

## 2 Corinthians

As stated in our study of 1 Corinthians, scholarly research has determined that Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthians. As far as we can tell, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth before he wrote what we call 1 Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 5:9** – I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

Scholars call that letter referenced in 1 Corinthians 5:9 – letter A (Scholars aren't very original sometimes!).

Then we have what we call 1 Corinthians, but scholars call – Letter B.

1 Corinthians as we know it was written while Paul was in Ephesus, around the year 55.

Shortly after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, it appears that someone in Corinth questioned Paul's authority and right to be called an apostle. Upon hearing this, Paul made a visit to Corinth, and his reception wasn't that great. He left, and wrote what he called a painful letter.

We find reference to this in the following verses from 2 Corinthians.

**2 Corinthians 2:1** – So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. <sup>2</sup>For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? <sup>3</sup>I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. <sup>4</sup>For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

**2 Corinthians 7:8** – Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—<sup>9</sup>yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.

This painful letter is called – Letter C.

When Paul was in Macedonia in the year 56, Titus returned from a visit to Corinth. He informed Paul that his letter was well received and the Corinthians wished to be reconciled to Paul. He then wrote what is called a thankful letter. This is what we call 2 Corinthians and it is known as Letter D.

It was written in Macedonia around the year 56.

There remains one other scholarly issue concerning 2 Corinthians. Basically, is it one letter, or a composite of two or more. We will address that as we move in the the sections that are questioned.

## **Chapter 1**

**1:1** – Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:  
<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul began by saying that he was called to be an apostle. His title is used more definitively here. Later in this letter he will give a defense of himself and of his authority.

Grace & peace are two favorite words of Paul. He uses them in all of greetings. Grace is God's divine favor. Given to us freely. Peace is the result of God's grace.

Paul now has his customary thanksgiving – in all his letters except Galatians. This thanksgiving has a focus upon comfort.

**1:3** – Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort

Paul uses this word comfort ten times in this thanksgiving. The Greek word is Paraklésis. This is essentially the same word that Jesus uses in John 14:26 when referring to the Holy Spirit. There in John, it is translated as comforter or Advocate.

The word means a calling to one's aid, encouragement, comfort. Comfort here means more than consolation during sorrow. It includes encouragement, and implies the gift of strength to meet life's crises.

**1:4** – who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Let's not miss this verse! God is our comforter, encourager and strength. Having received that from God, we are to be comfort, encouragement, and strength for others.

**1:5** – For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

The sufferings of Christ that we are to share is our service to Christ. In Paul's writings, this suffering, or sharing, is a characteristic of the Christian life.

**Romans 8:17** – Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

This suffering with Christ does not cause us to lose hope, because, as we see here in verse five, our comfort abounds.

**1:6** – If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

In verse five Paul stated that suffering in Christ bring abundant comfort. In verse four he stated that those who have been comforted by God will comfort others. So it only leads to this verse – Paul's afflictions leads to God's comfort, which he uses to comfort the Corinthians.

**1:7** – And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

Please note that Biblical hope meant an expectation. In modern English, hope is thought of as a wish. Not so in the ancient language – even in the language of the KJV.

Having given praise for help and comfort during suffering, Paul now recalls his recent deliverance. It seems that the Corinthians knew of it, for he doesn't give any details.

**1:8** – We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.

Exactly what this event was we can't be sure. Ephesus was the chief city in Asia, so it probably refers to difficulties there.

**1:9** – Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

In **Romans 8:28** Paul will write: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,

There in verse nine he basically says the same thing – something bad happened and God turned it into a benefit.

Neither here in verse nine, or Romans 8:28 is Paul saying that God caused something bad to happen. He is saying that God caused something beneficial to happen when something bad happened.

**1:10** – He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11</sup>as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

That concludes Paul's introductory notes. Now some personal matters. Paul will write about changes in his travel plans. As he often has to do, there is a bit of personal defense of his actions in this section.

**1:12** – Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. <sup>13</sup>For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, <sup>14</sup>as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paul was not belittling their education or understanding in verse 13. When he writes 'anything you cannot read,' he is meaning aloud. These letters would be read at church. In verse 13 he is basically he is saying – what I mean is what I say/write. You don't have to read between the lines.

**1:15** – Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. <sup>16</sup>I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. <sup>17</sup>Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

Paul's authority and integrity had previously been challenged – that was why he had to make a painful visit and letter which he references twice in this letter.

Verse 16 says so that they could send him on his way to Judea. Remember in 1 Corinthians 16 he wrote about them taking up an offering for the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. That's what he is referring to there in verse 16.

**1:18** – But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." <sup>19</sup>For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." <sup>20</sup>For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. <sup>21</sup>Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, <sup>22</sup>set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Paul has yet to explain his change of plans, instead he defends his integrity. He seems to be saying that his yes is yes, but God is the final word on his journeys.

In verses 21 & 22 we find the trinity. Not the word, but God, Christ and the Spirit.

The seal of ownership in verse 22 may refer to baptism. It would later be used that way by Christians.

**1:23** – I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. <sup>24</sup>Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

What were they spared from? Chapter two will reveal that it spared them from disciplinary action for sinfulness.

## Chapter 2

Paul continues with this piece about his travel in chapter two.

**2:1** – So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. <sup>2</sup>For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? <sup>3</sup>I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. <sup>4</sup>For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

Here is Paul's reason for not visiting. He did not want to make another painful visit. Paul was certainly a determined and headstrong person. I've often wondered about that painful visit.

This painful visit was after 1 Corinthians was written, and is also referred to two more times in this letter. He decided after that visit to delay his return before going to Macedonia. Instead he sent Titus with the stern letter that is referenced also in chapter seven.

In the following verses we get just a little information concerning what the trouble was at Corinth that prompted Paul to make a visit and write a letter.

**2:5** – If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely.

Using ‘anyone’ instead of the person’s name, Paul is writing about the one who seemingly challenged Paul’s authority. Speaking of this man, Paul would write in chapter **11:4** – if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Here in 2:5, Paul wants them to know that this man’s challenge to Paul’s authority hurt them all as a group – as a church.

**2:6** – The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient.

We can deduce that some punishment was the result of Paul’s stern letter, and by Titus’ appeal. Paul speaks of this again in 7:11.

