

Introduction

- See page 1 of my 'Study of 1 Corinthians'. Note: It's believed that Paul wrote at least four letters to the church in Corinth, two of which are included in the Bible. His first letter to the Corinthians is lost (I Cor.5:9-11); his second letter is the book of I Corinthians; his third letter is also lost (2:6-9); and his fourth letter is this book of II Corinthians. It was written about a year after writing I Corinthians, probably while Paul was in Philippi.
- Because of contention with Barnabas, concerning John Mark, Paul chose Silas as his companion for his 'Second Missionary Journey' (**Acts 15:36-40**). When they arrived at Troas, Paul, in a night vision, received the call to Macedonia. Therefore, he and the others, believing God was calling them to go there to preach the gospel, went straightway (**Acts 16:9-12**).
- While in Macedonia, churches were founded at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. From there, Paul traveled to Athens, preached the sermon: 'The Unknown God', and then went on to Corinth. Note: This was Paul's first visit to Corinth. He continued there a year and six months, and founded the church (**Acts 18:4-11**).
- After leaving Corinth, Paul journeyed to Ephesus. While there, he received word of some problems that had arisen among believers back in Corinth, problems such as: worldliness, internal strife, and doctrinal defections. False teachers had entered the church and had poisoned the hearts and minds of some concerning Paul: claiming he was fickle, that he took too much authority upon himself, that he didn't have proper credentials, etc. So, Paul wrote a letter, hoping it would be helpful in their getting things worked out for the glory of God. Too, he gave instructions as to how they were to treat the offender (he who was mentioned in **I Cor.5**) after he had sincerely repented.

Chapter 1

Vs.1,2. Paul sends greetings from himself and Timothy.

- 'an apostle of Jesus Christ'. Since some in the church had questioned Paul's apostleship, he wants them to know that he is not only an apostle of Jesus Christ, but an apostle by the 'will of God'. Note: An 'apostle' is someone sent with full power of authority to act in behalf of another. As regarding the Christian faith, it means that God sends someone to do what He, Himself would do if He went. Note: There are 24 persons listed in the Bible as being apostles. Yet, many questions have been raised through the years as to 'what' is required for apostleship?; 'who' is an apostle?; are there apostles in our day (2020)?; etc.

My answers: (1) It's suggested that in order to be an Apostle a person must have spent time with the Lord Jesus Christ. (I agree.) (2) Although some 24 persons are mentioned in the Bible as being apostles, some believe that only the 12 disciples and Paul should actually have this distinction. (I disagree.) But I do believe that Paul was God's choice to replace Judas Iscariot. When the Apostle John was writing concerning the New Jerusalem (**Rev.21:14**), he said, 'And the wall of that city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb'. (I expect Paul's name to be there rather than that of Matthias.)

(3) **Eph.4:11** tells us that Jesus 'gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers'. (I don't believe there are those who hold the office of an 'apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God' in our day (in 2020).

- Too, although the epistle is primarily addressed to 'the church of God which is at Corinth', Paul intended it to be a 'circular letter' for 'all the saints which are in all Achaia'. Note: A 'saint' is someone saved by the blood of Christ and set apart to walk in newness of life.
- 'Grace be to you and peace'. For Paul, 'grace' always preceded 'peace'. Until a person has received the grace of God, he can know nothing of God's peace. Note: I like what one writer said of grace: 'It demands no merit and incurs no obligation'. Too, it has been extended to all of mankind through Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. Thank God for the message of the cross.

- Vs.3-7. 'Blessed be God . . . the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort'. Note: 'Grace' is God giving us what we don't deserve (blessings of salvation, healing, etc.), while 'mercy' (compassion) is man not getting what he deserves (punishment and death). We're not told who wrote **Ps.136**, but I'm glad it is included in the Scriptures. All 26 verses tell us that 'God's mercy endureth for ever'. Amen! Too, here in **vs.3-6**, 'comfort' is mentioned five times, and it means to encourage, to give strength and hope. Note: On the night before being crucified, Jesus told the disciples, 'it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you' (**Jn.16:7**). And it happened just as Jesus said (**Acts 2:1-4**). The Comforter has come! He has come alongside to give strength for the inner man and encouragement for the outer man.**
- 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation' (**Isa.40:1; 51:12; 66:13**). But we must remember: God doesn't comfort the faithful so that we might be comfortable, but that we might become comforters. Notice: The word 'consolation' is mentioned four times in **vs.5-7**. As

problems and difficulties increase, so does the consolation. Amen! When Christians suffer, Christ suffers with us. Surely, we are serving a wonderful Lord!

- Our hope concerning you is steadfast. It hasn't wavered, in spite of all we have heard. And since you share in the sufferings for Christ, you will share in His grace and consolation, as well.

V.8. 'For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant'. Paul used this statement, or a variation of it, on many different occasions. Actually, he is saying, 'There are some things I want you to grasp', some things, of which, I want you to 'be sure', to 'fully understand'. Then, in the last part of the verse Paul tells how God had been faithful in times of trouble. 'We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life'. **Note:** He was not saying their troubles were more than they could bear, but that they had come to the end of themselves; their strength was gone, completely diminished. In fact, he had written earlier, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it' (I Cor.10:13).

- 'We despaired even of life'. We were convinced that this was the end, fearing that we would not live through the persecution.

V.9. 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves'. Paul's condition, due to the external pressures and physical limitations, had reached the point where the only way out, seemingly, was death. Yet, God's purpose, even in this, was being fulfilled so that Paul would come to the end of himself and trust God (the One who raises from the dead) completely. Amen! **Note:** God, oftentimes, allows desperate trials in order that Christ might come near; and, as we look unto Him in faith, He gives the grace needed to bring us to overcoming victory. **Ex.** King Jehoshaphat prayed (**II Chron.20:12**), 'O our God, wilt thou not judge them (armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mt. Seir)? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee'. Amen! That's the answer!

- In **I Cor.15:31**, Paul said, 'I die daily'. Many teach that Paul is saying that he 'died out to sin daily'; but that's not the case at all. In **Rom.6:6,7** Paul says, 'Knowing this, that our old man in crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin'. We need not reckon the 'old man' (self-will; sin nature; uncircumcised heart) to be crucified by faith but once. 'For he that is dead is freed from sin'. Therefore, when Paul said 'I die daily', he was not speaking of dying out to sin (which had taken place much earlier in sanctification), but of putting his life on the line for the Lord every day, knowing that at any time he could be put to death for preaching the Gospel.

V.10. Three wonderful statements:

- (1) God delivered us when it seemed as if death was certain.
- (2) God continues to deliver. (He is the never-changing God.)
- (3) And we are confident that He will deliver in the future. Our hope is in Him.

Ex. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (**Dan.3:15-18**). The king asked, saying, 'who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' They answered, saying, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up'. Amen! I pray that God will give us young Christians in our day such as these Hebrew boys.

Vs.11-14. 'Ye also helping together by prayer'. This likely has reference to the cooperation of the saints in Corinth interceding on Paul's behalf along with the other churches. Too, it seems Paul is saying, 'health was rendered by means of prayer, therefore, thanksgiving to God is rendered by means of many who shared in praying'.

- Paul's basis for rejoicing was the fact that he had determined in his heart that he could remain faithful to the Lord, refuse to compromise with the world, and, continue to live holy until God called him home.
- In summary, Paul says, 'Some of you understand, not only 'what' was written in the first letter, but 'why' it was written. And because you received it in the right spirit, it has caused you to rejoice. Too, you will be 'our rejoicing' when we present you before Him in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Vs.15,16. Because of the news Paul had received concerning the believers in Corinth, he intended to return to them upon his leaving Ephesus - 'that ye might have a second benefit'. Note: Some have suggested that Paul was referring to them receiving a 'second work of grace' (of their being sanctified). But that can't be. They were already sanctified (**I Cor.1:2**). (2) Others teach that Paul was speaking of a 'second visit' to them. But that, too, can't be, since Paul had already visited them twice (**12:14**). Paul explains in **v.16**, telling them that in his trip to Macedonia he would be seeing them twice: once on his way there, and, again, upon his return.

Vs.17-19. The Apostle vindicates himself. Paul's opponents used his unexpected change of plans to accuse him of being untrustworthy. But just as God does not promise one thing while intending another (yes and no), so Paul was not intentionally misleading the Corinthians when he said he had planned to visit them. Note: As the truth of God stands, so does the word of the apostle.

- Paul was consistent in his preaching, and, in his daily living. That which he had preached earlier, he still preached. That which he had declared sinful and wrong, he continued to declare sinful and wrong. Note: Many of our day have watered down the Gospel, endeavoring to make it palatable enough to draw in the crowds and finances. How sad!

Vs.20-22. The promises of God find their affirmation and fulfillment in Christ. Note: 'Amen' is equivalent to 'yes'. Whether a Gentile (yea) or a Hebrew (amen), the promises of God are sure. Paul goes on to say that his word is as good as the gospel because 'he which stablisheth us with you in Christ . . . is God'.

- A Threefold Blessing of God:

(1) He establishes (makes secure in Christ; leads into 'truth'; confirms in the faith).

(2) He anoints (endues with power).

(3) He seals (with a stamp of ownership). He has set His seal upon us, letting the world know we belong to Him. Too, He has given us His Spirit as a pledge of future blessings.

Vs.23,24. Paul explains why he had waited before coming again to Corinth. He didn't want to cause any more sorrow among them. His desire was to help.

Chapter 2

- As mentioned in the 'Introduction' (**p.1**), Paul, likely, wrote at least four letters to the church in Corinth. Too, it's believed by many that he visited Corinth a second time before writing his third letter (which we know as II Corinthians). He went there to deal with the faction in the church that was undermining his authority as an apostle.
- Vs.1-3.** Paul gives his reason as to why he did not come to Corinth, as was expected: deciding that it would be best not to visit them again until they had acted upon the matter mentioned in his previous letter. He did not want to grieve them, nor to be grieved by them. But he wanted them to take care of the matter in question, so that when he came, he would be able to rejoice with them for their obedience. In essence, he was saying, 'If I make you sorry enough to cause you to put away sin, then you will make me glad'. Note: One of the greatest joys a minister of the gospel can experience is to see his 'spiritual children' walking in 'truth'.
- Vs.4,5.** Paul didn't enjoy reprimanding his fellow believers, but cared enough to confront them about their wrongdoing. Paul illustrated, by example, how to handle discipline in a godly manner: address the issue causing 'grief', hoping it will result in 'joy'. Note: Discipline, in love, may cause 'affliction and anguish of heart', but its purpose is always restoration.
- If the behavior of an individual in the church has caused distress, it doesn't mean that he has actually injured me; but, to some extent, he has injured all of you.
- Vs.6-8.** Paul, here, refers to the person in the church (**I Cor.5**) who had committed fornication (incest). The disciplinary action taken by the church, as recommended by Paul, had brought the wrongdoer to repentance. Note: The punishment had been 'inflicted by many' (evidently, a majority). It seems that some of the church did not participate in administering the punishment, for whatever reason. But now, the church was having a difficult time forgiving and receiving the repentant wrongdoer back into fellowship. So, Paul exhorts them, letting them know it's time to do so - in love.
- Vs.9,10.** For my aim in writing was simply to test your loyalty, to determine whether or not you accepted my authority as an apostle. Therefore, anyone who has your forgiveness has mine, as well.
- Two extremes in church discipline:
 - (1) Being too lenient concerning sin; not correcting mistakes; letting it slide.
 - (2) Being too harsh. Failing to forgive and restore to fellowship after one has repented, exhibiting godly sorrow.
- V.11.** Another reason why the church should be ready to forgive and restore those repentant: 'Lest Satan should get an advantage of us'. Not only does Satan desire to get an advantage against the penitent (driving him to despair), but against the ministers and churches, as well. Note: The real purpose in discipline is to restore a person to a rightful relationship with the Lord, and, with fellow Christians. Never to destroy. Satan would love to represent

ministers and churches as being too severe, too rigid, too demanding; and most of all, uncaring (without real love). But we must always remember: Satan is a 'liar', a subtle enemy, and, is not only bent on deceiving, but to steal, kill, and destroy everything that is good (**Jn.10:10**).

