church. It is the cost of one of the cattle." When the pastor looked at the check, he saw that the amount was just what was needed to meet the need of all the bills due. That, my friend, is how God enriches, to all bountifulness, and allows us the privilege to bring thanksgiving to Him.

The purpose of anyone's wealth is not for self-gratification, but to be used for the glory of God. If God so moves to give you more than another, it should be an honor to use what you have to enrich the need of others less fortunate.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you (9:12-14). Their giving was what was used to bring others to praise God and give thanksgiving for the generosity of the Corinthian believers. When those in Corinth subjected themselves to obedience, it became an honor for those receiving their gift to offer prayers to God on behalf of the givers, and to desire to let them know that they not only appreciated the gift, but the giver.

I wonder how many missionaries think to praise God for the gifts of those who supply their need, and then have a longing in their heart to visit the giving congregations? And how many congregations ever think that what they give is used of God to bring about the salvation of the lost on foreign lands?

It will tend to excite the prayers of the saints for you, and thus produce important benefits to yourselves. They will earnestly desire your welfare; they will anxiously pray to be united in Christian friendship with those who have been so signally endowed with the grace of God. The sentiment is, that charity should be shown to poor and afflicted Christians because it will lead them to pray for us and to desire our welfare. The prayers

of the poorest Christian for us are worth more than all we usually bestow on them in charity; and he who has secured the pleadings of a child of God, however humble, in his behalf, has made a good use of his money.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift (9:15). What a fitting way to end a chapter to explain the importance of giving. We think of our giving and in light of all that God did for us, it is very meager in its amount. We give a paltry amount when we think of all God gave for us – in sending His only Son into the world to die a miserable death that should have been intended for us, but Jesus took in our place. Our best is nothing in comparison to what He has done for us.

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; though this is not the meaning of the last verse. The conversion of a soul from sin to holiness is inconceivable. To go from the darkness of Hell and Satan to the light of the Gospel is even more from being totally understood, and yet, we will never fully understand all that was done for us until the day we stand in God's presence and cast our meager crowns at the feet of Jesus. So great was His gift that we could never repay in any way all that was done for us.

Chapter Ten

The War Isn't Over

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh (10:1-2). Paul now changes his course of correspondence to the Corinthians. In the first few chapters, he dealt with corrective measures to the members who agreed with the principles of Paul's instruction, while there were those there who argued that in their presence, he showed weakness and in his absence was bold in his letters, he set himself as an example of the same manner of Christ while here on earth. He seems to vindicate his attitude toward those who were in opposition to his apostolic calling by God. "Who does he think he is? When he is here, he is meek as a lamb, and then when absent, writes very boldly. Which is he?" This seems to be the attitude of many in any congregation; there will be those who follow the path of their pastor, while at the same time, there are others who, no matter what he preaches, will find reason to cast doubt on his ministry. These are those who go home after Sunday morning sermons and have "roast preacher" for dinner, nitpicking every thing he says and correcting every word he may have spoken incorrectly. Here, Paul is begging them to not cause him to have to use harsh means when he was present, but to know that because of the love he has for them, he is rather meek and gentle.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 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; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled (10:3-6). You need to understand the analogy Paul is using to speak of the power of God upon him. In those days, when enemies would approach a town that was enclosed by walls, the men on the outside of the walls would take large grappling hooks tied to ropes, and in sequence, they would hurl them over the top of the walls and all pull toward them at the same time, literally *pulling down of strong holds*, or the walls of the city, and then marching in to battle to conquer the city. Here, the strong holds are the methods of Satan to hold people captive in their thought processes. If he can get you thinking negative thoughts, he has you where he wants you. Instead, God calls upon us to subject our minds to the thoughts of Christ, and we have the devil defeated.

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's (10:7). It was Almighty God who told Samuel not to look upon a man's appearance. First Samuel 16:7 says, ***But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*** Why is it mankind looks upon the tall, the muscular or the handsome or beautiful and think they are the best leaders? God saw a scrawny, red-headed boy tending sheep for his father, and this became the greatest leader of the Jews in the Old Testament. His heart was tune to things of God, not as Saul who sought for man's approval.