**2 Corinthians 7:11** – See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

So, Paul’s authority was attacked. A personal attack on us never feels good. Do we get over it? I think Paul did.

**2:7** – Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup>I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

In our English translations this sounds like a suggestion – you ought to. In the Greek it is stronger – you forgive him.

It appears that the man was repentant. This is the Christian response for someone who repents, no matter how bad the offense made us feel. We forgive and comfort and reaffirm our love for the person. Powerful stuff!

**2:9** – Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup> Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, <sup>11</sup> in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Having been obedient to God by correcting the man who rebelled, not they must continue to be obedient to God and forgive the man.

Forgiveness is a big deal. Yes, it's the Christian thing to do, but when we don't forgive, Satan uses it to divide us. In this case, to divide the church.

**2:12** – Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, <sup>13</sup> I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.

Paul has been explaining why his return to Corinth has been delayed. In short, his previous visit ended awkwardly as he was challenged. He then sent a painful letter to the church.

Paul sent Titus with the painful letter. The plan was to meet Titus in Troas before returning to Macedonia. Paul did not want to return to Corinth until he heard Titus' report.

Now Paul resumes the travel story, When he arrived at Troas, he found an open door from the Lord. In other words, some people were ready to hear about Jesus. But, Paul was restless in spirit because he had not been able to meet up with Titus.

So he returned to Macedonia, where evidentially he met up with Titus and hears good news. This causes Paul great joy and so he writes a thanksgiving.

**2:14** – But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

Paul uses an image that his readers would have been familiar with – a Roman victory procession. That was a parade in which the victorious Roman general would march his soldiers and captured soldiers through the street in triumph.

In those parades, incense was burned in celebration of the defeat of the enemy. To the Romans, it was a pleasing aroma. To the defeated, it was an aroma that brought death.

Verse 16 asked who is equal to such a task. His answer is in verse 17.

**2:17** – Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

The short answer was that only genuine Christians are qualified to represent Christ. False teachers and fake Christians had moved in amongst the true believers and were spreading a different message – and for profit.

Perhaps, this spoke of the one who did so in Corinth, but fortunately that situation had been resolved.

### **Chapter 3**

Paul has just written about his sincerity. Now he is responding to a charge that he is some egotistical bragger who likes to recommend himself. What does that mean – recommend himself?

It was common in those day for traveling teachers or speakers to come with letters of recommendation. Often, as strange as it may sound to us, these were written by the teacher or speaker about themselves.

Not much different, really, than a resume.

**3:1** – Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? <sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. <sup>3</sup>You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Paul states that he has something even better than a letter of recommendation – he has the Corinthians Christians themselves.

**2 Corinthians 3:4** – Such confidence we have through Christ before God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. <sup>6</sup> He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul wrote often about the power of Christ at work within him. Perhaps, his best known is **Philippians 4:13** – I can do all things through him who strengthens me. He is saying the same thing here in this passage.

When Paul uses the term new covenant, he is contrasting the message of salvation through faith in Jesus with the old covenant of salvation for Israel through the law.

He writes – not of the letter but of the Spirit. Probably meaning the letter of the law.

He wrote that the letter kills. In other words, those who attempt to be reconciled with God through the law will fail.

Paul will now look deeper into the contrast between the old and new covenant.

**3:7** – Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, <sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?

Remember, Paul has lived under both covenants. He was zealous for the old covenant, and now he is zealous for the new covenant.

Even though the old covenant was incomplete, it brought glory, reflected on Moses' face after he encountered God.

The new covenant, called the ministry of the Spirit, will bring even more glory. It will bring glory not just to one, but to all. To you and I.

**3:9** – If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

Verse eight called the new covenant the Ministry of the Spirit, and this verse calls the new covenant the ministry of righteousness. It is both!

**Romans 8:1** – Therefore, **there is now no** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you<sup>[a]</sup> free from the law of sin and death.

**3:10** – For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. <sup>11</sup> And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

The old covenant has been fulfilled, so it no longer holds any glory. The new covenant, through faith in Christ, is permanent. It is based upon God's grace, not human performance.

Anything based on human performance can not last.

Now Paul writes about the boldness of those who minister in Jesus' name.

**3:12** – Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

What allowed for this boldness?

In the old covenant people relied upon themselves. This would only lead to a lack of confidence, because they soon failed and had to start over.

Under the new covenant, we don't have to rely upon our own ability. We have the Spirit. Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy about the Spirit?

**2 Timothy 1:7** – For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

**3:13** – We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.

This refers to Exodus 34, where Moses put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from seeing the end of the fading splendor of God.

Paul, and those that minister in Jesus name, want others to see the glory of God shine into their own lives through the presence and the power of God's Spirit.

**3:14** – But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

We're not told of the cause of their minds being made dull. Was it God, was it Satan, or sin? Any could be true, but sin is a likely answer. Even as Moses was receiving the law from God, the Israelites were building an idol to worship.

Verse 14 tells us that the veil has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away. That certainly makes it sound like sin itself is the veil, and only Christ can remove our sins.

**3:17** – Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

We gain some fundamental insight into Paul's Christology here. The lord – Jesus – is spirit. Here, Paul is writing about two parts of the trinity. Jesus and the Spirit are the same.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples the night before he was crucified ...

**John 16:7** – “Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

**3:18** – And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Again, Paul identifies the Spirit with Jesus.  
The work of the Spirit is to transform us into his image.  
That's good stuff! A good Pentecost Sunday passage.

## Chapter 4

In chapter three, Paul described the new covenant that God has made with those who come to him through Jesus Christ. This new covenant allows us to see the glory of God through faith in Jesus.

Remember, without Jesus a veil remains preventing us from seeing God's glory.

Now here in chapter four, Paul returns to defending his ministry of carrying the message of the new covenant to the people of his world.

**4:1** – Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

If there was ever anyone who had good reason to lose heart, it was Paul! Run out of various towns countless times. Escaped riots. Was stoned to the point of death. Imprisoned.

Yet, here he says that he does not lose heart. This needs to speak to each of us in our daily walk as a Christian. For, each of us has a ministry as a child of God.

We can become tired in what we do at times, but we should never become tired of what we do.

We can be tired **in what** we do (that a personal physical thing).  
We should never grow tired **of what** we do (that is a spiritual thing).