- 'We are not ignorant of his devices' (schemes, deceptive tactics). We must understand that the devil will take advantage of every failure that can possibly be found in the Christian. That's another reason why we, as Christians, should always endeavor to 'walk in the light, as he (Christ) is in the light'. Note: It's been said that Satan's 'first attack' is against the gospel. Therefore, if he can bring disunity and division to the church (which is God's agent in spreading the good news of salvation to mankind), he will use it to bring dishonor upon the gospel.

Vs.12,13. After writing at length concerning the one in the church who had been disciplined, and now, needing restoration and renewed fellowship, Paul digresses to give an account of his travels and ministry since leaving Corinth. While in Troas, he had a vision of a man praying, saying, 'Come over into Macedonia, and help us'. Believing that God was opening the door for him to preach in Europe (Macedonia), Paul immediately made plans to go. Yet, his concern for Titus and the church in Corinth was so great he was troubled in his spirit to the degree that he was unable to find rest. Note: He had hoped to find Titus at Troas, and, to learn from him how things were going in Corinth. But Titus had not yet arrived.

- Vs.14-17.** Paul pictures believers here as in a 'triumphal procession' led by Christ, the Resurrected Savior. Not just a single occasion, or one outstanding victory, but, 'always triumphant'. Amen! This is not just a 'promise', or a 'hope', it's a 'statement of fact' for all who will wholly follow the Lord. For which, we give thanks to God! Note: I'm reminded of the song our choir used to sing: 'We Are Victorious'. That means 'defeat' is not a part of our daily living. Too, the 'key' to 'triumphant living' is found in the two words: 'in Christ'. He has never lost a battle. Therefore, if we remain 'in Him', we need never be defeated.
- 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ'. Note: A Christian's 'fragrance' should be that of Christ. We are to be like a sweet perfume whose fragrance others can readily notice. If we remain true to Him, his Spirit, working in us, will attract others. 'God uses us to reveal and spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of himself' (New English Bible). 'He makes our knowledge of him spread throughout the world like a lovely perfume' (New Testament in Modern English - J. B. Phillips).
 - The 'gospel message' results in one of two things: (1) To those who believe and accept it - 'salvation'. (2) To those who reject it - 'damnation'. For one, it is 'life unto life'; for the other, 'death unto death'.
 - 'And who is sufficient for these things?' 'Who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work, a work of such vast importance, with consequences so great? (M. Henry).
 - Some in the Corinthian church had questioned Paul's apostleship, so the implied answer to his question is 'I am'. And he proceeds to mention his credentials as being altogether different from those which had corrupted the word of God, saying, 'but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ'. Paul was not boasting, but wanted to assure them that his adequacy was not within himself, but in God. (**Jn.15:5**)

- Note: There are still 'religious hucksters', even today, who prostitute the gospel for their own benefit. It seems their major desire is to have their coffers filled, having little or no concern for the 'truth of God's Word' or for the eternal salvation of their listeners.

Chapter 3

Vs.1,2. Some, of Paul's day, were carrying 'letters of commendation' (forged or otherwise) to enhance their authority. In fact, due to the social, political, and religious climate of the day, such letters of introduction were both advisable and necessary. Yet, Paul was amazed that some Corinthian believers would require such from him, inasmuch as he had been one of those who had brought the message of salvation to their city, and founded the church there.

- He states that he doesn't need such letters. The changed lives of his converts were recommendation enough. 'You are our letter, written in our hearts; and, yet, open for all to read'.

V.3. You are the 'epistle of Christ' ministered by us through the Holy Spirit; not written with ink or in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. This shows the contrast between the 'Law of Moses' and that of the 'Spirit'. The Law of Moses was 'external', while that of the Spirit is 'internal'. Note: 'Under the new covenant, established by the blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit writes the law of God, not in tablets of stone as at Sinai (**Exo.31:18**), but in tables of the heart' (Full Life Study Bible).

Vs.4,5. Paul is not boasting, but giving God the credit for anything that had been accomplished for good in their ministry. He refuses to take any praise to themselves, but ascribes all the glory to God. (A different action altogether than that of the false teachers.) Note: To say it another way: Paul was not 'self-sufficient', but 'God-sufficient'.

V.6. 'God has made us competent to serve as ministers of the New Covenant' (R. Weymouth). Note: It is called a 'new testament' because it could not be inaugurated until the death and resurrection of Christ (**Heb.9:16,17**).

- There were those in the Corinthian assembly who were concerned with what they believed to be Paul's defection from Moses' law. Here, Paul explains that the best the 'Law' could do (although it was holy, just, and good) was to bring condemnation upon all who fell short in fulfilling its requirements (which included all of mankind other than Jesus). No one but Jesus has ever fulfilled the written law perfectly; therefore, the whole world is under the condemnation of death.
- 'for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'. We must understand, it is not the law (written word) that destroys, but the law without the life and power of the Spirit that brings condemnation. In fact, the law was never intended to give life, but to serve as a mirror, convicting sinners and showing them their need for a Savior. Thank God for the spirit that gives life, eternal life, abundant life.

Vs.7,8. 'But if the ministration of death (referring to the 'Law'), written and engraven in stones (by the finger of God upon stone tablets), was glorious (limited, but brought into existence with splendor and glory), so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance (the people could not look upon Moses' face because of its brightness); which glory was to be done away' (although such glory and

splendor was only temporary, and would soon fade away). Note: This incident is recorded in **Exodus 34:29-35**, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony (the Law; Commandments).

- 'How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?' Paul is saying, if that which was temporary (soon faded away) manifested the glory of God in such a manner, how far more glorious must the ministration of the spirit be?

Vs.9-11. God Himself gave the law (Old Covenant) to Moses (**Exo.19**) amidst dazzling splendor of thunders and lightnings and smoke. Yet, Paul goes on to say, 'For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious'. The Law merely hinted at the glories to come in Christ. But, now, we can readily see that the New Testament in Jesus Christ is far superior to all that was received on Mount Sinai. Amen! Note: Jesus fulfilled the Law. When writing to the believers in Rome, Paul said, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth' (**Rom.10:4**).

Vs.12-14. Having therefore such a 'hope' (that of a new covenant in Christ Jesus), we have freedom to speak boldly, holding back nothing in our ministry.

- At the giving of the law, Moses, when with the people, had to cover his face with a veil because of the glory upon his countenance, a glory that was only temporary (would soon fade away). Yet, for Israel, the glory that has accompanied the new covenant remains in obscurity. Their hearts and minds are still blinded to the truth as though the veil upon Moses' face has now been placed upon their hearts and minds. Note: Only the gospel of God's grace can bring truth into full view. Only through Christ can the veil be lifted. That's why Christ commissioned the disciples (and us) to take the gospel to every creature (all of mankind; everyone, everywhere), so that those spiritually blind might see.

Vs.15,16. To the nation of Israel (seed of Abraham; Jews), Christ is still a stumbling block. When they read the prophecies of the Old Testament, they fail to grasp its real meaning. The veil remains upon their hearts, causing their spiritual eyes to be blinded to the truth. Nevertheless, the apostle tells us that 'when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away'. Note: It is believed by some the 'it', here in **v.16**, refers to the nation of Israel. They say, when Moses returned to God on the mountain, he removed the veil. In the same sense, when Israel once again returns to the Lord (**Rom.11:26**), the veil will be removed. Sounds reasonable. Yet, the 'it', in the verse in question, is more likely speaking of when a person turns to the Lord, when he commits his heart and life to Christ.

V.17. 'Now the Lord is that Spirit'. This does not mean that Jesus is now without a body, or that he became the Holy Spirit; it means that he entered into a new form of existence when he was glorified. As such, he can now live in heaven and in the hearts of believers at the same time.

- 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. Where he works, as he does under the new covenant (the gospel-dispensation), there is liberty. Note: This liberty (freedom), provided by Christ, is not a freedom for the believer to do as he wants, but to do what he should. We

are set free (liberated from the presence and power of sin) that we might serve God and our fellowman.

V.18. As the face of Moses reflected God's glory at Mount Sinai, the face of every Christian believer radiates the glory of Christ. That which was experienced only by Moses under the Old Covenant (dispensation of the law) is available to all believers under the New Testament (gospel dispensation of grace).

Chapter 4

- In **chapters 2 & 3**, Paul mentioned the 'ministry' as being: (a) 'triumphant in Christ' (always, and in every situation - **2:14**); (b) 'accredited' (having credence - **3:3**); and, (c) both 'spiritual' and 'glorious', giving life to those who believe - **3:6**. Note: Paul, having a desire to vindicate their ministry from the accusation of false teachers (those who charged them as being deceitful workers), concludes by mentioning their ministry as being (d) 'honest' (truthful; free from fraud or deception).

Vs.1,2. 'Therefore seeing we have this ministry'. The Apostle doesn't speak only of himself, but includes Silas, Timothy, Luke, and possibly others, who are a part of his evangelistic team.

- Seeing, then, that we have been entrusted with this ministry (commission), which we owe entirely to God's mercy, 'we faint not' (never lose heart; not derelict in fulfilling our calling; not despondent or discouraged, in spite of difficult situations - **Lu.18:1; Gal.6:9**). But, we denounce all underhanded, disgraceful, and crafty methods, such as those used by some to deceive and defraud the people.
- When we speak of Christ, we're careful not to distort the message in order to please the audience. We're determined to proclaim the 'truth' of God's Word.

Vs.3,4. The 'good news' of the gospel of Christ's saving grace is not to be hidden, but proclaimed and revealed to every one. The Apostle Peter says (**II Pet. 3:9**), 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'. Yet, Satan (the god of this world and 'master deceiver') 'hath blinded the minds of them which believe not'. He darkens the understanding of men by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds to the 'truth' that they should not behold 'the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God'. Note: For many, the love of pleasure, power, and prestige make God's offer of salvation seem irrelevant. Therefore, they reject Christ, preferring, instead, the ways of the world. By so doing, they make Satan their god. A question is asked: How is Satan able to accomplish all of this? Answer: Only by way of the 'permissive will' of God'. Remember: Satan's rule is usurped (been taken without right), and is temporary. He can only do 'what' God allows, and 'when' God allows it.

- The one all-important object of the ministry of Paul and his 'evangelistic team' was to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to make their Master known to the world as the Messiah, the Christ of glory.

V.5. It is Christ Jesus as Lord whom we proclaim; and not ourselves. We are simply servants of yours for His sake.

V.6. Just as God 'commanded the light to shine out of darkness' at creation (**Gen.1:2,3**), He has now flooded our hearts with his light; and by it we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines in the personal presence of Jesus Christ.

V.7. 'But we have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels'. Note: An earthen jar is a brittle jar, and is a picture of humanity in its weakness. Here, the emphasis is on the contrast between a frail vessel of earth (humanity) and the priceless treasure of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the vessel.

- 'Christianity is not the removal of weakness, nor is it merely the manifestation of divine power. Rather, it is the manifestation of divine power through human weakness' (**Full Life Study Bible**).

Vs.8,9. As believers, we may be 'troubled' (hard pressed; hedged in from every side), yet not 'distressed' (hemmed in, nor crushed); 'perplexed' (bewildered; filled with uncertainty), but not in 'despair' (never at a loss); 'persecuted' (grieved; harassed; hunted down), but not 'forsaken' (abandoned); 'cast down' (struck down), but not 'destroyed' (cast out; killed; left to die).

- Under no circumstances will God forsake his faithful children. At times, it might seem as if we have come to the end of our 'rope'; yet, we are never at the end of 'hope'. Whatever we might face in life, we have the assurance that we are 'always triumphant in Christ' (**II Cor.2:14**), and 'more than conquerors' through him that loved us.