Here in First Corinthians, we see this wayward congregation that struggled with the appearance of the Apostle Paul and sought occasion to complain. They wondered at his demeanor in his letters, being so strict and authoritarian, and then his presence being in humility. Paul was telling them, "Why do you challenge my appearance when I am with you and then complain about my letters of correction. If you are a child of God, as we are also, then rejoice in that fact, and not be complaining about how I appear to you in presence and of my letters when I am absent.

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible (10:8-10). Paul is subtly leading up to his authority, as well as his "weakness in the flesh," that he explains in chapter twelve. He did not desire to flaunt his position as God's messenger, but since this seemed to be the vulnerable part in their complaints, he brings the point to the open. "You say my letters are challenging and blunt, yet my body seems to be a conflict. Evidently, Paul had something in his appearance that was to be a point of contempt. Perhaps his eyes were such as to cause them to shun away (read Galatians 4:13-15). Some have even conjectured that because of being stoned at Philippi, he may have suffered from epilepsy afterwards, causing him to shy away in the presence of others. "I do not threaten more than I can perform. I have it in my power to execute all that I have threatened, and to strike an awe not only by my letters, but by the infliction of extraordinary miraculous punishments." You will recall on one occasion, in Acts 13:9-11, Paul had to use his authority to bring a curse upon a man. ***Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.*** What power he had then, he could still exercise in the will of God, had he chosen to do so. He, however, chose to use humility in the presence of those in Corinth.

Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present (10:11). "You want me to be strict, authoritarian and harsh when I come to see you? That is always a probability. I can write harsh letters to you, and I can also be harsh toward you when I come to see you.

That is entirely up to you. Let them not flatter themselves that there will be any discrepancy between my words and my deeds. Let them feel that all which has been threatened will be certainly executed, unless there is repentance.” Paul here designedly contradicts the charge which was made against him; and means to say that all that he had threatened in his letters would be certainly executed, unless there was reform. Paul does not deny the bodily weaknesses he might have had, but he certainly does not deny that he can and would implement the punishment he mentioned, if that was what it would take to get them to repent of their faults.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise (10:12). The sense of Paul is, that they made themselves the standard of excellence; that they were satisfied with their own attainments; and that they overlooked the superior excellence and attainments of others. This is a graphic description of pride and self-complacency; and alas! it is what is often exhibited. The Corinthians had evidently boasted of their many “gifts” that were the sore point in Paul’s first epistle. They must have thought themselves superior to others who had not shown the ability to speak in tongues, among other things the Corinthians had thought gave them superior over others.

Jamison, Faucet and Brown put it this way: There is no limit to a man's high opinion of himself, so long as he measures himself by himself (2Co 10:13) and his fellows, and does not compare himself with his superiors. It marks the personal character of this Epistle that the word "boast" occurs twenty-nine times in it, and only twenty-six times in all the other Epistles put together. When anyone in any congregation holds himself superior to others and “snubs his nose” at those who they consider of the lower class of society, then this is where they are not wise.

As one evangelist stated it: “The definition of the ‘upper crust’ is a bunch of crumbs held together by their dough.” The moment you or anyone boasts that they consider anyone who does not clear a certain amount of money in a year as being poor, and make that statement openly, they place themselves up for ridicule.

But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand (10:13-16). These four verses are one complete paragraph, and as such must be considered in light of the statement. Paul had been the one who had brought the Gospel to the region of Corinth, and these were his children in the Lord. He did not want anyone to think he was infringing on anyone’s own methods of preaching the Gospel, and as such, he would not *boast in another man’s line of things*, or try to usurp authority over someone else’s preaching, planting, watering and allowing God to give the increase.

Paul probably means here to intimate that this had been done by the false teachers of Corinth; but so far was he from designing to do this, that he meant soon to leave Corinth, which was properly within his limits, and the church which he had founded there, to go and preach the gospel to other regions. But he would not claim someone else’s territory as work he had begun.