**4:2** – Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.<sup>3</sup> And even if our *gospel* is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

Paul is still defending himself – and others with whom he ministered. They were presenting God’s message plainly.

Verse 3 – even if our good news is veiled (going back to his analogy in chapter 3) – in other words, some would not understand or believe the good news. If they did not accept the good news, it was not the presenters fault. The fault lied in those who were still under the veil. The veil being sin.

When we are under the veil, we are perishing.

**4:4** – The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the *gospel* that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Here is one of the verses where we can plainly see Paul’s understanding of this present age in which we live. It is a battleground in which Satan and his army contend with God and God’s army for the control of our lives.

We see this view in much of Paul’s writings:

**Galatians 1:3** – Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age,

**Ephesians 2:2** – As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

This view reflects the teachings of Jesus:

**John 14:30** – “I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me,”

**John 16:11** – “The prince of this world now stands condemned.”

Back in verse 2 Paul wrote – Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly.

Verse five picks up there ...

**4:5** – For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," (Genesis 1:3) made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Remember in the previous chapter Paul discussed God's glory reflected in the face of Moses.. As a mere reflection, that glory began to fade as soon as Moses left the presence of the Lord.

The glory shining from the face of Christ, however, never fades. Jesus is the source of light.

Without Christ, there is darkness within us. So, let light shine out of darkness is a powerful verse! This light can shine from out of us. It's not our glory, but the glory of God. Paul clarifies this in the next verse.

**4:7** – But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are the jars of clay. Jars of clay may look nice if they are adorned well, but they are still only clay. Clay is just fancy soil, dirt.

Remember what Isaiah said our ourselves –  
**Isaiah 64:6** – all our righteous acts are like filthy rags

**2 Corinthians 5:21** – God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Because of this power and glory of God that dwells within us, Paul can boldly proclaim the following:

**4:8** – We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup>We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

For Paul, the reality of being with Jesus was not a future thing. It was not in the sweet bye & bye, it was in the here and now.

In verse eleven, Paul is talking about those who minister in Jesus' name. This is a defense, although we may not see it. We might see it as a boast. Remember, many of those Corinthians Christians had been pagan.

Pagans believed that true servants of a god would always be protected from harm – so why was Paul working through such adversity?

Even today, there exists a belief among many Christians that we suffer certain trials and afflictions because of a lack of faith.

Paul is saying that the opposite was true.

**4:11** – For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup>So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It takes great faith to stay strong under continual sufferings, which Paul had faced. In verses 13-15 Paul mentions four things that sustain him.

**4:13** – It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.”<sup>[b]</sup> Since we have that same spirit of<sup>[c]</sup> faith, we also believe and therefore speak,

Quoting from Psalm 116, Paul speaks of his faith. Paul speaks – preaches – the good news because he not only believes in it, he believes it is for all people.

**4:14** – because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.

The second thing that sustain Paul is his belief in the resurrection of the dead.

**4:15** – All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Here we have two things that sustain Paul throughout his trials. First, what Paul does is for the benefit of others.

**Philippians 2:3** – Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Lastly, glorifying God – and having others glorify God – gives Paul strength. Because of these things, Paul writes in verse 16 ...

**4:16** – Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Life is full of trials and challenges. While I doubt that nay of us will face the particular challenges that Paul faced, our lives have their own challenges.

If we nurture our spiritual life, then we will not lose heart, and we will be renewed day by day.

**4:17** – For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

By comparison, our worst trials and sufferings here on earth are only a light and momentary affliction when compared to the glory of God's eternity! That's good news!

This passage is very similar to what Paul writes in

**Colossians 3:1** – Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in

God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

## Chapter 5

Paul continues his discussion on why he endures trials and challenges for the Lord. Chapter four ended with the topic of eternity, which he continues here.

**5:1** – For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

We have already seen that Paul uses many analogies in his writings. Here he refers to the body as a tent – which for many people in those days was a house, not a small tent we might camping in.

Like a tent dwelling, life in the here and now is inferior, insecure and transient. It won't last. Our permanent building will be our spiritual body.

**5:2** – Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

Pauls' states that leaving behind this earthly tent will not leave us without a body. We will then have the bodies that we were made for.

These are spiritual bodies, of which Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15.

**5:4** – For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Verse five makes it clear, this transformation from our earthly bodies to our heavenly spiritual bodies has been God's plan from the beginning.

How do we know this is going to happen? God has given us the very Spirit of God as a deposit. That's Good News!

What is the result of this good news? Confidence.

**5:6** – Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

Some translations have courage instead of confidence. The Greek word can be translated either way, and both speak of our boldness to face life – which has been Paul's theme here.

We all – who trust in Jesus – can live confidently. We have an eternity awaiting us in the presence of God's glory.

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

In the Greek, verse six is not a complete sentence. Verse seven completes it. The word live can be translated as walk – the word means a way of life.

The point is this – when we believe the good news, which includes our own resurrection and eternal life, then the struggles we face are put into their proper perspective.

We don't live by sight, because what we see is troubles, pain, suffering, even death. Our faith tells us otherwise.

**5:8** – We are confident/or of good courage, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

When we die, are we in a state of soul sleep until Jesus returns for all? Some would say yes. And, some would say that since Paul expected Jesus to return anytime, that he was referring to the return of Jesus as to when he would be away from the body.

My understanding of this verse, and the understanding of a great many Christians, is that it means just as it reads, being away from this body is to be in the presence of the Lord.

**5:9** – So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

These two verses make for an interesting study in and of themselves, and they have been the topic of much debate and theological differences.

Paul wants to please the Lord, and his motivation is his appearance before the Lord in judgment. Aren't we saved by faith and not by works? Yes, we are!

This judgment is not about salvation. This judgment is for believers only. Each heaven bound Christian will receive a judgment on what we have done in the body.

**Romans 14:12** – So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

The part of 2 Corinthians 5:10 that causes some division is the part that says each of us may receive what is due?  
Are their levels in heaven?  
Do some get a better reward?

I am not sure about that. What reward could be better than to be in the presence of God's glory?

It's a difficult verse. Feel free to share your comments.

**5:11** – Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

To hear Paul speak of fearing the Lord may cause us to question some things Paul wrote in other letters.