Vs.10-12. Always exposed to death, even as was Jesus. Note: This is similar to Paul's statement, 'I die daily' (**I Cor.15:31**). He was referring to the outward man perishing day by day, of putting his life on the line for Christ daily; not of his dying to sin daily, as some teach.

- 'that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body' (so that the power of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies as well).
- We are ready to die for Christ. Yet, although we continually face death for preaching the gospel, it is that you might know more and more about living your life in Christ.
- 'So then death worketh in us, but life in you'. So great were the sufferings of the apostles that, in comparison with them, other Christians, even during this time, were in prosperous circumstances.

Vs.13,14. Our faith is similar to that mentioned in **Ps.116:10**. The question is raised: How could Paul maintain such joy and obedience in the face of so much suffering and the threat of death? The answer: Paul's hope was not in the peace and security of this life, but in the hope of the resurrection, and, of an eternity with the Lord free of sin, sickness, and death. Amen!

- Paul continues by saying, 'He who raised Jesus will also call us into his presence together with you.'

Vs.15-18. 'For all things are for your sakes'. We count our sufferings to be as nothing, if through them we might win you and others to Christ. The greater the number to whom the grace is given, the greater is the praise to the glory of God.

- That's why we are not discouraged, and refuse to give up. Even though outwardly we are wasting away (physical bodies are gradually returning to dust from which they came), yet, every day the inward man (spiritual man) receives fresh strength.

- The afflictions and hardships endured by the faithful are light when compared to the abundance of glory which is ours through Christ. Too, our present troubles, which are but for a short time, are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory, which is beyond our wildest imaginations. Note: The words of two hymns come to mind: (1) It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. (2) The toils of the road will seem nothing, when I get to the end of the way.
- 'Seeing that which is invisible'. The things which are seen are temporary (only here for a time; not worthy of the pursuit of an immortal soul), but those things we cannot see (things invisible) are those which are permanent (imperishable; eternal).

Chapter 5

Vs.1-13. Paul explains 'why death itself has no real terrors for those who love and serve God'. Too, he shows why he and the others, who were faithful servants of God, did not faint in the midst of their afflictions.

V. 1. 'For we know'. Modern-day theologians would have us believe 'there are no absolutes', 'everything is relative', 'we cannot be fully sure when it comes to matters of religion', i.e. knowing there is a heaven; all our sins, as believers in Christ, are forgiven and forgotten by him; we will one day be raptured to be with the Lord forever. And the list goes on. But Paul preached a different message. He said, 'We know'. **Note:** Like the Sadducees, of the Jewish religion, the Greeks did not believe in a bodily resurrection. Yet, the Corinthian church was in the very heart of Greek culture. And because of that, many who had accepted Christ as the promised Messiah had difficulty with the concept of a bodily resurrection.

- 'if our earthly house of this tabernacle (this earthly body made from the dust of the ground - **Gen.2:7**) were dissolved (taken down, signifying physical death), we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'. **Note:** There are, generally, three views having to do with this 'house': (a) it is 'heaven itself'; (b) it speaks of an intermediate body (a stage between extremes) provided at death; and, (c) it refers to the 'resurrection body'. (I agree with 'c'.)

Vs.2-4. 'For in this we groan'. While in this body of flesh, with all the pain, suffering, hardships, burdens of life, etc., 'we groan'. It's without doubt that Paul, here in these verses, is speaking of the 'house not made with hands' as being our 'glorified body' (**Rom.8:23**; **I Cor.15:53,54**; **Phil.3:20,21**).

V.5. God made man an eternal being, and desired to have fellowship with him forever. But man sinned (**Gen.3:6**). And with sin came the penalty of death (separation from God - **Rom.5:12**; **Rom.6:23**). But to those 'saved by grace through faith' (**Eph.2:8,9**), God has given the 'earnest of the Spirit' as a 'pledge' (guarantee) that we will be resurrected and put on immortality.

Vs.6-8. 'Always confident'. Paul did not fear death, because he was confident, as a believer in the resurrected Christ, of spending eternity with the Lord in glory.

- As long as we live in this mortal body we remain in our 'earthly house' (our temporary home), and are absent from our eternal home with the Lord. Although God, by his Spirit, is with us now, yet we are not with him as we one day shall be. We cannot behold his face while we continue in this mortal body, therefore, 'we walk by faith, not by sight'. **Note:** It's been said that, 'Faith is for this world, while sight is reserved for the other world'. A question is asked: What does it mean to 'walk by faith'? Answer is to have faith that: (a) God is with us every step of the way; (b) He will supply our every need; and, (c) When we come to the end of the journey, He will see us over to the other side.

- For those who believe in Christ, death is actually the entranceway (door) into the immediate presence of Christ. Think about it: We will close our eyes to the things of this world, and open them in a world of glory. It will be then that faith will be turned into sight.

Vs.9.10. Inasmuch as our hope is to one day be present with the Lord, we 'labor' (strive earnestly) to be well-pleasing to Him. Note: This does not imply that 'works' are a means of salvation. Eternal life (salvation) is a 'free gift' given on the basis of God's grace. Therefore, 'while absent from the Lord' and still in these mortal bodies, we have opportunities to please him.

- 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ'. In the Greek language of that day, the 'judgment seat' was known as the 'Bema', meaning 'step' ('riser'; a raised platform, or seat). A place where a Roman magistrate sat to act as a judge. (Hodge)
- Note: This is not the 'Great White Throne Judgment', where all the unrighteous shall be judged, as mentioned in **Rev.20:11-15**; but a 'judgment' for only the righteous, that they might be rewarded for the deeds done (whether good or bad) while here in the physical body (**Rom.14:10; I Cor.3:13-15**). Two important truths: (a) Saints will be judged for 'what' they have done, and, (b) their 'motives' for that which they have done.

V.11. 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men'. Note: Paul is not saying that believers should live with fright while awaiting the Lord's judgment seat, but it's with the knowledge of what the terror of the Lord (fear of the Lord) means that he persuades (appeals to) men. 'We persuade men' to come to Christ (to accept him as Savior), so that they too might enjoy his peace, and not live in fear of standing before him in that great day.

- Our motives are plain to God; and I hope they are plain to you, as well.

Vs.12,13. Paul was aware that he still had enemies in the Corinthian assembly. But his goal, here, was not to boast of his credentials nor prove his character, but to give his followers 'somewhat to answer them' (those who gloried in appearance and not in heart - **I Sam.16:7**).

- 'For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God'. 'For if I be mad, or out of my senses, as some say, it is for the glory of God'. A question is raised: Why would anyone consider Paul to be 'beside himself', or 'a mad man'? Answer: Possibly thought he was wasting his time with an assembly that showed so little appreciation for his ministry. Too, it might have been because he was so content with a life of pain, troubles, hardships, etc. It was too much for some to comprehend.

Vs.14,15. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us'. Inasmuch as Christ loved us so much that he was willing to die in our stead (give his life that we might have life), we are compelled to preach, to share the 'good news', to witness. The 'love of Christ' leaves us no other choice.

- We have come to the conclusion that if one man died on behalf of all, then all thereby became dead men (**Eph.2:1**). Therefore, we should live to please him, and not just please ourselves.

Vs.16,17. 'Wherefore henceforth, know we no man after the flesh'. Convinced of this, from now on we regard no one from just a human point of view; even if we once knew Christ simply

as a man, yet, now, we do so no longer. 'Our knowledge of men can no longer be based entirely on their outward manner of living' (Revised Standard Version).

- Even those who knew Christ in the flesh found their new relationship with him through the Holy Spirit far more rewarding.
- 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation)'. Since he is now 'in Christ', he lives in a new world, one in which the Spirit rules. 'The believer becomes a new person (**Gal.6:15**), renewed after God's image (**I Cor. 15:49**), sharing his glory (**3:18**), with a renewed knowledge (**Col.3:10**) and understanding (**Rom.12:2**), and living a life of holiness (**Eph.4:24**)'. (F. Life Study Bible)
- 'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new'. The old life has passed away (is finished and gone), and a new life has begun (everything fresh and new).

Vs.18,19. 'And all things are of God'. This speaks of all the 'new things' that come to the 'believer in Christ' at salvation; new heart, new life, new name, new nature, etc. Note: Regenerating (saving) grace creates a totally new world in the heart and life of the believer.

- 'who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ'. To reconcile is to 'restore to friendship'; 'remove enmity' between two enemy parties; 'resolve differences'. Note: Paul said (**Rom.5:12**), 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. Sin separates from God. And since it is impossible for a sinner to reconcile himself to God, God does it for him through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ. In essence, when a sinner accepts Christ as Savior, God restores the new believer to fellowship with Himself. It's then that God gives us the work (ministry) of reconciliation.
- 'not imputing their trespasses unto them'. To 'impute' is to 'keep track of', to 'place in the record'. And 'not to impute' is to 'forgive'. The reason sins are not imputed to him who confesses his sins, is because his sins were imputed to (rolled over on) Jesus. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (**I Jn.1:9**). Notice: In such a case, God does not impute our sins, but forgives - extending mercy, rather than justice.

V.20. 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us'. An 'ambassador' is a person delegated to represent one government in its dealings with another. He does not speak on his own authority, but simply says what he has been commissioned to say.

- Questions asked:
 - (1) 'Who are Christ's ambassadors? (They who owe their importance, not to themselves, but to the One they represent. It's not only preachers, but us, you and me, believers in Christ.)
 - (2) By what court, or authority, are these ambassadors commissioned? (They are ministers of the King of glory; and their authority is that of the King's Son.)
 - (3) To whom are these ambassadors sent? (They address themselves to offenders, to rebels, to those who seemingly care nothing for Christ nor the Gospel.)

- (4) Whose substitutes are these ambassadors? (They act 'on Christ's behalf', 'in Christ's stead'. Christ entrusted to his apostles, and in a sense to all his ministers, the office and trust of acting as his representatives.)
- (5) What is the commission which these ambassadors are sent to execute? (It is an office of mercy. Their duty is to publish the tidings of redemption, the offer of pardon, and, urge men to accept the gospel. By so-doing they can enjoy the blessings of reconciliation with God.) (D. Thomas)

- 'we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God'. As Christ's ambassadors, we are sent to the world with His message of reconciliation. Too, not only is it a high honor to be an ambassador for Christ, it is an awesome responsibility. May God help us to be up to the task.

V.21. When we trust the Lord for salvation, we actually make a trade: our sins for his goodness (righteousness); our rags for his riches; our defeats for his victories; our emptiness for his fulness; our lack for his abundance. Christ identified with man's sin; man identified with Christ's righteousness. Amen! What a mighty God we serve!

- 'Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as if he had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin' (Spurgeon).