But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (10:17-18). Paul could have used this same statement when he addressed the church at Philippi and said, ***Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice.*** He would not allow any glory go to himself in any of his labors of preaching the Gospel. Had he not received credit for the work done in Corinth, I believe he would have been just as joyful, knowing that they had come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Chapter Eleven

From Subtlety To Simplicity

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (11:1-2). The object of Paul is to vindicate himself from the charges which had been brought against him, and especially to vindicate his claims to the apostolic office. It is ironic in its character, and is of course severe upon the false teachers who had accused him in Corinth. The main purpose is to state his claims to the office of an apostle, and especially to show that when he mentioned those claims, or even boasted of his labours, he had ground for doing so (Albert Barnes' NT Commentary). The very fact that Paul stated, ***I have espoused you...*** is to not only vindicate his apostleship but as their leader who brought them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Savior. It was another attempt to quiet those in their congregation that sought to bring doubt concerning his ministry. "Who was it that showed you the way of salvation? Who presented you the message of Jesus Christ? It was none other, and I have presented you unto the Lord Jesus Christ as His own."

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (11:3). Here, Paul begins to point to those who planted doubts. It was they who were "beguiling" this group of believers and bringing division in their services. It was they who were not only doubting Paul's ministry but also corrupting the message he had given them. Hence, the next few verses.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (11:4). There has been controversy over the meaning of the word ***another***, whether it is in reference to someone bringing in a false Jesus and teaching that such is as authentic as the one Paul preached, then Paul might be able to withstand their controversy. The problem arises in the fact that the first ***another*** is the Greek word *αλλος*, in reference to a "different" Jesus, while the ***another spirit*** and ***another gospel*** are from the Greek word *ητερος* and are "the same spirit and same gospel." In other words, the "different" Jesus to them was being preached as having the same spirit and same gospel as what Paul preached. This could not be so, as there is no other Gospel than that which is given by God.

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles (11:5). What other apostle had shown any greater authority in not only preaching the Gospel, but in the administration of the gifts that were bestowed upon Paul by the Holy Spirit? If anyone in

their congregation wishes to say they are greater than Paul, then let them prove their calling to be an apostle by the same measure. The use of *I suppose* is almost cynical in the manner in which Paul phrases it, as if using irony in telling them that there was none who had done more, even among the apostles, in preaching the Gospel and building up local bodies of believers. Could the false preachers there in Corinth claim the same?

But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? (11:6-7). Once again, Paul vindicates his appearance and his epistles to them by stating, “My appearance might be objected by you, only because I choose to make myself humble in your presence. Did this cause you to doubt my ministry, even though I have proved myself as an apostle in so many other areas?” Here was a man who before his conversion had been a Pharisee with great authority and knowledge. He no doubt had superior knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and when Christ came into his heart, he used this same knowledge to boldly prove Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the Christ of the Gentiles. Now they doubted him, because he did not charge them for this ministry?

I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself (11:8-9). I would presume this is where we get the saying, “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” He had taken that which was given him from other congregations so that he would not have to be chargeable by the Corinthians for his service to them. Just because he abased himself as a tent maker in their presence was no reason for them to doubt his ministry of the Gospel.

As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia (11:10). Paul’s resolve was not to be a burden to anyone, hence he was to work with his own hands in tent making in order to supply his physical need. It was not something of which he wished to boast, but it seemed in the case of these in Corinth that he had to make such a boast, in order to stop any accusations that were to be made by his opponents. This is an example that today’s evangelists should take. He should resolve to receive nothing for which he has not rendered a fair equivalent; and resolve, if he has health, never to be a burden to his friends or to the church of God. If in exchange the congregation wishes to give a love offering, then that is their disposition, and not something that should be demanded

Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we (11:11-12). When it comes to finances, there will always be those who will complain about how much and how often they give to the support of a minister. Paul did not wish this to be so with him, therefore he worked to supply his own need, so that the dissenters in Corinth would have no reason to complain. And then, they turned around and complained about him working a menial job as tent maker, dirtying his hands to earn a living, when they had assumed he would be chargeable to them for his support. Now they had no reason to boast of how much they had supplied to his need, or to complain about having to support him. Now they had no reason to complain about anything he did, because he did not give them a reason to do so.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ (11:13). Now Paul calls them just what they are; liars and deceivers who wished to pose as something that they were not. This would be the same as those in the days of Christ who would make a big show about how much money they put into the temple's collection, or would have long and loud prayers in public, to show how "holy" they were. Here were the same, who wanted to make themselves out to be something they were not.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (11:14-15). It becomes a sad occasion when someone who claims to be a minister of God is compared to Satan. Here were men in the congregation, piously passing themselves off to others as apostles, but were instead the ministers of the devil himself. What was it Jesus called the Pharisees and Sadducees? He called them the child of the devil (John 8:44). Woe to the man who wears a backward collar, gives the sign of Tamuz the Satanic idol of the Old Testament enemies of Israel, and call themselves "fathers." Paul called Elymus the sorcerer the child of the devil. And here, these so-called ***ministers of righteousness*** were instead servants of Satan.

The word ***transformed*** is where we get our term "schematic." It is a copy of the original, but not the original itself. These men were trying to "copy" what others in the ministry had done, but in so doing, they were corrupting the Word of God. Just as those in Galatia were perverting the plan of salvation by trying to impose circumcision on the Gentile believers, these here were adding their own sets of rules and regulations that were contrary to what Paul had given.

I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also (11:16-18). What was it Paul had told them in chapter ten? ***But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord***. But here he finds himself having to boast, or glory, in the fact that he did not hold them accountable to his support, and even if he had to boast of things done in the flesh, he had more authority to do so than any of these false teachers.

If any had a reason to glory in the flesh, Paul had more than they all. He was of the lineage of those who were the Pharisees, born a son of a Pharisee, a free-born Roman of notoriety and had many other credentials he could boast. But instead, he remained a humble servant of God. And in speaking of glorying, he told them to give all glory to the Lord instead.

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face (11:19-20). The idea that Paul is speaking of is that there were men who were imposing themselves on the Corinthian Christians, making them as though they were "bond slaves" to their whims. They were taking away their freedom as if they were being made into servants.

I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also (11:21). It seems that Paul refers to what he had been admitting respecting himself--to what he had evinced in

rudeness of speech, and to his not having urged his claims to the support which an apostle had a right to receive--to things, in short, which they esteemed to be disgraceful or reproachful. So once again, Paul has to vindicate himself before those who would accuse him, and in so doing, he follows with his credentials of apostleship.

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep (11:22-25). In whatever "pedigree" the doubters and accusers would bring with them, Paul could match them in every category. They were no greater in stature as Jews than Paul. And in what area had they ministered the Word of God more than he? Then he brings in the persecutions he had to endure, which no doubt none of them had been.

In the book of Phillipians, Paul also mentioned his claims of apostleship, along with that which was the reason he could make the bold claim as the minister of Christ. There, he wrote: *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* (Philippians 3:4-6). Here to those in Corinth, he had to vindicate his claim as a minister of God. In Philippians, it was merely a statement to show he placed no claims of superiority, but an act of humility to be able to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

The trouble with today's congregations is that everyone thinks they can do a better job than the preacher or teacher. That was the problem then with Paul and those who argued superiority to him, and it is the argument today. "Boy, he is a lousy Sunday school teacher. He missed a bunch of points in his lesson that **I** could have brought out." That is the problem with many Christians today. They have their *I*'s too close together.

In mentioning the *forty stripes save one*, the Jews had in their law that no one could be beaten more than forty times, so they would beat them thirteen times on the right side of the back, thirteen times on the middle and thirteen times on the left, hence no more than thirty-nine at any one time. But think of this: the Romans had no such law, so in the torture they inflicted upon Jesus Christ was beyond what any human could endure. That is why Isaiah said he was so marred, he was beyond being recognized as a man. Perhaps this is the reason Pilate said, *Behold the man*, or in our rendition, "Believe it or not, this is a man." This is part of the treatment given Paul many times over, which no doubt, none of his accusers ever had to endure.