**Romans 5:1** – therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we<sup>[a]</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

**Romans 8:15** – The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.<sup>[f]</sup> And by him we cry, “*Abba*,<sup>[g]</sup> Father.”

Some say that what Paul's use of fear is like a reverent awe for Christ. Possible. The word fear was used in that manner quite often in the Old Testament.

However, in verse eleven, and in the verses that follow, you can tell that Paul is back to defending himself and his co-workers.

**5:12** – We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. <sup>13</sup> If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Verse fourteen can cause a bit of confusion. Paul is saying that Christ has died to pay for the sins of all humanity, and his death has become the death required for all to pay for their sin.

In a spiritual sense, all who trust in Christ died with Christ when he died. Theologians call this substitutionary atonement.

Paul writes of this in Romans 6 ...

**Romans 6:5** – For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,<sup>[a]</sup> that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

**5:15** – And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

We are told here that Christ dying for us was not just to save us from our sins. He also died and was raised so that those who trust in him for salvation would stop living for themselves and instead live for Jesus.

He wrote about this in ...

**Ephesians 2:10** – For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**5:16** – So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

What a powerful statement of faith! Do we regard people in a worldly way? The point of this verse is that everyone can be forgiven of their sins! God can change anyone’s life.

With that powerful belief in mind, do we look at people as good or bad – or do we instead have a desire in our hearts that they know the Lord, or come to know the Lord.

Paul’s desire for all people, and our desire for all should be – the new creation spoken of in the next verse.

**5:17** – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:<sup>[a]</sup> The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

When we look at people in a worldly manner, we make judgements about them – and then there will be many that we won’t ever give an effort to reconcile with God.

But our ministry is the ministry of reconciliation! This is powerful & this is what we are to be about.

Being made right with God is not all there is to a Christian life. We want all people to be reconciled with God. All people. Even the people we don’t like. And there is a lot of dislike being displayed by Christians in our country right now.

Lord, help us to be reconcilers! Even ambassadors for Christ, which Paul calls us.

**5:20** – We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

God is appealing to those who don't know Christ through us – not just through preachers & evangelists. You are every bit a minister of the Good News of Jesus Christ as I am!

**5:21** – God made him who had no sin to be sin<sup>[b]</sup> for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is what it means to 'be in Christ.' God has received Christ's death as payment for our sins and now gives us credit for Christ's righteousness.

Verses 1 & 2 of chapter six should be read as part of this section about the ministry of reconciliation.

**6:1** – As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says,

“In the time of my favor I heard you,  
and in the day of salvation I helped you.”<sup>[a]</sup>  
I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Paul uses a quote from Isaiah 49:8 to remind the Corinthians that God's invitation is for a limited time only. That time – mortal life.

And for you and I, that time – as Paul says in verse two – is now! Now is the day of salvation.

This ministry to which we are called, is not always easy. It certainly wasn't easy for Paul. In the next section Paul will list some of those difficulties that he faced.

And again, we have Paul defending his authority.

**6:3** – We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. <sup>4</sup> Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; <sup>5</sup> in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in

hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; <sup>6</sup> in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; <sup>7</sup> in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; <sup>8</sup> through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; <sup>9</sup> known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The implied questions here is – why would we go through all of this if our motives were not pure?

Early church leaders endured outrage from a number of the Jewish leaders. In the Book of Acts we read how a number of riots were incited by synagogue leaders. Some even had Paul and others imprisoned for preaching doctrine unlike their own. Sometimes playing on Roman sympathies by claiming they had another king besides Caesar.

We do, you know. We have a king and we are subject to our king first and foremost.

Verse six notes that they had the Holy Spirit within them, and acted in sincere love. Sincere love for all others is possible through the Holy Spirit. Remember, Paul wrote to them in 1 Corinthians about the primacy of love.

In verse seven Paul writes about weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left. In other words, they were fully armed. In Ephesians 6 Paul will describe in more detail what those weapons are.

In verse ten he writes about always rejoicing, even when sorrowful. Paul wrote a lot about rejoicing.

**Philippians 4:4** – Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice!

**1 Thessalonians 5:16** – Rejoice always.

Paul, unlike many believers, could see the big picture. He could endure the troubles of this life because he could believe in what awaited him.

**2 Corinthians 4:16** – Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

**6:11** – We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. <sup>12</sup> We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. <sup>13</sup> As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

Remember in our introduction, I mentioned that some scholars think that 2 Corinthians may be a composite of several letters. What we’re looking at here in chapter six is one of those reasons.

Earlier in his letter he was so thankful for the Corinthians returning from false teachers and from their rejecting of Paul. Here, it seems as if he is giving a fairly strong defense.

However, we will see much more in the latter chapters, as well.

The rest of this chapter brings up another question about the unity of 2 Corinthians. Beginning in verse 14 Paul abruptly changes the subject. Whether or not this was part of another letter, we simply cannot tell.

**6:14** – Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What harmony is there between Christ and Belial<sup>[b]</sup>? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:  
“I will live with them  
and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.”

You may recall in 1 Corinthians Paul addressed the issue of when a pagan converts to Christianity, but their spouse does not. This is a different issue here. Here Paul is addressing unmarried Christians.

He does not say here ‘Stop being unequally yoked with unbelievers.’ He had already given his response to that in 1 Corinthians. So, perhaps, this was addressing a question that the Corinthians had after hearing about those already married.

Note that Paul is not telling them to not associate with unbelievers. How else could we have the ministry of reconciliation?

And remember what he wrote in ...

**1 Corinthians 5:9** – I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

The quote in verse 16 is found in a few places in the Old Testament, including Ezekiel 37 and Leviticus 26.

Paul continues with quotes from Isaiah 52 and 2 Samuel.

**6:17** – Therefore,  
“Come out from them  
and be separate,  
says the Lord.  
Touch no unclean thing,  
and I will receive you.”<sup>[d]</sup>  
<sup>18</sup> And,  
“I will be a Father to you,  
and you will be my sons and daughters,  
says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>[e]</sup>

Remember, the man who inserted chapters and verses was a bookmaker, not a Bible scholar. Chapter 7:1 is part of this passage.

**7:1** – Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

We read – perfecting holiness. Complete holiness is a better translation. We don't get one area of our life together and pure and then sit back all satisfied. This purity and holiness must be throughout our life.