Chapter 6

- Vs.1,2.** 'We then, as workers together with him'. As God's fellow-workers, we encouraged you (new converts in Corinth) to be reconciled to Him. Now, we beseech you (plead with you; earnestly request), that you not let the grace God has extended you go for naught. Note: The Bible plainly teaches that a person can receive the grace of God and experience salvation, and afterwards, fail to continue on with the Lord, return to a life of sin, depart from the faith, and again be lost. To do such as this is to receive the grace of God in vain.
- 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation' (c.f. **Isa.49:8**). A sense of urgency is noted here. Therefore, inasmuch as we know not what tomorrow might bring, nor where we shall be; the present time is the only proper season to accept the grace that is offered. 'The gospel day is a day of salvation, the means of grace the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the present time the only proper time to accept these offers' (M. Henry Comm.).
- Vs.3,4a.** 'Giving no offense in anything'. Paul was determined that he and his fellow-laborers not do that which would be 'a cause of stumbling' (that may cause someone to reject the gospel). Note: When others are quick to take offense, ministers must be careful (cautious) lest they do that which may bring reproach (blame) on their ministry.
- 'But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God'. But in everything we do we endeavor to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God. Then Paul begins to outline the things he will use in commending himself before them.
- Vs.4b-10.** Note: The 'all things' Paul mentioned above are listed here in twenty-seven categories divided into three groups of nine each. In **vs.4-5**, Paul's thoughts are upon his 'trials'; **vs.6-7**, upon 'divine provision'; and **vs.8-10**, upon his 'ensuing victory over circumstances' (Daniel Mitchell).
- Vs.4b,5.** 'in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses'. For many, 'patience' is thought of as having the ability to stay calm (without anxiety) while continuing to wait to see the doctor for an appointment that is already more than two hours past the scheduled time. (I can't deny that such would surely take patience.) But, here, 'Paul describes patience as the ability to endure things in such a triumphant manner that it transfigures (gives a new and typically exalted or spiritual appearance to) them' (Barclay).
- 'Afflictions, necessities, distresses' (tribulations, needs, difficulties). Afflictions speak of great sufferings; Necessities: Paul was often in want; Distresses: under extreme pressure.
 - 'Stripes, imprisonments, tumults' (scourgings, in bonds, facing angry mobs). Stripes, in New Testament times, were of two kinds: from Jewish whips and Roman rods. Imprisonments: Although Paul was incarcerated frequently, Luke only mentions one of these occasions (**Acts 16:24**) - at Philippi. Note: Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea and Rome took place after his writing this epistle. Tumults: These violent outbursts were common occurrences in the apostle's life.
 - 'Labors, watchings, fastings' (toiling, sleeplessness, hungering and thirsting). All of these, seemingly, were of Paul's own choosing. He was not forced to work as hard as he did

(making tents), rather than receiving monetary support from the church, or keep so many sleepless nights, or go without food so often. Yet, he did so, willingly (without complaining), as a co-worker with Christ.

- Note: The nine forms of suffering, just mentioned - three were 'general', three 'specific', and three 'voluntary'. Yet, all were with 'much patience'.
- The apostle, who lived by good principles in all that he did, now gives six 'spiritual graces' with which God enabled him to 'always triumph' over adversity (**c.f. II Cor.2:14**).

Vs.6,7. 'By pureness, knowledge, longsuffering'. Pureness: Could have a 'moral' sense or a 'constitutional' sense. That is, it may refer to freedom from immorality or singleness of motive and purpose. Paul, likely, had both in mind. Purity is not only chastity (personal integrity), but absolute sincerity (**I Jn.3:2,3**). Knowledge: The truth of the gospel in its fulness (**Eph.3:4**). 'Zeal without knowledge is but madness' (M. Henry). Longsuffering: Patient endurance. Not easily provoked.

- 'By kindness, the Holy Ghost, love unfeigned'. Kindness: The aforementioned 'longsuffering' is a passive idea, while kindness is active. Longsuffering is patient submission to injustice; while kindness is the desire (tendency) to do good to others. 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind' (I Cor.13:4). By the Holy Ghost: Anointed by, and under the influence of, the Holy Ghost. Note: Paul attributed all his success to the gift of the Spirit. Love unfeigned: Sincere (genuine; unpretentious) love.
- 'By the word of truth, the power of God, the armour of righteousness'. 'Speaking the word of truth, working with the power of God, fighting with the weapons of righteousness' (W.J. Conybeare). Too, 'Speaking the plain truth, and living by the power of God. Our sole defense, our only weapon is a life of integrity' (N.T. in Modern English). Armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left: 'A consciousness of universal righteousness and holiness, which is the best defense against the temptations of prosperity on the right hand, and of adversity on the left' (M. Henry Comm.). Too, the idea of 'on the right hand and on the left' could speak of holding both offensive and defensive weapons; one, upon attacking (sword), the other while being attacked (shield)' (A. Clarke).

Vs.8-10. Paul now describes both what the world thought of him and what God thought of him. A question is raised: Which description was true - the world's or God's? Answer was given in the previous chapter: 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal' (4:18). In this final part of Paul's list, he presents a model of Christlike character in the midst of negative circumstances.

- 'By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true'. Regardless of the reputation or report that had preceded Paul (how he had punished saints, falsely testified against them, caused them to blaspheme, imprisoned them, and even had them put to death) , he refused to compromise the integrity of his message. Note: Good men of this world should expect to meet with some dishonor and reproaches. Not long before being put to death, Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, 'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (II Tim.3:12). Too, when speaking to His disciples, Jesus

said, 'And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved' (**Matt.10:22**).

- 'As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed'. ('The world ignores us, but we are known to God; at the point of death, yet here I am alive; punished, but not dead yet' (E.J. Goodspeed).
- 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things'. (Grieved, but rejoicing continually; a pauper, but at the same time, the means of riches to many; disinherited, penniless, yet we own the world). 'We are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together' (**Rom.8:6b,7**).

Vs.11-13. Before cautioning these of the Corinthian church against mingling with unbelievers, Paul speaks to them tenderly, even like that of a father to his children.

- 'O ye Corinthians'. Only two other times in his writings did Paul address his readers by name (**Gal.3:1; Phil.4:15**).
- 'our mouth is open unto you'. We are speaking freely to you, holding back nothing (**c.f. 3:12**).
- 'our heart is enlarged'. We throw our hearts open to you. This gives the idea of increasing the heart's capacity for sympathy and understanding.
- 'Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels'. Paul is saying, there is no lack of love in his heart for these Corinthians, but the problem lies with them, and in their ability to receive him.
- 'Now for a recompense in the same (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged'. 'I pray you therefore in return for my affection (I speak as to my children), let your hearts be opened in like manner' (W. J. Conybeare). Note: If the Corinthians would but open themselves to the apostle the problem could be resolved. There is no room for bickering between the brethren in the 'ministry of reconciliation'.

Vs.14-16. The idea, or warning, given here by Paul, is evidently based on **Deut.22:9-11** (the law of separation), which prohibited Hebrews yoking together two different animals. He begins by saying, believers are not to be 'unequally yoked together with unbelievers'. To keep out of intimate and inconsistent relations with unbelievers (those who reject the faith). Then, Paul goes on to ask five questions concerning this 'matter of separation'. And the answer to the five is unmistakably clear: Righteousness cannot mix with lawlessness; light can have no communion with darkness; Christ and Belial (worthlessness; wickedness; referred to here as Satan; only time used in the N.T.) cannot be of one accord; a believer cannot have part with an infidel (unbeliever; or one who opposes Christianity); and there can be no agreement of the temple of God with idols. Note: A born-again believer, as the temple of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit, cannot be indwelt by a demon, as many are teaching today, even amongst Pentecostals. (Idols in both the O.T. and the N.T. represent demons.) The 'temple of God', as mentioned in Scripture, has a variety of meanings: (a) A reference to 'heaven', as God's dwelling place; (b) It may refer to the 'church' as God's temple, or (c) It may have reference to the 'individual believer'. Seemingly, most scholars believe that Paul, here, is referring to the church as a whole being the temple.

- 'God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them'. Note: In the original Hebrew (**Lev.26:12**), the term mentioned here, 'in them', actually means 'among them', since the indwelling of God by the Holy Spirit belongs only to the new covenant.
 - 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people'. This great promise to Abraham, and to his natural seed, is now for all who are sons of Abraham by faith (**Gal.3:6-16**).
- Vs.17,18.** 'Wherefore come out from among them (unbelievers), and be ye separate'. There can be no reconciliation with God (as mentioned in **5:18-21**) for the man who continues in sin. Too, not only is it required that the believer separate himself from evil, he must also separate himself unto God.
- To those who follow these admonitions, God, the Lord Almighty, promises to receive them as His sons and daughters. Note: The word 'Almighty', used here, has the meaning of 'the one who has his hand on everything'. It's like the words of the children's song: 'He holds the whole world in His hands'. And another line says, 'He holds you and me brother (sons and daughters), in His hands'. A blessed thought, indeed!
 - A final thought: This word, 'Almighty', is used in the New Testament only here and in the book of Revelation.

Chapter 7

V.1. 'Having therefore these promises' (those outlined in the last three verses of previous chapter):

- (1) I will dwell in them.
- (2) I will walk in them.
- (3) I will be their God.
- (4) They shall be my people.
- (5) I will receive you.
- (6) I will be a Father unto you.
- (7) Ye shall be my sons and daughters.

- 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit'. To 'cleanse' is to 'purify'; and is a two-fold action on our part: (a) a turning away from sin, and (b) a turning toward God.
- 'Perfecting holiness in the fear of God'. Question is asked: How is this accomplished? Answer: Submit your will to the will of God. 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God' (Rom.12:1). Then, continue on with the Lord, walking in the light of His Word (**I Jn.1:7**). Note: 'Eternal perfection' should be the goal and aim of every Christian, although such perfection, while in this life, cannot be fully attained (**Phil.3:12**). Yet, in that same chapter (**v.15**), Paul tells us there is a 'perfection' that is available for believers while still in these mortal bodies (a perfection on the way to perfection). Amen! It's to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and your neighbor as yourself (**Mk.12:30,31**). And it's made possible by being 'sanctified wholly', which is 'God's will' for every believer (**I Thess. 4:3**). 'Sanctification' is not an experience that takes place at death, or, in a place called purgatory (as some teach). It's God's will for believers - now.

Vs.2,3. 'Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man'.

- In spite of what some troublemakers in the Corinthian assembly had said about him, Paul had been faithful, both to the church and to God. So, he says, 'Make room in your hearts; because in no instance have we ever wronged, or harmed, or taken advantage of, anyone' (Twentieth Century New Testament).
- Paul says, Open your hearts to us. We have done nothing to forfeit your esteem and goodwill.
- On another occasion, while visiting some Ephesian elders, Paul said, 'I have coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel' (**Acts 20:33**). Note: It's a sad commentary, but lots of church leaders would be unable to make that statement, since they have taken advantage of others: cheating, lying, corrupting.
- 'I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you'. Paul, once again, assures them of his affection to them, inasmuch that he could spend his last breath in Corinth, and live and die with them, if his work and ministry as an apostle would permit him to do so.

Vs.4,5. 'I have bragged on you in many places'. 'I am full of encouragement, and, in spite of the many troubles and trials, my heart is exceeding joyful' (M. Henry). Note: Some have the idea that when a trial comes our way, as Christians, we are to 'grin and bear it' (endure as best we can). But that wasn't Paul's experience at all. In the midst of difficulties, he was not only filled with comfort, but was 'exceeding joyful' (overflowing with happiness - **Matt.5:11,12**).

- Even after arriving in Macedonia, there was still no relief from the strain of things - not from the body, nor from the soul.
- 'Without were fightings, within were fears'. Paul was constantly in conflict with enemies of the gospel and carnal (worldly minded) Christians. And on the inside, Paul battled daily with the stress and anxiety of the ministry. Too, his 'fears' (anxieties) could easily have concerned his first letter to the Corinthian church, as to how it had been received.

Vs.6,7. 'Nevertheless God . . . comforted us by the coming of Titus'. When Titus finally joined us in Macedonia, bringing a good report as to how things were going in Corinth, we were comforted indeed. It was a matter of great consolation.

- Too, 'he told us of your strong affection, your penitence, and, your zeal on my behalf - so that I am happier still' (Twentieth Century New Testament).

Vs.8,9. 'For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, etc.' Because of the initial response to his letter to the Corinthian assembly, Paul regretted that he had written it. But when he heard that the letter had caused them to repent of their wrongdoing, and, that they had now gotten matters straightened out, it made him rejoice.

- In other words, the result was to make you sorry as God would have had you sorry, and not merely to make you offended by what we said '(J. B. Phillips)'

V.10. 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance'. True repentance means being sorry for sins, and changing behavior. Note: Many are sorry only for the consequences of their sins, or, for their being caught in their wrongdoing.

- The repentance of these Corinthians unto salvation was the cause for Paul's rejoicing.
- 'Three kinds of sorrow mentioned here (vs.8-10):'
 - (1) Paul's regret for the moment was he wondered whether he had made a mistake by being too severe in his letter (**v.8**).
 - (2) Godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation, changing the life and cleansing it from all sin (**vs.8-10**).
 - (3) Sorrow of the world that works death (**v.10**). This is unrepentant sorrow or pain over lost goods, lost friends, lack of pleasure and partial reaping of what has been sowed.' (Dake)
- Note: 'True 'penitents' will never repent that they have repented' (M. Henry).