In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (11:26-27). Many of the countries, especially Arabia, through which he travelled, were then infested, as they are now, with robbers. It is not impossible or improbable that he was often attacked, and his life endangered. It is still unsafe to travel in many of the places through which he travelled. Not only of foreigners, but those of his

own nationality; those who opposed the propagation of the Gospel, which they had considered an abomination against the Jewish faith. He had to be let down a wall in a basket on occasion, to escape those who wanted him dead. When held by the Roman government, a caravan of soldiers had to lead him safely out of a city, where men had vowed under curse of fasting until he was dead. It was no easy life for an evangelist in his days, quite the opposite of those who wanted to usurp power and claim they had more authority than he when it came to preaching the Gospel.

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (11:28). He was not only weary from the drudgery of escaping from enemies, but had the burden of all the congregations he had established and left in the hands of other ministers of the Gospel. In the phrase, ***that which cometh upon me***, the word ἐπισυστασις means, properly, a concourse, a crowd, hence a tumult; and the idea here is, that these cares rushed upon him, or pressed upon him like a crowd of men or a mob that bore all before it. It was obvious that the dissenters did not have any ***care of all the churches***, more or less the one where they were causing factions. They were only concerned about enriching their own coffers and taking that which Paul used to help other congregations, instead of rightfully giving it to him to distribute.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities (11:29-30). In what is obviously a prelude to the next chapter, Paul begins to speak of the ***infirmities*** which he faced every day; not only the many beatings, imprisonments, stoning and being shipwrecked, but the burden of all those with whom he had brought to Christ. What group was there in which Paul did not have a compassionate love for and care for, that these in Corinth had no desire to help whatsoever? How many times did they suffer for the cause of Christ?

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not (11:31). In a court of law today, this would be the same as being asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth, nothing but the truth and all the truth, so help you God?" Paul invokes Almighty God as his witness to the truth of every statement he had made. My friend, if you are ever called upon to tell the truth, you better be sure that you do, because there is someone higher and nobler than any earthly judge who hears you and knows the absolute truth of what you are saying.

In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands (11:32-33). Who he was is unknown, though he was evidently some officer under the king. It is not improbable that he was a Jew, or at any rate he was one who could be influenced by the Jews, and who was doubtless excited by the Jews to guard the city, and if possible to take Paul as a malefactor. We do not know how many times Paul had to escape with his life because of the hatred of the Jews, as well as the Gentile populace against his preaching the Gospel. He had not only escaped by being let down a wall in a basket, but being led out of a city by Roman soldiers when he was being held for trial in Rome. But this was not a boast of any sort, but a mere statement of fact about the perils, persecutions and problems he had to face on a day-to-day basis. As stated before, when Paul came into a city, he either started a riot or a revival, and often had both going at the same time.

This statement is but leading up to what follows; Paul's "thorn in the flesh" and his desire to please God, no matter the circumstances in his life.

Chapter Twelve

The Thorn

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord (12:1). This chapter is a continuation of the argument that Paul had in defending himself from the critics in Corinth. The specific design of his presenting this was to show that he did not want to glory in himself, but in all that Jesus Christ had done for him, and how he was allowed to suffer for the sake of Christ, even as Jesus Christ had told Ananias (Acts 9:16).

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven (12:2). Paul appeals to another evidence that he was engaged in the apostolic office--an evidence to which none of his accusers could appeal, that he had been permitted to behold the glories of the heavenly world. Here was a sight to appealing to Paul that he could not assume that it was a reality, or whether he had actually died and gone to Heaven. The reason why Paul did not speak of this directly as a vision which he had himself seen, was probably that he was accused of boasting, and he had admitted that it did not become him to glory. But though it did not become him to boast directly, yet he could tell them of a man concerning whom there would be no impropriety evidently in boasting. It is not uncommon, moreover, for a man to speak of himself in the third person. This was done in numerous other writings of that day. For instance, Caesar, in writing his memoirs would often speak of himself in the third person rather than using the "I," "me," or "my."