Essentially – the lesson here in this passage is as fallen humans, we are more easily influenced by evil than we are good. Keep away from evil, remain pure.

## Chapter 7

We're studying 2 Corinthians. Last week we finished chapter six, and we ended with chapter 7:1. In that last section Paul was warning them not to be yoked with non believer. His concern was over morality.

Remember, sometimes we are more easily influenced by bad examples than good.

Here in chapter 7, Paul picks up with something he started in chapter 6. Let's review that:

**2 Corinthians 6:11** – We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. <sup>12</sup>We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. <sup>13</sup>As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

**7:2** – Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one.

These statements from Paul may shed some light on what kind of accusations had been made against him.

**7:3** – I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. <sup>4</sup>I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.

One of the great lessons from 2 Corinthians is the role of forgiveness and reconciliation in the life of a Christian.

Too many times we simply write people off, move on but stay angry. Paul modelled Christian love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Back in chapter two, Paul started to tell of Titus's return to him. He moved away from that for a defense of his ministry. He returns to that story now.

**7:5** – For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within.<sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,<sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

**7:8** – Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—<sup>9</sup> yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.

This letter would be what is called Letter C. The third letter that we know of that Paul sent to the Corinthians.

Like a parent, Paul hated to hear that they were sad for his rebuke. Yet like a loving parent, he was glad that their sorrow led to repentance.

He now writes about godly sorrow.

**7:10** – Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

There are two types of sorrow. Worldly and godly. Godly sorrow leads to repentance – which reconciles. Paul assures them that they do not need to have any regrets. They are reconciled.

God wants us all reconciled with God. And remember from Chapter five – we have the ministry of reconciliation.

**7:11** – See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what

readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

It may be confusing – Paul says that they have proven themselves to be innocent in their former rejection of Paul’s authority and teaching. After all, it was a sense of guilt that brought them to sorrow and repentance.

Perhaps this means that they have re-established their innocent standing now that they have repented of their sins that made them guilty.

**7:12** – So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrong nor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. <sup>13</sup> By all this we are encouraged.

Paul did not rebuke them in his letter out of anger or because he felt wronged. He rebuked them out of love, out of genuine concern for them.

Quoting from Proverbs 3:11-12 Hebrews says –

**Hebrews 12:5** – “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
<sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

Not only was Paul encouraged, so was Titus, who had been the go between between Paul and the Corinthians.

**7:13b** – In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. <sup>14</sup> I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. <sup>15</sup> And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup> I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.

Verse 15 says that the Corinthians received Titus with fear and trembling. This may refer to their reverent and humble attitude.

It may also mean that even before his arrival with Paul's letter, they had been convicted within over their break from Paul.

## Chapter 8

In chapters 8 & 9, Paul urges the Corinthians to complete their collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. He had mentioned this in 1 Corinthians, but evidently that project had been interrupted with their revolt against Paul.

In this section the theme is the blessing of giving.

**8:1** – And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup>In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup>they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. <sup>5</sup>And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

Paul begins this section by praising the churches of Macedonia. This would have included the cities of Philippi & Thessalonica, to which we have letter from Paul to the Christians there.

What a wonderful, beautiful, picture of the grace of giving – the grace of compassion. The Christians of Macedonia urgently pleaded for the privilege of giving! And, these were poor slaves. Truly, they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

**8:6** – So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

<sup>7</sup>But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you<sup>[a]</sup>—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I love that phrase – the grace of giving. Sometimes, that is the area in which many Christians are challenged. At least challenged to give sacrificially. Most Christians give from their abundance – from what they have left over.

**8:8** – I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

We should never give because we are commanded. Like all we do – we give out of love. Remember from this morning’s message – all that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Giving and generosity is faith expressing itself through love.

Jesus was never rich on this earth, but as God in heaven – he sure was! Yet, he gave all of that up so that we would be rich for eternity.

**8:10** – And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. <sup>11</sup>Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. <sup>12</sup>For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

Paul never specifies what the portion of one’s giving should be. Paul leaves that to be decided between the individual and God.

Many Christians give without ever consulting God about it. I think many would be afraid to consult with God through prayer about their giving!

**8:13** – Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. <sup>14</sup>At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, <sup>15</sup>as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

Paul quotes Exodus 16:18 to show that the principle of economic fairness was not a new idea of his, but a biblical principle.

Economic fairness is something we struggle with. We struggle because we are human. Don't give up the struggle! Pray to the Holy Spirit to guide you in this. What is economic fairness, and what is your role in this fairness?

In the rest of the chapter, Paul sends his recommendations or praises for Titus and other leaders in the church. Verse 16 picks up where verse 6 left off.

**8:16** – Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. <sup>17</sup> For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. <sup>18</sup> And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.

This man is not named, and we simply do not know who it was.

**8:19** – What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. <sup>20</sup> We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. <sup>21</sup> For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

Paul is taking the necessary precautions to protect himself. In chapter 12, it appears that he is being accused of being in ministry for the people's money. Which, as we will see when we get there, leads some to suspect that 2 Corinthians is a composite of more than one letter.

**8:22** – In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you.

This is now a third man, two in addition to Titus, that are being sent. This man, also, is not named.

**8:23** – As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

## Chapter 9

Paul continues to write about the offering.

**9:1** – There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. <sup>2</sup> For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. <sup>3</sup> But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. <sup>4</sup> For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. <sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

I think this section fairly straight forward. God wants us to be generous. God wants us to give to the needs of others.

When we give grudgingly we are not reflecting the spirit of Christ.

Also, it is clear that these new Christians had not yet learned this principle. Sadly, many Christians never learn this principle.

**9:6** – Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Paul is referencing Proverbs 11:24-26. Not quoting it word for word, but giving the same principle. And this principle holds true in the natural and spiritual world.

A large harvest requires more planting. The one who plants more will have a greater harvest.

We should all realize that our generosity towards the needs of others can bring spiritual results.

**9:7** – Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Again, we see that Paul does not mention tithing, but an honest decision. This should be made through prayer – asking God to speak to your heart.

It's been my observation that those who nurture their relationship with Jesus tend to be more regular in their giving – and more generous.

Generosity is not an amount. A person of wealth can give a fine looking sum, but has not really been generous. While a person of little financial standing can give what looks to be a little but is, in fact, a generous offering.