V.11. 'For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you'. The effects produced by their repentance showed that it was 'according to God', inasmuch as it brought forth in them the fruits of good living to the honor and glory of God (Pulpit Comm.).

- What diligence: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance (turning around) shows 'diligence'. It takes diligence to stay turned around.
- What clearing of yourselves: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows a clearing (that of guilt and shame).
- What indignation: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows 'indignation'. We are indignant at ourselves for our foolishness while in sin.
- What fear: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows a 'fear' that we would never fall into the same sin again.
- What vehement desire: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows 'vehement desire' (for purity and godliness, determined to sin no more).
- What zeal: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows 'zeal' (a fervor for that which is right).
- What vindication: Godly sorrow produces, and repentance shows 'vindication' (judicial punishment to the incestuous offender of **I Cor.5**).
- 'In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter'. You can look back now and see how the hand of God was in your sorrow. It caused you to come to grips with yourselves, and repent.

Vs.12,13. Although Paul's first letter might have been thought severe, it was not written, primarily, for the one who had done wrong, nor was it written merely for the injured father, who had been wronged, but for the entire church - that ye might see for yourselves, in the sight of God, how deeply you are devoted to us.

- And it is this that has encouraged us. While we were comforted, we were much more delighted to see how happy Titus was because his heart had been cheered by you all.

Note: In scriptures **2:14** through **7:16**, an outline of the 'New Testament Ministry' is presented by Finis J. Dake.

- (1) Always triumphant in Christ (2:14),
- (2) A soul-saving and soul-damning ministry (2:15,16),
- (3) A sincere and truthful ministry (2:17),
- (4) A ministry commended by God (3:1-5),
- (5) A ministry of the New Testament, not of the Old (3:6-8),
- (6) A ministry of glory and righteousness (3:9-11),
- (7) A ministry of hope, light and liberty (3:12-17),
- (8) A ministry of constant transformation ((3:18),
- (9) An honest ministry (4:1,2),
- (10) An unselfish ministry 4:3-6),
- (11) A ministry of power (4:7),
- (12) A ministry of suffering (4:8-12),
- (13) A bold and faithful ministry (4:13-15),
- (14) A ministry of eternal things (4:16-18),
- (15) A confident ministry of the future (5:1-8),
- (16) A hard-working ministry to please God (5:9-13),
- (17) A ministry of reconciliation (5:14-19),

- (18) An entreating ministry (5:20-6:2),
- (19) A blameless and approved ministry (6:3-10),
- (20) A human and compassionate ministry (6:11-13),
- (21) A separated ministry (6:14-18),
- (22) A clean ministry (7:1),
- (23) A human ministry longing for fellowship (7:2-4),
- (24) A human ministry subject to human fears and discouragements (7:5-7),
- (25) A human ministry with ordinary emotions and feelings (7:8-16).

Vs.14-16. 'I have boasted'. Earlier, while conversing with Titus, Paul was convinced that the opposition in Corinth was coming from only a few dissenters, with the vast majority wanting to do what was right. This conviction was confirmed by Titus' report, and Paul is able to say, 'even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth'.

- 'With fear and trembling ye received him'. Titus has a much greater love for you, now that he has seen for himself the obedience you gave him, and the respect and reverence with which you treated him.
- I am glad that I can feel perfect confidence in you.

Chapter 8

- Historical background: On his Second Missionary journey, Paul, and his companion, Silas, went into Macedonia (Europe). They ministered in Philippi (where imprisoned), Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (preached of the 'Unknown God' on Mars' Hill), and Corinth. He stayed in Corinth a year and a half (establishing a church). Afterwards, he went on to Ephesus (staying three years) residing with Aquila and Priscilla, and founded a church.
- While in Ephesus, he received word from those of Corinth. They had questions concerning marriage, what to eat and not to eat, church discipline, etc. So, Paul wrote I Corinthians, giving answers. Too, he rebuked the 'immorality' in the church; advised about taking a brother before the courts, rather than having a matter settled in the church; wrote at length about marriage, etc. Note: He then had Titus deliver the letter. While in Corinth, Titus was to begin a collection for the needy believers in Judea. The people responded favorably, pledging so much, and giving a portion at that time toward their pledge.
- The trouble was: The Corinthian church had failed to follow through. So, Paul writes this letter (**II Cor.**), and in the final verse of the previous chapter (**Ch.7**), he says, 'I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things'.

Vs.1-3. 'We do you to wit' (we want you to know). Paul mentions the churches of Macedonia (mostly made up of Gentiles) concerning their willingness to assist the needy saints in Jerusalem (mostly Jews). Although the Macedonians were poor, and were being persecuted terribly, they rejoiced at the opportunity of doing good to their suffering brethren in Judea. Note: Paul hoped his sharing this would be an encouragement to the Corinthian believers, and would motivate them to solve their problems and unite in fellowship.

- Instead of allowing circumstances to inhibit their (Macedonians) giving, they turned personal and financial distress into an opportunity to demonstrate the riches of God's grace. Rather than complain over having little, they shared what they had with others in need.
- 'Beyond their power they were willing of themselves'. They gave beyond their ability (more than seemingly able; a real sacrifice), and did so willingly.

Vs.4,5. It seems as though Paul had considered their circumstances and needs so extreme that he wanted to exempt these poor Macedonian believers from participating in this special collection. But they insisted that they be allowed to share in this good cause. They wanted to do their part.

- 'This they did, not as we hoped'. I must confess, they exceeded our expectations, since they were in such dire straits themselves. I thought they would possibly give a small cash payment, but they went far beyond.
- 'But first gave their own selves to the Lord'. This is the proper order of New Testament giving. 'First' is understood in order of priority, and not chronology. The gift is first to God and then to the saints.
- Three thoughts concerning the giving of the Macedonians: (a) They gave 'generously' (much more than they seemed able to give); (b) They gave 'voluntarily' (even pleaded with Paul

that they be allowed to participate); and, (c) They gave 'after first giving themselves to the Lord'.

V.6. In Titus' previous visit to Corinth, it's likely that he had discussed the 'collection' (**c.f. I Cor,16:1**). So Paul suggests that he now be delegated the responsibility of overseeing it.

Vs.7,8. Inasmuch as you excel in most everything - faith, teaching, understanding, devotion of every kind, and, in your love to us; surely you will show yourselves equally lavish in this service. Note: Paul did not demand that the Corinthians give; instead, he encouraged them to prove the sincerity of their love (that it was truly genuine).

V.9. After mentioning how the Macedonian churches were showing real sacrificial love in their desire to participate in the 'collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem', Paul uses Christ as the great example of love. He tells how Jesus became poor for all (Jew and Gentile), and, how, by His poverty, all may be rich. Note: Christ gave up the splendors of heaven for the poverty of earth, so that we who were in spiritual poverty of sin could experience and enjoy everlasting blessings. Question is raised: When, and how, did this take place? Answer: At the 'incarnation'. 'And the Word (the promised Messiah; Christ); he who was with God, and, was God (Jn.1:1), was made flesh (conceived of the Holy Ghost; born of the virgin Mary) and dwelt among us'.

Vs.10,11. 'Herein I give my advice' (here is my considered opinion on the matter).

- 'For this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago'. More than a year earlier, the Corinthian church had not only expressed a desire to assist the needy saints of Jerusalem with a 'love-offering', but they had led the way. At that time, Titus being with them, they had been excited about having a part in the collection. Now, Paul encourages them to match that earlier enthusiasm with action; that they follow through with their original commitment.

Vs.12-14. Four Principles in Giving:

- (1) The 'attitude' with which we give is more important than the 'amount' we give. 'God loveth a cheerful giver' (**9:7**). Note: We don't have to be embarrassed if we can only give a small gift. God is concerned about how we give from that which we have. And according to this standard, the giving of the Macedonian churches was difficult to match.
 - (2) A person should always strive to fulfill his financial commitments.
 - (3) If we give to others in need, they will, in turn, help when we are in need. 'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again' (**Lu.6:38**).
 - (4) We should always give as unto Christ; not for anything we might receive in return.
- Note: Paul recommends equality in giving.

V.15. 'As it is written'. Paul refers to the gathering of manna by the Israelites in the wilderness. 'The man who got much had no more than enough, and the man who got little did not go short' (New English Bible).

Vs.16,17. 'But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you'. I thank God that Titus feels the same deep concern for you as we do.

- 'For indeed he accepted the exhortation'. Titus consented to Paul's request that he undertake the task of over-seeing the collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem (**c.f. v.6**).
- 'But being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you'. Not only did Titus consent to my desire, but was so enthusiastic about it that he went to you of his own accord.

Vs.18,19. 'And we have sent with him the brother'. The brother's name is not given, but he was highly praised as a gospel preacher in all the churches. Too, he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us and assist in overseeing the collection (love gift) for Jerusalem.

Vs.20-24. Such men were selected so that no one would question how the funds were acquired or what was done with them after being collected.

- 'Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men'. We want to be absolutely above-board (beyond reproach), not only in the Lord's eyes, but also in the eyes of men.
- Along with the previously unnamed individual (**v.18**), there will be one other who will be accompanying Titus when he arrives.
- As for Titus, he is my fellow companion, and he shares my work for you. As for these other brethren, they are representatives (delegates) of the churches and ambassadors for Christ.
- Therefore, I ask that you give proof of your love to them before all the churches; and, by so doing, justify all the nice things we have said about you.
- A brief summary of these final verses: A committee of three men was chosen to organize and administer the love-gift collected by the Corinthians. The group consisted of Titus (who was well-known by Corinthians), and two unnamed others. Note: (a) They each had concern for the poverty of believers in Judea. (b) They were committed to handling this collection the right and proper way. (c) Paul endorsed them as 'messengers of the churches', and encouraged the Corinthians to accept them with Christian love.

Chapter 9

- Paul continues the theme of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia 'giving aid' (love gift) for the suffering saints in Jerusalem.
- Earlier, recorded in **I Cor.16:1-4**, he had said, 'Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me' (NKJV).

Vs.1,2. It's really unnecessary for me to write to you about helping those fellow-Christians (at Jerusalem) in need. Note: After having written about the 'collection' throughout the entire previous chapter, Paul's statement, here in **v.1**, seems rather odd. Yet, some believe that he was possibly interrupted while writing (or dictating), and now comes back to pick up where he had left off.

- 'For I know the forwardness of your mind. etc.'. I know your willingness to give, and I have boasted of this to the churches of Macedonia, using your zeal and sacrificial giving as an example to others. Note: It was Paul's understanding that the 'offering' in Achaia (Corinth) had been received and ready, even a year ago.

Vs.3,4. 'Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf'. (I'm sending these brethren so that our boast of you in this matter does not prove empty.)

- 'Lest happily if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared'. Such would cause an embarrassment to us, and to you, after all the confidence we have shown.

V.5. That is why I thought it necessary for Titus, and the others, to go to you in advance to see that the offering you promised earlier may be ready - as a gift, and not appear as if it were being given under pressure.

Vs.6,7. 'God loves a cheerful giver; if we give, he will give' (Scofield).

- 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully'. Note: The 'law of nature' illustrates the law of Christian giving. **Example:** A farmer, because the cost of seed is pricey (expensive) - he sows sparingly. But, while trying to save money on cost of seed, he loses out when time for harvest. Paul uses a similar analogy here, likening a 'gift' to the needy believers in Judea as an investment, just as the seed planted in the ground are expected to yield a harvest. Remember: A person's return is determined by his investment. A question is raised: Since we know this principle of 'sowing and reaping' is true, why do you suppose so many professing Christians find it difficult to grasp (put into practice)? Answer: (a) Afraid that which is left will not be sufficient to meet their needs. (b) Fail to take God at his word (trust him).
- Four Important Truths about Christian Giving:
 - (1) We are to give 'willingly' (as unto God); and as he purposeth in his heart.
 - (2) Not to give 'grudgingly' (painfully; reluctantly).