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (12:3-4). Again, Paul uses the third person in speaking of this vision; one so incredible that he felt it unlawful to speak of anything he had heard. One would imagine that if he or she had seen such a glory, they would be awe stricken by the sight and sound. Perhaps this is the reason Paul earlier had written to the Corinthians, *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (I Corinthians 2:9). Legend has it that after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, Lazarus never smiled again, because he had been in glory and had been returned to earth. We can imagine if such a chance would befall us, we too would be stricken in awe

by the sight of the splendors of all Jesus Christ has been preparing for us for over two thousand years now.

Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me (12:5-6). "I have been led along in speaking of myself until I admit I appear foolish in this kind of boasting. It is folly to do it, and I would not have entered on it unless I had been driven to it by my circumstances, and the necessity which was imposed on me of speaking of myself." Paul doubtless desired that what he had said of himself should not be regarded as an example for others to follow. Religion repressed all vain boasting and self-exultation; and to prevent others from falling into a habit of boasting, and then pleading his example as an apology, he is careful to say that he regarded it as folly; and that he would by no means have done it if the circumstances of the case had not constrained him (Barne's NT Notes). Paul had earlier made the statement, ***It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory***. He must have felt embarrassed to have to exonerate everything that he had done for the Corinthians Christians, but because of the opposition, he had to explain to them some of his history; his "pedicure," his authority as a Pharisee before he was converted on the road to Damascus, his zeal to get the Gospel to everyone while he was still breathing and now, to exonerate his every move before the doubters.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure (12:7). Pride has been the downfall of many preachers and evangelists. Because of their position, they are vulnerable to temptation that comes their way. I recall a preacher who said he had one certain woman who had constantly sought favors from him, telling him on numerous occasions that she wanted him and would have him whatever it took. There have been others who have fallen into such a snare, dividing not only their families but their congregation, and ended up being shamed out of their position of pastor. It is doubtful if this was a temptation to Paul, but whatever it was, he would not allow his many ***revelations*** be an occasion for pride, hence there was given to him ***a thorn in the flesh*** to keep him humble. This phrase is used only here in the New Testament, speaking of something that constantly pricked his body. It may have been his eyesight, making it difficult for him to see, hence having to use an amanuensis for his epistles. This was hinted at in Galatians where he mentioned the ***large letters*** he had written, no doubt making them large enough for him to see. Others believe that it might have been a hump backed, stooped position because of the stoning he endured, or possibly epileptic like seizures. Whatever the case, he held that they were ***the messenger of Satan*** to constantly bother him.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me (12:8). Praying to God for comfort from this, he mentions seeking relief three times; perhaps once for each member of the godhead. However, the use of the word ***Lord*** by itself in the New Testament signifies that such a prayer was directed solely to the Lord Jesus Christ, and if there was anyone who had the power to heal him, it would have to be Jesus Christ Himself. One wonders why Paul could not heal himself? It is obvious that the "gifts" of the New Testament era were already diminishing with the near completion of the Canon of the Scriptures. At one time, Paul had raised a young man from death; had healed numerous people; had cast out demons from a damsel and even shook off a venomous snake into a fire that had attached to his hand. But here, there was no power of healing given to Paul. Obviously, the healing miracles, the tongues and other gifts were no

longer needed because of the many letters Paul had written, making up the New Testament Scriptures. What was the Lord's answer?

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (12:9). What would be greater for an evangelist; to be able to preach unabated in the ministry, having thousands come a throng to your ecumenical meetings, or be reticent in your speech because God allows you to suffer a debilitating bodily infliction, having to depend upon him for everything you say and do? I think the latter would be more important, no matter how many graham crackers you may enjoy. God does not call a minister to placate his message for the sake of crowds or riches. But He does empower for the ability to give the Gospel with great conviction of the heart.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (12:10). Remember, any time there is a ***therefore***, find out what it is "there for." It is a statement that refers back to a previous remark, in this case, where the Lord told Paul to rest in the grace that only God could give him.