Regardless of the amount, what God desires is that we give cheerfully. When we give to causes and churches that are making a difference in the lives of others – it should bring us joy.

**9:8** – And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written:  
“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever.”

Paul quotes Psalm 112:9 . Psalm 112 declares that God has distributed God's gifts freely, and God's people should follow God's example.

**9:10** – Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

While helping to provide for the needs of others is right and Christlike, there is more to giving. Generosity produces righteousness. When we give we have the privilege of being used by God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 said that whatever we do, do it to glorify God. This last passage in chapter nine tells us that when we are generous, both givers and receivers will glorify God.

**9:12** – This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

In the end, Paul’s focus is not on the gift of money, but on God’s gift to all who are in Christ. This gift from God is indescribable. Some translations have unspeakable, others inexpressible – which is what the Greek says.

## **Chapter 10**

Chapters 10-13 present a noticeable and stark difference in the tone of the letter. Some propose that perhaps Paul had just heard of some new rebellion amongst the Corinthian Christians. Yet, Paul does not mention any new news.

Most biblical scholars today believe that chapter 10-13 are actually part of the stern letter which Paul wrote from Ephesus.

**10:1** – By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” toward you when away! <sup>2</sup> I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.

In verse 1, Paul is stating the a charge against him – that he was only bold from a distance.

Verse two makes it clear that being in ministry to make money off of them is also a charge against Paul.

**10:3** – For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

In verse two Paul said that there were people who thought he lived by the standards of the world. Here in verse three Paul answers that charge. Yes, he does live in the world. No, he does not live by the worlds standards.

**10:4** – The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

The weapons of the world – he’s not talking about military weapons. He’s talking about lies, slander, cheating. He’s talking about using people for monetary gain. These are the weapons of the world.

Paul’s weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. What are the strongholds? The resistance of the enemies of God? Those who opposed Paul were strongholds. Through God’s power, Paul could break through those barriers.

**10:5** – We demolish arguments (a stronghold) and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (strongholds), and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

So the battle is against the hearts and minds of those who are opposed to the things of God. Through God’s power, Paul was able to destroy arguments and even the impressive sounding opinions of those who opposed Paul.

There’s been a couple of ways to interpret this last sentence - *we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*. I don’t think Paul is necessarily talking about the thoughts of others, but his own.

We would be wise – especially when dealing with someone or someone’s who oppose us – to take captive our thoughts to make sure that they are obedient to Christ.

**10:6** – And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

By punishment, Paul is not referring to some form of corporal punishment. Remember, Paul had just said that his weapons were not physical, but spiritual.

Back in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul wrote about a man who was living with his step mother. Paul wrote about removing that man from the church and minister to him as a non believer. Some form of removing the guilty parties would be the form of punishment Paul is writing about.

**10:7** – You are judging by appearances.<sup>[a]</sup> If anyone is confident that they belong to Christ, they should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as they do.

The first part of verse seven is translated in various ways. It literally says you are judging by the face – which was their way of saying appearance.

Some say this means that perhaps was a man of small stature.

The RSV translates the first part of verse seven as – Look at what is before your eyes. In other words – look at the results of what Paul has done planting churches.

**10:8** – So even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. <sup>9</sup>I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. <sup>10</sup>For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” <sup>11</sup>Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

Verse ten gives us an accusation against Paul. Apparently, some false teachers had come into Corinth after Paul left. Amazing how quickly false teaching crept into the church. The church is always under attack from false teachers. Sadly, still, many Christians buy into – pun intended – false teachings.

**10:12** – We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Many of the early false teachers were simply men who had made their living as traveling orators/speakers. Picking up some loose interpretation of the teachings of Jesus, they rode into areas of pagan converts and made their living off of people who did not truly understand the message.

Much as some do today.

**10:13** – We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you.

When Paul says that he and those with him will not boast beyond limits, he is saying that they aren't trying to win a popularity contest. The only boasting they will do is about what God has given them to do.

Whenever Paul boasts, it's about God, and what God is doing.

This is a good lesson for all Christians. We are not called to be impressive according to worldly standards. I've heard some impressive teaching and preaching by worldly standards, but the content was not solid. However, people like impressive over solid.

**10:14** – We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.

In other words – They succeeded in what God called them to do – they brought the good news to the Corinthians, and they had believed.

**10:15** – Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, <sup>16</sup> so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.

Paul's main task had been completed, but he is not finished. It is Paul's desire that as their faith grows, his influence among them will also grow.

How so? Perhaps they join in evangelistic opportunities, or they seek deeper teachings. Or they support missionary work.

**10:16b** – For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else’s territory. <sup>17</sup> But, “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>18</sup> For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Paul’s quote is a shortened version of Jeremiah 9:24, which he used in 1 Corinthians 1:31.

## Chapter 11

Paul has been defending himself against challenges to his authority. Apparently, some men had come to Corinth and told them that Paul wasn’t a legitimate Apostle.

Who? We don’t know. Perhaps some Jews trying to undermine Paul’s work. Maybe, as I mentioned last time, just some powerful orator/speaker who was trying to make money off of them.

As we saw in chapter 10, this person may have claimed that Paul didn’t have authority because he wasn’t some impressive looking person who spoke powerfully. The culture of that day – and this day – wanted speakers who spoke boldly and with passion.

Here, in chapter 11, Paul defends himself even more vigorously. Remember, scholars believe this to be part of Paul’s stern letter because the tone of the letter is so different from the first nine chapters.

As we see in verse one, Paul seems to be uncomfortable in the role of self defense because his words may sound as some form of self promotion – which is what others would do to be heard by the Christians.

**11:1** – I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! <sup>2</sup> I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

In the culture of Paul's day, the betrothal period was much more binding than the modern concept of engagement. A father would betroth his daughter to a man months or even years in advance.

The father's responsibility, in part, was to protect his daughter's virginity until she was married to her husband.

Using that analogy, which they would have been familiar with, Paul says that the Corinthian Christians are betrothed to Christ, and his responsibility was like a father to his betrothed daughter.

Paul's saw it as his duty to protect them from anyone attempting to steal them away from Christ, or from the true faith.

**11:3** – But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

This is a powerful passage of Scripture, and it has always been timely. It amazes me how easily many people put up with – as Paul said the the Galatians – Good News that isn't really good news at all.