- (3) Not to give 'of necessity' (forced to do so; with compulsion).
- (4) To give 'cheerfully' (merrily; to be a delightful experience).

V.8. 'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you'. 'The believer who gives what he can to help those in need will find the grace of God furnishes a 'sufficiency' for his own needs, and even beyond' (Full Life Study Bible). 'God has the power to supply you abundantly with every kind of blessing, so that, with all your needs well supplied at all times, you may have something to spare for every work of mercy' (R. Knox). Note: Generosity is not contingent on the amount given, but reveals that the 'giver' is charitable at all times.

- Some interesting adages:

- (1) 'Giving is the true barometer of love' (Jack Hyles).
- (2) 'It's what you sow that multiplies, not what you keep in the barn' (Adrian Rogers).
- (3) 'God judges what we give by what we keep' (George Mueller).
- (4) 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Jesus - **Acts 20:35**).

Vs.9,10. 'He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever' (a quotation from **Ps.112:9**). Neither Paul nor the Psalmist intended to convey the thought that every believer will be wealthy, nor that the believer who gives regularly and faithfully will be wealthy. Instead, he is saying that the abundance of God's riches are available to those who are rightly related to Him. When we invest what God has given us in His work, He will provide us with even more to give.

- 'His righteousness remaineth for ever'. Again, Paul is not saying that generous giving makes us righteous, but it gives evidence of a right standing with God.

V.11. 'Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness'. God increases riches to be used for His glory and the good of men.

- 'Which causeth through us all thanksgiving to God'. We are the agents in collecting and distributing your gifts. Note: Inasmuch as **vs.9 & 10** are parenthetical, this verse is connected to the thought in **v.8**.

Vs.12,13. The ministration of this service not only relieves the needs of your fellow-Christians, it also results in a wealth of thanksgiving to God. Paul, here, emphasizes the 'spiritual rewards' for those who give generously to God's work. Yet, believers should never give with the thought of becoming wealthy, nor, of receiving material reward for so doing.

- Notice the process outlined: First, 'God', by His grace, supplies the needs of believers. He blesses. Then, 'believers', in gratitude to God, share their abundance with others. Afterwards, 'they' (recipients of the love-gift), in turn, give thanks to God, from whom the supply originated. They glorify God. (The cycle is complete.)

V.14. 'And by their prayer for you'. Those who receive your gifts will be glad, and will pray for you. Therefore, as you bless others, you, yourself, are blessed.

V.15. 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift'. A question is raised: What is God's 'unspeakable gift'? Some declare it to be the gift of 'salvation', while others are sure Paul

has in mind the gift of 'Jesus, God's only begotten Son'. The answer, without question, includes both, since salvation is given to us in Jesus Christ. In **Jn.14:6**, Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father (receives salvation), but by me'.

- 'Unspeakable'. In essence, Paul is saying that 'words are inadequate'. They fail us when trying to tell others how wonderful this great 'gift' really is. Note: The Apostle John must have had similar feelings. When speaking of Jesus, he said, 'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written' (**Jn.21:25**).

The 'unspeakable, indescribable, incomparable gift':

- The gift of 'bread' to feed the hungry;
- The gift of 'water' to satisfy the thirsty;
- The gift of 'light' to those in darkness;
- The gift of 'peace' to those in turmoil;
- The gift of 'hope' to those in despair; and, the greatest of them all,
- The gift of 'salvation' to those in sin. Amen!

Too, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is:

- A 'free gift'. Nothing demanded nor expected in exchange. The truth is: we have nothing to give.
- A 'voluntary gift'. Jesus, the Lamb of God, 'willingly' gave his life on the cross to atone for the sins of the world (**Jn.10:17b,18**).
- An 'undeserved gift'. Paul said, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us' (**Titu.3:5**).
- A gift that 'satisfies'. The songwriter said it well: 'My Jesus knows just what I need, O Yes he knows just what I need; He satisfies, and every need supplies. Yes, he knows just what I need.'
- A 'continuous gift'. Eternal salvation. Ours forever.
- 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift'.

Chapter 10

- In the first nine chapters, Paul writes to those of Corinthian congregation that love and appreciate him. But false teachers had made their way into the church, and were voicing opposition to his ministry, and were causing trouble. Note: We often think of the New Testament Church as being 'ideal'. Yet, Paul's two letters to the church at Corinth tell a different story altogether. Someone once said, 'As long as the church is made up of those of the human race, there will surely be trouble'.

Vs.1,2. 'Now I Paul myself'. 'Now' - indicates a change of subject. Paul's tone changes markedly, as he turns his attention to the small group in the church who had listened to the false teachers, and had begun to slander him. They were saying that 'he was bold in his writing, but, in reality, he had no real God-given apostolic authority'. Note: They were not saying he was 'carnal', but that he lacked divine anointing and unction; that he was a self-proclaimed apostle.

- Too, although acknowledging that Paul was bold when writing, they claimed that he was 'weak' when face-to-face. But Paul refutes this notion. He had been meek and humble when with them. And some had mistook his meekness as weakness. Question: What is the meaning of 'meekness'? Answer: It is to be mild; moderate; to endure injury with patience. But the definition I like best, is: 'Strength under control'.

V.3. 'For though we walk in the flesh'. Question: Paul said, in **Rom.8:8**, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God'. How can these two scriptures, both written by Paul, be reconciled? Answer: We live in bodies of flesh, being human, but we do not war after the flesh (it is not through our strength that we fight and win battles). All believers have spiritual battles in this world, but we must never entertain the thought that we can be victorious by using worldly methods in the warfare.

Vs.4-6. 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal'. Note: As Christians, we must decide which weapons, or methods, we will use in our battle against Satan in trying to build the Kingdom of God: man's or God's; carnal or righteous.

- Paul goes on to say, our weapons 'are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds'. Note: A 'strong-hold' is a military battlement; a fortified place; a place of security. And in **Eph.6:13-18**, Paul assures us that God's mighty weapons - prayer, faith, hope, love, the Word, and, the anointing of the Holy Spirit - are not only powerful, but effective.
- When dealing with the pride that keeps people from a relationship with Christ, we may be tempted to use our own methods. But nothing can break down the enemy's barriers like God's weapons.
- 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ'. Paul is not saying that we, as Christians, can never have an evil thought come into our mind. But, instead, he is saying, that when such a thought might come, we should choose not to linger on it. Note: We read in **Ja.1:14,15**, 'But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and

enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death'.

Vs.7,8. Paul is directing his words to that faction in the church that doubted his authority as an apostle, and were encouraging believers to ignore him. They claimed they were of Christ, while asserting that he was not. But Paul had one goal in mind, and that was to protect them from heresy. He was sent to 'build up', not 'tear down'; to 'edify', not 'destroy'.

- 'Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?' (Do you judge by mere externals?) The Apostle John, in **Jn.7:24**, said, 'Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment'. But these detractors of Paul placed a high value on style, speaking ability, and forcefulness; which, evidently, they felt Paul lacked.

Vs.9,10. The 'faction' in the church was saying, 'Don't bother about his letters; he sounds big, but it's all noise' (Taylor). Two questions. First: Why would they say Paul's 'bodily presence was weak?' Note: There's been lots of speculation concerning Paul's physical appearance and condition, which could possibly have been caused by: (a) The beatings, stonings, imprisonments, etc., which had taken their toll. (b) Bad eye-sight. The truth is: we don't know. Second: What does 'his speech is contemptible' mean? Again, there are various thoughts. Some believe, (a) He was an excellent debater, but a poor speaker. Others, (b) Since he was highly educated (having studied under Rabban Gamaliel, the first of only seven rabbis to have been given this title), and, therefore, difficult to grasp what he was preaching or teaching. Too, (c) some believe he had an impediment in his speech, possibly a 'lisp'. Yet, whatever the case, his preaching was anointed and powerful, allowing him to be one of the greatest missionary-evangelist and pioneer church-builders of all time. (I believe him to be the 'greatest'.)

V.11. Paul says, 'I am not ashamed to boast a little of the power God has given me. Therefore, when I come, I will prove to you that I am just as powerful as my letters indicate. My actions will correspond to my words'.

V.12. Paul criticizes the false teachers for trying to prove their goodness by comparing themselves with others, rather than with God. We read in **Rom.3:23**, 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. Note: The 'glory of God' is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs.13-16. Paul says, we have not attempted to go where others have labored, but have endeavored to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. His hope was that they might grow in faith and grace, making it possible for him to take the gospel to other regions where it had not yet been preached or taught.

- False teachers cited their authority; Paul cites his accomplishments. Those who were quick to criticize Paul were not responsible for founding the church in Corinth - he was.

Vs.17,18. Paul realized that he had nothing within himself for which to boast. And he says, 'But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord'. Note: As Christian believers (servants of God), we are called to glory only in Christ.

- Paul didn't want these Corinthians to interpret what he had said as expressions of self-conceit, so he concludes by re-emphasizing that his commendation and authority had come from the Lord.

Chapter 11

Vs.1,2. With an irony that marks all of this chapter, Paul asks the Corinthians to bear with him as he takes on the foolish position of his detractors. He, seemingly, is uneasy about what he is about to do, yet, he feels it necessary. So, he apologizes for boasting (commending self).

- 'For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy'. This was a good thing. Question: Inasmuch as the wise King Solomon said, 'jealousy is cruel as the grave' (S of Sol. 8:6), what is 'godly jealousy'? Answer: A divine jealousy; a concern for holiness and Christian purity for His people. Note: God is jealous over his people, and has a compassionate concern that they serve only him. He demands pure, exclusive devotion.
- 'For I have espoused you to one husband' (I betrothed you to the Lord - at your conversion). Just as God is jealous over his people, Paul was jealous over his converts. And he desired to present them to Christ in like manner as a chaste virgin is presented to her husband.

Vs.3,4. 'But I fear'. Paul is concerned for these young (new) converts - fearing they will be turned away from Christ just as Eve was beguiled by Satan (**Gen.3:4-6**) to turn away from God. Note: Satan beguiled Eve through his subtilty (crafty wickedness). And since the Bible is God's infallible Word, those who teach or preach anything differently than that which the 'Word' declares are both 'mistaken' and 'misleading'.

- 'Another Jesus' - 'another spirit' - 'another gospel' - 'ye might well bear with him'. Two differing thoughts: (1) Paul is saying, you are all set against me; and yet the new-comer does not profess to preach to you another Jesus, or impart a different Spirit. If he had done such, you might have had an excuse for listening to him. Now there is no excuse; for I was the one who first preached Jesus to you, and from me you first received the Spirit. (2) 'If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, etc.'. 'Ye might well bear with him' (might put up with it). The problem wasn't altogether that these false teachers had made their way into the church, and were teaching that which was false. The problem was that the Christians in Corinth put up with them. Note: When writing to the Galatians, Paul warned them against receiving another Jesus, saying, 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Gal.1:8).

Vs.5,6. 'For I suppose I was not a whit (the least bit) behind (inferior to) the very chiefest apostles'. I do not regard myself as in any way inferior to the most eminent apostles (Twentieth Century N.T.). Note: Paul compares himself to some he refers to as 'the most eminent apostles'. Apparently, those false apostles the Corinthian Christians preferred over him.

- 'Rude in speech' (unskilled in the art of speech; untrained; possibly even offensive to some). Note: They may have criticized his style, or delivery, but could not deny the effectiveness of his message.
- 'Yet not in knowledge'. Paul was grounded in the revelation of God (the scriptures), and spoke with God's authority.

- 'But we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things' (We, at all times, have made known to you the full truth).