Often, it is called upon a minister of the Gospel to suffer great pain or tragedy to be used of God. I recall the story of a youth minister in the ghettos, where he was seemingly not having any success in getting the young people to respond to the Gospel. Broken hearted over their apathy, one night when all alone, he fell on his knees, began to cry and told the Lord, "I don't care what it takes to win them, Lord, even if it meant the loss of the thing most dear to my heart." Within a week, he lost his wife to a tragic accident, but because of his reliance upon God and love for the young people, he was again going door to door, speaking to the young people, and on the day they had their meeting, he poured out his soul in preaching to them. Knowing that he had lost his wife, the young people could see he had a greater desire to give them the Gospel than for him to sit at home in despair over losing his wife. Because of this, there was a tremendous turn in their attitude and he saw many of them come to Christ for salvation. We never know what God may bring into our life; whether it be the death of a loved one or a severe illness or a bodily infliction. But God can use anything in our life to be of service to Him. Here in this verse, we see Paul being willing to suffer anything in weakness of the flesh, so he could be strong in spirit.

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing (12:11). In his first epistle, Paul had considered himself not to be worthy to be called an apostle, stating that he was ***less than the least of the apostles*** (I Cor. 15:9). He here has one more time to vindicate his ministry as one being called by God, and although seemingly measuring himself among the apostles, did not want to glory in his accomplishments, even though the Corinthians compelled him to do so. This group of dissenters ought to have submitted themselves to his authority, but instead, they were to continually complain and attempt to usurp his position upon themselves. ***...I ought to have been commended of you...*** It is a good thing he did not need any letter of recommendation from them to other congregations, because they no doubt would have complained there also.

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds (12:12). What these miracles at Corinth were, we are not distinctly informed. They probably, however, were similar to those wrought in other places, in healing the sick, probably exorcising those controlled by demons, among other gifts, the most benevolent, as it was one of the most decisive proofs of the Divine power. Yet in all these, he still was met with opposition by those who denied his authority as the emissary of Jesus Christ. And through all, he remained patient with them.

For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong (12:13). Once again Paul has to return to their main point of dissension, and that was in financial assistance, which he evidently refused to receive at their hands, but instead worked to earn his living. And we question as to why he felt it necessary to ask their forgiveness?

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (12:14-15). In our reading of the journeys of Paul, it is difficult to see where his third journey had come, but evidently he had two prior to this occasion. And again, he would not accept from them any support, but felt it was more important for him to give to them instead, in the giving of the Gospel, and probably in financial support from other congregations. He did not seek their property, but their salvation and continued spiritual growth in the Lord. And yet, through all this, he maintained a deep love for them, even though they did not return such a love to him.

But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile (12:16). To guard against this charge was one of the reasons why Paul was so anxious to have some persons appointed by the church to take charge of the contribution. In this way, they could not be charged with taking that which belonged to another, and in return, they were "tricked" into giving for the support of others.

Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps? (12:17-18). Once more, Paul returns to the focus of the Corinthians' attention, and that was the offering which they claimed Paul had taken for his own use, rather than distribution to other saints in other regions. And again, Paul mentions the ***brother***, which remained unknown, who accompanied Titus, and asked if they did not follow in the same manner as Paul in regards to the offering. It was a sad set of affairs when it seemed all that the Corinthians cared for was the money and gifts they provided for others, and then argued about to whom the money should go.

Paul appeals boldly to the facts, and to what they knew. "Name the man, says he, who has thus defrauded you under my instructions. If the charge is well-founded, let him be specified, and let the mode in which it was done be distinctly stated." The phrase "make a gain," (from *πλεονεκτεω*), means, properly, to have an advantage; then to take advantage, to seek unlawful gain. Here Paul asks whether he had defrauded them by means of any one whom he had sent to them.

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying (12:19). Was it needed

for Paul to present the claim by them concerning whether they had been defrauded? If so then they needed to present evidence of the same. But as for his part, everything he did was *for your edifying*, and out of his love for them.

The word *edifying* is from the Greek word οικοδομη, which properly spoken of means “house keepers.” It is a term used for a servant who kept a home clean for his/her master. Here, Paul puts himself in the place of a servant, rather than having them be the ones who should serve him.