When people do accept different teachings – and I'm talking about good church going Christians – it's because the preachers spoke powerfully.

On advantage we have that they did not can be found in

**2 Timothy 3:16** – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

We should always check the Scriptures before accepting any teaching. That is why I always include the Scripture references from my sermons in the bulletin, in case anyone is not certain they can check.

**11:5** – I do not think I am in the least inferior to those “super-apostles.”

We translate this term as super apostles, or Superlative apostles. The KJV has chiefest apostles. The Greek word is hooper – and we get the word hyper from it.

Paul is not referring to any of the apostles that we know – he is referring to false teachers who had come to Corinth and led them stray.

Remember, they were professional orators/speakers. Paul refers to this in the next verse.

**11:6** – I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. <sup>7</sup> Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge?

What was happening in Corinth is that Paul came to town, preached and taught the message of Jesus Christ. He worked among them to pay his way. After he left, some powerful speakers come in, preach a different message, claim to be something of God, and make money off of them.

Sound strange? It shouldn't! It's still being done today! There are members of churches across this nation who send money to all kinds of preachers instead of sending their money to their own local church.

**11:8** – I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. <sup>9</sup> And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. <sup>10</sup> As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

Paul did not rob anyone, but he was supported by other churches. He uses exaggeration to make his point.

What is his boasting? That he loves them so much!

**11:12** – And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. <sup>13</sup> For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

Paul knows that the false apostles (earlier he called them hyper apostles) would not be able to get the more established churches to support their missionary work as Paul had done. So, he would be cutting the ground from under them.

**11:14** – And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Paul writes – and no wonder. It is no wonder because Scripture tells us that this is Satan’s tactic, deception. We find Satan’s deception in the opening chapters of Genesis.

**1 Peter 5:8** – Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

These false apostles were not merely some group of Christians disagreeing with Paul over certain points of doctrine. These false teachers were intentional in their deception of the Christians in Corinth.

**11:16** – I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting.

Beginning in this verse, Paul, for the sake of argument, agrees to compete on the terms of the hyper apostles. In other words, bring it on!

So, to make a point, he will be foolish and boast.

**11:17** – In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. <sup>18</sup> Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. <sup>19</sup> You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise!

Do you see why scholars believe this to be part of the stern or angry letter? Paul is angry, and sarcastic!

Here, Paul is saying that they should be able to put up with his foolishness since they so easily put up with others.

The so wise is clearly sarcasm. Remember, he spent much of 1 Corinthians addressing the wisdom party. In 1 Corinthians 13 when he writes – If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, but don't have faith – he was addressing the wisdom party.

**11:20** – In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face.

They think that they were wise, but they were duped and imposed upon by false apostles.

**11:21** – To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Paul's use of sarcasm comes through again. They were too weak to boast about themselves, clearly implying that the false apostles did a lot of boasting.

**11:21b** – Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. <sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. <sup>23</sup> Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup> I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. <sup>27</sup> I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. <sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

A lot to break down here. Let's start with verse 22. Paul asks if they were Hebrews. Later he mentions Jews. In that time a Hebrew was a Jew who spoke Aramaic.

The false apostles obviously spoke Aramaic and Greek.

Then he asks if they were Israelites. Israelites was a term for covenant people.

Then – are they Abraham’s descendants? Again, simply another term for those who claim to be heirs of God’s promise.

Paul seems to be putting out titles that the false apostles had used in their boasting. Since Paul had not been one to boast, they had never heard him make all of these claims.

Again, we see where Christians are more impressed with flash and powerful speaking than they with sound doctrine.

Then in verse 23 goes through a long list of hardships that he had already endured for the sake of the good news.

From Scripture we know that by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians he had been imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:23). He would be imprisoned more, but that would come after this letter.

In verse 24 he writes of five times receiving 40 lashes minus 1 (the legal limit for a Roman citizen) from the Jews. We don’t have any record of that in Acts. These were most likely in Gentile lands at the hands of the synagogue leaders.

In verse 25 he writes of being beaten with rods three times. This was a Roman punishment. We know of one of those times from Acts 16:22-23. That happened in Philippi.

We know that Paul received a stoning in Lystra.

**Acts 14:19** – Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. <sup>20</sup> But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

We don’t have written account of the three shipwrecks. The story of his being shipwrecked in Acts 27 occurred after this.

Something that tells us even more of Paul's character in addition to these hardships is found in verse 28 – "I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

Paul certainly had a pastors heart, and was concerned for all of the churches that he started.

**11:29** – Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

In verse 28, Paul spoke of his daily concern for the churches. In verse 29 it's clear that Paul is not only concerned for someone coming into a saving faith with Jesus. He wants more for Christians. His burden for the people of the church continues for all believers even after they have received salvation.

**11:30** – If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. <sup>31</sup> The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup> In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. <sup>33</sup> But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

In this passage Paul is boasting about how weak he really is. This may have been the exact opposite of what the Corinthians wanted to hear. They had wanted apostles, like the false apostles who had turned them from Paul, appeared strong and **confident in themselves**. Paul, however, is describing how he is weak in an effort to show how strong God was in his life.

A variant of this story here is found in Acts 9:23-25.

## Chapter 12

In chapter 12 Paul shares an experience where he was transported into the presence of God. He then receives his thorn in his side. So, Paul boasts in his weakness because when he is weak, it more clearly proves the power of Christ within him.

**12:1** – I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.

Don't forget the reason for his boasting. False apostles – whom Paul called hyper Apostles – had gone to Corinth and led them astray. They had come to Corinth boasting of their background and knowledge.

Paul had been humble with them, but now in defense he shares with them his experiences. We have heard of the trials of his missionary journeys. Now, Paul turns to more personal experiences.

**12:2** – I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.<sup>3</sup> And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—<sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

When we get to verse seven, we will see more clearly that Paul is writing about himself.

Fourteen years prior would have been about 44 A.D. This would have been after his conversion but before what we call his first missionary journey.

The third heaven. There were two popular notions in Jewish thought about heaven. One had seven levels and one had three. This is what Paul is referring to.

According to the third heaven theory, the first heaven was what we could see above us – terrestrial – the place where we see birds and mountain tops. The second heaven was celestial – where the moon and stars are.