V.7. 'Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that ye might be exalted' (Was it wrong of me to work with my hands and receive help from other churches while I labored to win the lost in Corinth?)' Note: While spending eighteen months ministering in their city, Paul never asked them to give him a salary. Note: In Greek culture, those known as 'speakers' would often charge fees that were indicative of their excellence. If the speaker was to refuse remuneration, listeners would often become suspicious, and, at times, dismiss him as an imposter.

- Therefore, since Paul refused to take money, they considered him to be unprofessional. But Paul realized that it would not be wisdom to expect a salary while endeavoring to pioneer a new church.

V.8. 'I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service'. (I received love-gifts from believers of other churches, which made it possible for me to do pioneer ministry to you of Corinth without it becoming a hardship upon you.) Note: The only church of which we know as contributing to Paul's needs was that of Philippi (**Phil.4:15,16**).

Vs.9-11. 'And when I was present with you, and wanted' (in need). Note: Jesus taught that those who minister for God should be supported by those to whom they minister. Therefore, Paul could have requested financial support from these Corinthians. But, because of what the false teachers were saying and doing (refusing to teach unless being paid), he felt such a request could easily be misunderstood. And he surely didn't want to be identified as one of them.

- 'I was chargeable to no man'. Anything I needed was fully met by our friends who came from Macedonia, and, from that which I earned from tent-making.
- 'As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting'. As one called of God to be an apostle, Paul could 'boast' that God had met his every need, and, that he had required no salary from the believers in Corinth. Yet, to keep them from misunderstanding his actions, he says, 'Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth'. (Does this mean that I do not love you? God knows it doesn't.)

V.12. 'But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion'. Paul wanted to expose these false teachers as frauds. And if it took sarcasm or embarrassment to do so, that's what he would use. He goes on to challenge them, saying, if they wished to boast they should follow his example, and teach without the motivation of being compensated. Note: The motivation for service to God should be the same as the motivation for giving: a heart filled with love for Him, for all He has done for us.

Vs.13-15. 'Deceitful workers, transforming themselves'. It's no surprise that they were able to deceive the believers at Corinth. Satan is a 'master deceiver'; and false teachers are nothing more than his agents. Too, it's those who 'transform themselves' into apostles for Christ

that are 'false apostles'. No one can transform themselves into a true apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ; apostleship is only through a divine calling from God.

- 'And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light'. Note: I'm confident that if Satan were to appear before a human congregation of people in our day, many would desire to worship him as someone divine, even as 'an angel of light'. **Example:** According to **Rev.13:4**, there will come a time during the 'seven-year tribulation' that many will worship, not only the Antichrist, but Satan, as well - having been deceived. Remember: Satan's servants can appear attractive, good, moral, holy, and even Spirit-filled. And since the things of God are spiritually discerned (**I Cor.14**), I pray that God will give all His children a spirit of discernment - that they may know that which is of God, and that which is not of God.
- Question: Since it's possible for Christians to be deceived, how are we to distinguish between those who are false and those who are true?

The answer:

- (1) Does their teaching confirm (agree with) Scripture? (**Acts 17:11**)
- (2) Do they claim that Jesus is the Son God? That He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, crucified on the cross, was buried, rose from the dead the third day, ascended into heaven after forty days, sat down at the right hand of the Father, and, today, is the 'one mediator between God and man?' (**I Jn.4:1-3**)
- (3) Are their lifestyles consistent with biblical morality and holiness? (**Matt.12:33-37**)

Vs.16-18. 'I say again, Let no man think me a fool'. Once more I appeal to you not to look upon me as a fool. Paul, now, gives a further excuse for what he was about to say in vindicating his apostleship.

- 'Yet as a fool receive me'. If you count it folly in me to boast, I ask you to show me at least the patience you have shown to others.
- 'I may boast myself a little', which is inconsistent with my professing humility.
- 'That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord'. Question: Is Paul saying that this part of his letter is any less inspired than the rest of Scripture? Answer: No. Paul, when writing to Timothy, said, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (**II Tim.3:16**). In fact, his boasting (foolish speaking) was directed by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of exposing the hypocrisy of the false apostles.
- 'Many glory after the flesh'. Many, in the spirit of the flesh, boast (brag) about their earthly accomplishments. 'I will glory (boast) also'.

Vs.19-21. 'For ye suffer (put up with) fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise'. Paul is again using sarcasm. If the Corinthians were wise enough to find pleasure in putting up with fools, surely they could put up with a little of Paul's boasting.

- Paul felt awkward speaking in such a manner. But if these believers turned against him, they would likely turn against the gospel he was preaching.
- 'For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face'. Note: It was very common in that day

for those in religious authority to command those considered to be ungodly to be smitten (**c.f. Acts 23:2**). These false teachers have lorded it over you - upbraided you, while at the same time reproaching me. It was as if you had been 'weak' in showing regard for me.

Vs.22-27. Paul presents his credentials to counteract charges the false teachers were making against him. Note: Paul also gave a list of his credentials in his letter to the Philippians (**Phil.3:4-8**).

- He was angry that the false teachers had impressed and deceived the Corinthians. Because of that, he endeavors to reestablish his credibility and authority by listing the trials he had endured in his service for Christ. And if these false teachers are ministers of Christ, as they claim, then I am more.
- To begin, he mentions the privileges of his birth, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, etc. Note: It seems, by his statements here, that the false teachers were almost surely of the Jewish race.
- 'Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more'. He then goes on to list some of the trials and hardships he had suffered for the cause of Christ, which reveal that he was sacrificing his life for the gospel, something the false teachers would never do.
- 'in labors more abundant'. He saw being a minister, called of God, as being a 'privilege'.
- 'in stripes above measure' - beaten many times for Jesus' sake. Note: He received beatings from both the Jews (five times I received forty stripes less one) and the Romans (three times beaten with rods).
- 'in prison more oft'. Although we have but one record of his being imprisoned (**Acts 16:20-24**), he mentions being in prison several times. Note: Acts is a wonderful book, but it is an incomplete record.
- 'in deaths oft'. He was close to death many times for the cause of Christ.
- 'once I was stoned'. No doubt, he is referring to the incident in Lystra (**Acts 14:19**).
- 'thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness'. Question is raised: How could anyone, who has lived such a life of troubles, trials, and hardships, be happy, and say, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose' (**Rom.8:28**)? Answer: Years earlier, he had presented himself to the service of God as a living sacrifice, totally committed (**Rom.12:1**). From that time forward, it was no longer his will that was important, but the 'will of God'.

Vs.28,29. 'Beside those things that are without'. And yet, this is not all. In addition to these many perils, that which concerned me most, as a missionary-evangelist and church planter, was 'the care (spiritual welfare) of all the churches'.

- 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' No man is offended but what I burn with indignation and zeal to restore him. (Who is caused to stumble, and I am not indignant?) Note: Paul is deeply concerned about the possibility of the Corinthian brethren being led astray.

V.30. 'If I must needs glory (boast), I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities'. 'I will not boast of my natural or acquired powers, neither in what God has done by me; but rather in what I have suffered for him.' (Clarke) Note: The false teachers, those who thought of themselves as being most eminent apostles, would never think of boasting of such things.

Vs.31-33. 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . knoweth that I lie not'. Note: Many scholars mention the fact that Paul's statement here does not connect with either that which precedes or what follows. It's as though he was about to mention his experiences that took place soon after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Yet, this is all he has to say concerning the matter.

- Not long after Paul's conversion, and while still in Damascus, the Governor, under King Aretas (father-in-law of Herod Antipas), had the gates of the city guarded so as to arrest him. But 'the disciples took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket' (**c.f. Acts 9:23-25**).

Chapter 12

V.1. In vindicating his apostleship and trying to refute the false teachers that were discrediting him, Paul continues with his boasting (although realizing it as unbecoming).

- 'I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord'. **Note:** It's likely that those 'false' (super apostles) among the Corinthian believers had claimed to have had spectacular experiences of the Lord.

Vs.2,3. 'I knew a man in Christ'. He does not mention the man by name, but it's clear that Paul was speaking of himself.

- 'Above fourteen years ago'. He relates something that had happened in his life, although he doesn't tell us 'when' it took place, nor 'where'. **Note:** Some suggest that it occurred at the time he was stoned at Lystra, and left for dead (**Acts 14:19,20**). Others think this took place when he was at Tarsus, waiting for the Lord to give directions as to what his work was to be, noted somewhere between **Acts 9:30** and **11:25**. Still others suggest that it could have been during the three days he was blinded after his conversion (**Acts 9:8,9**); or, while he was in Arabia (**Gal.1:17**). The truth of the matter is: the date is not precise enough to pinpoint the exact 'time' or 'event' to which Paul alludes. Therefore, we just don't know.
- 'Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth'. The experience was so real, Paul couldn't tell whether it was a vision, or, that he was literally caught up physically 'to the third heaven'. **Note:** The Bible speaks of three heavens: (a) The 'atmospheric heavens' (**Gen.1:7**), which is the expanse above the earth; (b) The 'starry space' (**Gen.15:5; 22:17**); and, (c) The abode of God (the home of all departed believers).

Vs.4,5. 'He was caught up into paradise'. **Note:** The 'third heaven' and 'paradise today' are one and the same. **Remember:** Paradise, at one time, was in the heart of the earth, inasmuch as Jesus said to the repentant dying thief, 'To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' (**Lu.23:43**). Therefore, at a time before Paul's day (at the resurrection of Jesus), it (paradise) was transferred to the abode of Almighty God. **Note:** There was a time, later in history, when rabbis were accustomed to dividing the heavens into seven stratum (layers). But there is no evidence, whatsoever, in rabbinical sources to substantiate the existence of such an idea among the Jews of our day.

- 'heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter'. **Question:** Does this mean that Paul heard something that he was not allowed to share; or, maybe, words which were impossible for him (as one still in his mortal body) to express; or, possibly, some other reason? **Note:** The 'unspeakable words', which were 'not lawful' for Paul to utter, were not words Paul, as human, was unable to utter, but words which he was not to utter' (not allowed to utter). God didn't want us to know, so He didn't give Paul permission to tell us.
- Something to think about: (a) Paul doesn't mention anything he 'saw', but gives only a vague description of what he 'heard'. (b) Some have been tempted to guess 'what' the unspeakable words were, or what the 'subject' might have been - all to no avail. (c) Whatever they might have been, we are told in the scriptures that while we are here in this

world, we have a more sure word of prophecy (God's infallible word) than that of visions and revelations (**II Pet.1:19**).

V.6. 'For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth' (Even if I had a mind to boast about such a man, it would not be empty vanity; I would only be telling the truth).

- 'But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me' (I spare; I refrain from boasting). He is reluctant to share this experience with the Corinthian Christians, fearing that they might 'think of me above that which I am'.

V.7. 'Lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh'.

Paul's vision was so outstanding and moving that he could easily have gotten lifted up within himself (over-exalted). Like all mortal beings, Paul was not immune to the danger of pride. Therefore, to keep him humble, and, to prevent him from being 'exalted above measure', there was given him a 'thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him'.

Note: In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint Version), the word 'thorn' is described as 'something which frustrates and causes trouble in the lives of those afflicted'.

(Kruse) Too, notice that Paul says, 'there was given to me a thorn in the flesh'. He does not say, 'There was *inflicted upon me* a thorn in the flesh', but 'There was *given* to me.'

(Spurgeon)

- Always good to remember: Satan has no right, nor power, to inflict God's people unless God gives him permission (**c.f. Job 2:3-6**). With that being true, the 'thorn', although a messenger of Satan, was ultimately given by God.
- Question is raised: What, actually, was the thorn? Answer: We are not given the answer, but there are many, and varied, ideas: (a) continued temptations from the devil; (b) Paul's opposition from his adversaries; (c) some intense bodily pain; (d) some physical affliction such as epilepsy, malaria, or an impediment of speech (**c.f. II Cor. 10:10**). But that which is most generally adopted is that the thorn was 'acute and disfiguring ophthalmia' (inflammation of the eyeball). And some go so far as to believe that his eye trouble originated in the blinding glare of the light from heaven which flashed about him on the Damascus road (**c.f. 9:3-8**). (I disagree with what, altogether.)