For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed (12:20-21). Here we return to the same problems that he had presented in his first epistle; a backslidden, carnal group of believers who bickered about everything and anything, rather than joyfully having the desire to serve others and be a source of blessing in seeing others come to Christ through their offering of themselves first and then of their bounty. And again, he brings up the *uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness* that had been in their congregation, which they did not condemn at first and seemingly, here he has to mention it once again, to get them on the right path to growth in the Lord.

Chapter Thirteen

Forewarning and Farewell

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you (13:1-3). “Okay, if you seek proof of my ministry, which I have already given to you on other occasions, I will not only be bold in my letters, but when I come to you, I will also be bold in my actions toward you. I won’t hold back on showing you just how severe the charges are against you in your many acts which are contrary to the Word of God. You seek proof of Christ speaking in me, and I will give it to you.”

For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth 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 (13:4). Some would argue that there was no weakness in the death of Jesus Christ, but consider that He had to allow Himself to be crucified, so that the power of God might be manifested in the salvation of souls. And even though in this body we may be weak, yet the Spirit of God living in and through us empowers us to preach the Gospel with boldness, and to see others come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior also. It is true Christ was crucified, and his crucifixion appeared to be the effect of His weakness; yet even this was not so; He gave up his life, none could take it away from Him; and in His last struggle, had He even been deficient in power, He could have had more than twelve legions of angels to support Him against the high priest's mob, but how then could the Scripture be fulfilled? And had He not died, how could the human race have been saved?

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (13:5). Here was a doubt that Paul was facing. Had they truly been born again? Was there any significant proof of their salvation that others could see, or was theirs a mere expression of a façade? The term *reprobate* is someone who has not been approved, or authenticated as real. Paul was stating, “Are you truly saved? Is there any proof that you know Jesus Christ in your heart? If so, prove it.” As the Sunday school song states it, “If you are saved and you know it, then your life will surely show it.”

But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates (13:6). My zeal toward the Gospel should be sufficient proof of my salvation. Others should look at me and see that there is something different, and want what I have. The Corinthians should have seen the attitude of the dissenters, and then looked at the life and ministry of Paul, and seen the difference.

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth (13:7-8). “We who are under the influence of the Spirit of God, who have been commissioned by Him as apostles, can do nothing that shall be against that great system of truth, which we are appointed to propagate and defend. You need, therefore, apprehend no partial or severe discipline from us; no unjust construction of your conduct. Our aim is to promote the truth, and to do what is right; and we cannot, therefore, by any regard to our own reputation, or to any personal advantage, do what is wrong, or countenance or desire what is wrong in others.” The desire of Paul was for them to quit their bickering one with another; quit arguing over which has more a ministry than another, and certainly to stop arguing over the authority of Paul and those who minister with him.

For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection (13:9). Perfection he is not one of reaching a state of being without sin, but one of spiritual maturity. It is the same word used by Jesus Christ when He said, ***It is finished***. It is different from the Greek word τετελοστοι, signifying, “All that God has appointed me to do has been perfected.” It is the Greek word καταρτιζω, which means to restore, to make amends or to repair. This is what they needed to do in their congregation in many ways.

One evangelist was talking to a man who had supposedly been saved, and the man made the statement, “I live above sin,” meaning he no longer sinned. The evangelist replied, “Then I suppose you live above a bar room, is that correct?” The only way to live “above sin” is to rent a room above a gambling casino, a bar or some other place of ill repute. No one is perfect. But we should strive toward “maturity” in Christ.

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction (13:10). Again, sharp words written were a warning of what they might have in their presence, if they do not correct their errors. His point in his letters was for ***edification***, or “cleaning house.”

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen (13:11-14). Paul’s farewell is one again of a loving heart. He calls upon them to be “mature,” to not only have comfort in their hearts but to comfort others also, to ***be of one mind***, and not be bickering about who has the greater spiritual gift, to ***live in peace***, or to cause no factions or frictions between each other. He then closes with the blessing of the trinity upon them: ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*** (Son), ***and the love of God*** (Father), ***and the communion of the Holy Ghost*** (Holy Spirit) ***be with you all***. What a touching and loving close he gives to the second of two sharp epistles, opening with the consolation of

God and closing with the communion of the trinity. Oh that such could be said of many of our congregations today.