The third heaven was where God and the angels existed.

So, Paul had an experience of heaven.

Verse four tells us that he heard inexpressible things. The Greek is a word play – unutterable utterances. That doesn't mean that he didn't understand it – but that they were too sacred to repeat.

**12:5** – I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup>Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, <sup>7</sup>or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

So, now it is revealed that this man that Paul writes about was, indeed, himself. It was him and the experience was so great that he was given a thorn in his flesh to keep him humble.

The word we translate as thorn is skolops in the Greek, and it literally means a pointed piece of wood. We might translate it as a wooden stake, which is much more harmful and painful than a thorn.

There has been much written and much debate as to what this thorn may have been. Some refer to Galatians 6:11 and say it had something to do with Paul's eyesight.

Others say it may have been a physical weakness or even a tremor alluded to in 1 Corinthians 2:3.

Some say it may have been something to do with his speech, as alluded to in 2 Corinthians 10:10).

The list of theories goes on and on. Scripture never tells us of the exact nature of Paul's thorn. That's a good thing. If we focused on what it was we might miss the greater truth of the story.

Some of those truths:

Humility amongst servants of God – which we should all be – is of utmost importance to God;

In the here and now in this fallen world, Satan has a level of control over us which is only overcome through the spiritual strength that God offers.

**12:8** – Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

This doesn't mean that somewhere along the way Paul asked three times in some short quick prayer. Paul would have been talking about an extended times of prayer, perhaps days of fasting and praying.

**12:9** – But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

There are some tremendous truths to be uncovered in this passage. First, God did answer Paul’s prayer even though the answer was no. The no of God led to a revelation to Paul about God’s nature. And that nature is grace which is sufficient for all things.

The Grace of God is all we really need.

Another truth, one of which most Christians, especially comfortable American Christians, do not want to face – God’s primary concern for us is not the ease of mortal life.

God’s primary concern is that we trust God for sufficient grace. This means we will allow God to be strong in places in which we are weak, and not to resent God for our areas in which we may suffer.

Paul now shares again the reason for his boasting.

**12:11** – I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,”<sup>[a]</sup> even though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup> I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.

Paul has not mentioned these before in 2 Corinthians. The implication is that the super/hyper apostles did not show such signs. All they had was impressive speech.

There are a number of stories of Paul performing miracles. In Acts 14 Paul healed a man who had been crippled since birth.

**Acts 19:11** – God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

In Acts 20 there is the story of Eutychus, the young man who got sleepy while Paul was preaching and fell out of a second story window and died. Paul raised him from the dead.

And others. So, sure, I would think that such happenings would qualify someone as an legitimate apostle!

**12:13** – How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Paul is asking if they feel less favored by Paul than the other churches that Paul planted. Paul answers his own question by saying that the only way they were treated differently was that Paul did not burden them financially.

His forgive me this wrong is sarcasm.

Maybe there was something going on that was all to human that we miss. Paul offered them the knowledge of God's grace free of charge. They seem to prefer the message of God that they had to pay for.

In a similar way – God offers to us God's grace free of charge, but many Christians feel they have to work for God's favor.

**12:14** – Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

Paul says that he is ready to visit them a third time. We know of his first visit from Acts 18. In 2 Corinthians 2 we read that he didn't want to make another painful visit. So it appears that his second visit was during the time of turmoil between the Corinthians and Paul.

**12:15** – So **I** will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?

The I in I will is emphatic in the Greek, emphasizing that Paul is willing to go beyond what the false apostles had done.

In verses 16-18 Paul denies the charge that their had been any dishonesty in money matters.

**12:16** – Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!

It appears that one of the things said about Paul was that he was being deceitful. This is referenced in sarcasm when he writes ‘crafty fellow that I am.’ Was was his supposed intended deceit? We can’t be sure, perhaps, that he was trying to play on the Corinthians guilt to get money later.

Paul explains that this wasn’t true.

**12:17** – Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? <sup>18</sup>I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?

Paul is asking them to think about the charge against him. Did they have any evidence that Paul or Titus (or the unnamed brother) were cheating them?

In the closing verses of chapter 12, Paul gives some final warnings in anticipation of his third visit.

**12:19** – Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. <sup>20</sup>For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.

In verse 19 we see that Paul's goal is to build up the church in Corinth. Building one another up is a common theme in Paul's letters. Building one another up is a characteristic of a healthy church.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** – Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

The list of things that he is afraid he will find sound a lot like the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 – those things that are opposed to the fruit of the Spirit.

**12:21** – I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

Apparently such behavior has been an ongoing problem in Corinth. Such behavior was addressed in 1 Corinthians.

## Chapter 13

**13:1** – This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, <sup>3</sup> since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. <sup>4</sup> For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

Verse one suggests some sort of formal church meeting. He quotes from Deuteronomy 19, as Jesus did in Matthew 18.

It is clear that Paul is warning the Corinthians that they should not expect Paul to appear weak during his next visit.

**13:5** – Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? <sup>6</sup> And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

It is good advice for all Christians to examine our faith and Christian walk. What are the results of our faith? Are we expressing our faith through love (Galatians 5)? Is Jesus Christ, is our salvation, making a change within us?

Ultimately, as Paul asks here – we ask ourselves ‘is Christ within us?’ Christ in us is a common theme throughout Paul’s letters. For example, we find in ...

**Galatians 2:20** – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

**13:7** – Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. <sup>8</sup> For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

Paul shows humility when he says that the only perceived failure would be on Paul’s side – failure to properly introduce them to Christ if they failed to repent.

Verse eight seems to be clarifying his position that they did not fail, even if some think they did. For they cannot do anything other than present the truth.

**13:9** – We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. <sup>10</sup> This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

Paul would be glad to appear weak if only the Corinthians were strong – in their faith.

Some translations have perfection in verse nine instead of restored, which I read from the NIV. I believed restored in the better translation from the Greek.

If chapters 10-13 are part of the stern letter, 13:11-13 may be the conclusion of the thankful letter found in 2 Corinthians 1-9. This is surmised because, once again, the tone is upbeat, not like chapters 10-13.

**13:11** – Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

<sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a *holy kiss*. <sup>13</sup> All God's people here send their greetings.

<sup>14</sup> May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *fellowship of the Holy Spirit* be with you all.