Vs.8,9. These verses, seemingly, fail to bear out what Paul had just said. He feels the 'thorn' to be a real hindrance to his ministry, so he prays three times asking God to remove it. But God didn't remove it. Yet, it's good to notice, Paul did that which he encouraged others to do in times of trouble - 'pray'. When writing to believers in Philippi, he said, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God' (**Phil.4:6**).

- Note: Some teach that to pray for something more than once is due to a lack of faith. But we can rest assured, such is not the case. Jesus prayed three times for the same thing, using the same words each time while in His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Mk.14:39-41**). Too, some think Paul was using a Hebrew figure of speech that actually means 'more than three times', but continuously, over and over again. (Morgan) (I disagree.)

- The Bible says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you' (**Matt.7:7**); and, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive' (**Matt.21:22**). Therefore, inasmuch as Paul was a man of faith, his praying on this occasion, with God refusing to remove the thorn in his flesh, has been a stumbling block for some.
- An interesting note: If an answer does not come to the first prayer concerning a matter - pray on. If the second prayer has the same result - pray on. Pray until the answer comes, whether 'yes' or 'no'. Not only are troubles sent to teach us to pray, but to teach us to continue to pray.
- God's response to Paul: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness'. Amen! Note: The answer wasn't what Paul hoped and prayed for at the beginning. The 'thorn' would remain; but it would always be accompanied by God's wonderful and marvelous grace, a grace that would be sufficient whatever the need.
- 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me'. It was through Paul's infirmities that he became completely dependent upon God's grace and strength. Therefore, he says, rather than glory in the visions and revelations I have received of God (like the false teachers would undoubtedly have done), I will gladly glory in my infirmities (weaknesses). By doing so, I'm confident that the power of Christ will shine forth through my life and ministry.

V.10. Rather than Paul being grieved over his state of affairs (infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses - for Christ's sake), he 'gloried' in them (**v.9**), and, 'took pleasure' in them. Note: Paul was determined to live his life as had been instructed by Jesus, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven' (**Matt.5:11,12**).

- 'For when I am weak, then am I strong'. God allowed the weaknesses of Paul to reveal a divine strength in him. Spurgeon said, 'The worst trial a man may have may be the best possession he has in this world'.
- When we are weak within ourselves, yet, allow God to fill us with his power, it's then that we are stronger than we could ever be on our own.

V.11. 'I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me'. Paul was hurt deeply (crushed in his spirit) that some of the believers in Corinth had doubted and questioned his apostleship rather than standing up in his defense. Question: If Paul thought his boasting was foolish, why did he do it? Answer: He defends himself; not to satisfy his ego, but for the cause of the gospel and the Corinthian believers.

- 'for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing'. Paul argued that he was not the least inferior to these 'chiefest apostles' (extraspecial messengers), even though he considered himself a nobody.

Vs.12,13. 'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you'. He had given them full proof and evidence of his apostleship - 'in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds'.

- 'For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches?' 'In what respect have you been worse used than other churches?' (R. Weymouth)

- 'Is it because I have not allowed you to support me financially?' Actually, Paul founded the church in Corinth, and had not wanted to be a burden to them (especially in its early stages), so he took no monies for his labors. Note: He did not seek 'theirs', but 'them'; not to be a burden, but a blessing. He sought not to enrich himself, but to save their souls.
- 'Forgive me this wrong.' The only fault of his ministry while in Corinth was that he had showed them preferential treatment. And because of their ingratitude, Paul, using irony (with sarcasm), says, 'My humblest apologies for this great wrong'.

Vs.14,15. While on his first visit, Paul founded the Corinthian church, staying in the city one year and six months (**Acts 18:11**). Too, it's believed his second visit took place between his writing the two letters (1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians). He now anticipates a 'third visit'.

- 'I will not be burdensome to you'. He expects nothing from them in terms of remuneration. He thought of himself as their spiritual father, and a father lays up for his children rather than taking (receiving) from them. Paul wasn't interested in their money, but in them.
- 'I will very gladly spend and be spent for you'. I will most happily spend my money and myself (my time, strength, interest, everything) for your sakes.
- 'Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved'. Note: You can sense the hurt in what Paul says. Yet, he loved them, and would spend himself totally for them, even if it meant there would be no affection, on their part, in return.

V.16. 'Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile'. Paul, once again, is being sarcastic. There were some in the Corinthian church that accused him of being 'crafty' in order to get them to participate in the love-offering for the poor saints in Judea; that he preyed upon them in a round-about way to get them to take part. Others believe Paul was speaking seriously here, admitting that he was crafty and used guile in his ministry to the Corinthians. Therefore, they conclude that it is lawful to use guile, deceit, etc., if such serves a good religious purpose. Listen closely: Nothing could be further from the truth. 'This doctrine is abominable; and the words are most evidently those of the apostle's detractors, against which he defends his conduct in the two following verses'. (A. Clarke)

Vs.17,18. 'Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?' (Did I defraud or exploit you through anyone I have sent your way?)

- Paul boasts of Titus, how that he and the brother sent with him were like-minded and of the same spirit. No devious tactics could be seen in Paul or any of his companions.

V.19. 'Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ'. Two versions: (a) Do you think I apologize for the way I have handled the situation - and that I sent Titus and the brethren to you because I was ashamed to come myself?' (b) Perhaps you have been imagining, all this time, that I have been pleading with you by way of self-defense.

- God is my judge. Such as that was not my motive at all. What I have done has been for your edification; not to defend myself in any way. Note: It was not necessary for Paul to defend himself before anyone, nor to qualify his apostolic authority. He was not accountable to the Corinthians, only to God.

Vs.20,21. Paul feared that the practices of those wicked in Corinth had invaded the church. So he writes in hopes they will straighten up their lives before he arrived.

- 'And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you'. He was grieved at the thought of finding scandalous sins prevalent among them not yet repented of. If this happened to be the case, it would be the cause of great humiliation and lamentation (wailing; crying out in grief).
- Interesting note: Upon reading this list of sins, which were prevalent in the church, it's hard to picture how these would be the people Paul said 'were enriched by him (God) . . . so that ye come behind in no gift . . . that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (I Cor.1:5-8).

Chapter 13

Paul gives his 'final advice' to the Corinthian believers, warning them to examine themselves before he and the other brethren arrive.

- V.1.** 'the third time I am coming to you'. Note: It is difficult to know, definitely, what Paul was actually saying. Was it: (a) He had already visited Corinth twice?; (b) This is the third time he had planned to pay them a visit? or, (c) I planned twice before, but had to forego my plans?'
- 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established'. Question is raised: Why would that be necessary? Answer: Primarily, because it is scriptural. (a) This is a quotation from **Deut.19:15**, which says, 'One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established'; (b) When speaking of 'discipline in the church', Jesus said, 'that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' (**Matt.18:16b**); and (c) This is the 'law of interpreting Scripture'. Every doctrine must be proved by at least two or three scriptures in order for it to be accepted as binding upon believers. (Dake)
 - On this occasion, when quoting Moses, Paul could be saying this 'third visit' is like a third witness'. Too, it's possible that it was to explain why, on this third trip, he was bringing with him Titus and the other brethren - that they might be witnesses.

Vs.2,3. 'I told you before, and foretell you'. I have told you before, and now tell (warn) you once again.

- 'As if I were present the second time'. He wanted them to understand the warning he had given by letter as clearly as if he were with them speaking face to face.
- 'being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other' (both they who had sinned, earlier, and, to those who had not fallen into gross sin, but had rejected Paul's authority as an apostle).
- 'If I come again, I will not spare'. Question: What is the meaning of Paul's statement: 'I will not spare'? (a) 'I will spare no one'; (b) 'I will show no leniency'; (c) Should there be disobedience and sin in the assembly, I will exercise my authority as an apostle, not by signs, but in discipline. (I agree with 'c'.)
- 'Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you'. (Thus, you will have proof that I am indeed a spokesman of Christ; and He is the One who shows no weakness towards you, but works mightily in you.) Note: In spite of all their failures and shortcomings, Christ had not deserted or "given up on" them. Amen! What a merciful and longsuffering Lord!

V.4. 'For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God'. To the multitudes, the crucifixion of Christ appeared a 'weakness' and 'defeat'. To them, Jesus, seemingly, was powerless, unable to help himself. Yet, what looked like weakness and defeat actually demonstrated his power and victory.

- 'For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God'. We too are weak, even as he was. Note: Paul had made mention, in **10:10**, of his bodily presence being

weak, and his speech contemptible. But he now says, 'we shall live with him by the power of God' (by the fact that Christ lives within). It is in our weakness that we are united to him, and made strong.

- 'Toward you' (with reference to you). Paul has in mind his spiritual authority being re-established over the Church of Corinth. (Pulpit Comm.)

Vs.5,6. 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves'. Paul's critics had been ready to examine him (his apostleship; proper credentials; authority, etc.) to ascertain his relationship with Christ. So he now asks them to subject themselves to the same scrutiny. Note: 'This was the trouble at Corinth. They were quick to criticize Paul, but had failed to examine themselves'. (Redpath)

- 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' Note: Paul has these Corinthian believers to consider an all-important and sobering question. They were to ask themselves, 'Am I really a Christian?'
- In essence, he says, 'You ought to know by this time that Christ abides within your heart and life - unless you are a reprobate (unacceptable; morally corrupt; foreordained to damnation; not a Christian at all)'.

Vs.7,8. 'Now I pray to God that ye do no evil, etc.'. We want you to always do that which is right, even though some have accused us of being reprobates (persons not approved of God). Your doing right will prevent us from using our power of judgments; otherwise, we will have to give proof that we are approved of God.

- 'For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth'. The powers we have are used in support of the truth, not against it.

V.9. 'For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong'. (We are glad to be weak if it means that you are strong.)

- 'and this also we wish, even your perfection'. Note: That was Paul's purpose for writing. Just as parents desire their children to grow into mature adults, Paul wanted the Corinthians to grow into mature believers; to come to the place in their Christian living where they loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. That's the definition of 'Christian perfection'.

V.10. 'Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness (severity; harshness), according to the power which the Lord hath given me (as an apostle).

- 'to edification, and not to destruction'. Paul's one desire, under God's authority as an apostle, was to edify, not destroy. Note: That should be the desire of every believer: that we might encourage and lift up, rather than tear down and destroy.

Vs.11-14. 'Finally, brethren'. Note: In the first nine chapters, Paul addressed the majority of the brethren in the Corinthian assembly (those faithful). Then, in **10:1-13:10**, his words had been directed primarily to those who questioned his apostleship and integrity. Now, in his closing words, he turns his attention to those who not only love and serve God, but love and appreciate him. And he calls them 'brethren'.

- 'Be perfect'. Some teach that such can never be achieved in this life. But that's untrue. Jesus said, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (**Matt.5:48**). The definition of 'perfection' is mentioned in the notes of **v.9**. Note: I recommend you read my notes on sanctification entitled: 'Sanctification, A Second Work of Grace', and, my notes on **I Corinthians**, and, especially, those of the 'circles' on **p.9**, which illustrate the heart of man: (a) Born with the 'sin nature'; (b) As a natural man (unsaved; sinner); (c) Saved man (although carnal; babe in Christ); and, (d) Sanctified man (spiritual; perfect in Christ).
- 'Be of good comfort'. (Contentment)
- 'Be of one mind'. (Unity; one accord) Note: The Holy Ghost did not come in His fulness on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) until the believers were in 'one accord'.
- 'Live in peace'. (Harmony)

V.14. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen'. In his concluding benediction, Paul not only invokes the fulness of God's blessings and provisions on behalf of the Corinthian believers, he also provides one of the clearest expressions in all of the New Testament on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

- 'be with you all'. Note: Some had sinned, earlier; some had not repented; yet, Paul has one prayer for them all. He wants God's best for everyone.
- Note: These are the last recorded words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian Church.