

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Lecture Notes

## INTRODUCTION

### 1a. The Authenticity of the Letter

The epistle is a genuine apostolic product. The author is, without doubt, the Apostle Paul. "The evidence, both external and internal, for the genuineness of 2 Corinthians is so strong that a commentator might be excused for assuming it without discussion." Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), xi.

### 1b. Internal Evidence

#### 1c. His name

His name appears twice in the epistle. (1) "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God ... (1:1), and (2) "Now I Paul myself beseech you ... (10:1)

#### 2c. His testimony

The testimony of the writer as recorded in 11:16-33 corresponds with the experiences of the Apostle Paul. See especially 11:25a cf Acts 16:22-23a; 11:25b cf Acts 14:19; 11:25c cf Acts 27; 11:26 cf Acts 14:5; 11:27 cf Acts 20:31; 11:28 cf Acts 15:36; 11:32-33 cf Acts 9:24-25. "The items of autobiography which are among the most precious details of the Epistle, ring true and are not at all like fiction. Moreover, there are frequent links with the other three great Epistles of St Paul, and it would be beyond the skill of any inventor to forge all these, to say nothing of the general agreement with the characteristic ideas of the Apostle." (Plummer, *Corinthians*, xii).

### 2b. External Evidence

1c. Irenaeus (130-200), disciple of Polycarp, quotes from chapters 2,3,4,5, and 13 of the epistle which he identifies as *in epistola secunda ad Corinthios*.

2c. Polycarp (70-150), disciple of the Apostle John, reveals his acquaintance with such verses as 2 Cor as 3:2, 4:14, 8:21.

3c. It is listed in the Muratorian Fragment (c AD 170). The Muratorian Fragment is the oldest extant list of NT writings.

## 2a. The Historical Background of the Letter

### 1b. Paul's Contacts with the Corinthians

Did Paul write only 2 epistles to the Corinthians? (cf 1 Cor 5:9, 11). Did he only pay them 2 visits (2 Cor 12:14). There were actually 3 visits and 4 epistles.

Kent lists 7 contacts between Paul and the Corinthians (Homer A Kent, Jr, *A Heart Opened Wide: Studies in II Corinthian* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982], 16-18). They are:

1c. The founding visit, at which Paul established the church at Corinth, occurred during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18).

2c. A "lost letter" was written by Paul dealing with the church's responsibility towards its sinning members (1 Cor 5:9). This letter has not been found, but its contents were summarized and clarified in 1 Cor 5:9-13. Word then came to Paul from the household of Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) and from Apollos (1 Cor 16:12) regarding the Corinthians. He also received a letter from the church (1 Cor 7:1), perhaps delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17). Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia and then on to Corinth (Acts 19:22. 1 Cor 4:17) to help resolve their

problems, but was uncertain whether Timothy would arrive before or after the church would receive 1 Corinthians.

3c. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) on Paul's third missionary journey. Some of the problems persisted, thus, requiring further action.

4c. A "painful visit" was undertaken by Paul from Ephesus to Corinth (2 Cor 2:1). This visit is not mentioned in Acts, but seems to be required by the information contained in 2 Corinthians. Paul refers to his next "coming" as his third one (2 Cor 12:14, 13:1-2). "Comings" refer to actual visits made by Paul. This visit seems to have been unsuccessful.

5c. Returning to Ephesus, Paul wrote a "severe letter" (2 Cor 2:4,9; 7:8-12), which Titus carried (2 Cor 12:18). It is difficult to identify this letter as 1 Corinthians because that epistle does not bear the marks of one composed "with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4, 7:8). Being impatient for Titus' return, Paul left Ephesus for Troas and then went to Macedonia where he finally met Titus and received good news (2 Cor 2:12-13; 7:5-16).

6c. Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1; 9:2-4).

7c. Paul paid another visit to church in Corinth. He was there throughout the winter (Acts 20:1-4, 2 Cor 12:14, 13: 1)

## 2b. Place and Date of the Letter

### 1c. Place

The letter was probably written shortly after Paul met Titus in Macedonia (2:13, 7:5-6). The Macedonian

churches are mentioned in 8:1, and 9:2,4 in conjunction with the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Apparently, Paul was in Macedonia enroute to Corinth to receive their part of the contribution. The subscription at the end of the epistle (non-inspired) indicates that it is written in Philippi, one of the churches in Macedonia. This is a possibility but one cannot be absolutely sure.

#### 2c. Date

On the basis of the close relation between the first and second epistles, it is likely that the 2 letters were written only a few months apart. Since Paul spent the winter with them, the letter must have been written sometime in the summer or autumn of AD 55 (probably reached Corinth in Nov-Dec AD 55).

#### 3b. The Opponents of Paul

That the epistle has a polemical tone is without question. Paul usually defends his apostleship by simply stating that he is an Apostle called by the will of God in his epistolary salutation (Rom 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1 et al). But in 2 Corinthians, such a preliminary declaration is apparently not enough. Paul took great pains to prove the genuineness of his apostolic office (Chaps 10-12). His enemies in Corinth were apparently very successful in swaying the loyalty of the Corinthian Church away from Paul to themselves. The gravity of the situation cannot be stressed enough. If Paul's apostleship is questioned, his message and ministry are in question as well.

#### 1c. The identity of Paul's opponents

Paul called them "false apostles" (11:13). But who exactly were they? There are 4 possibilities:

1d. Judaizers, ie Jews who profess to be Christians but demand continued observance of

the Mosaic Law as a partial requirement for salvation.

2d. Gnostics, ie those who claim to possess special knowledge of and position with God.

3d. Divine men, ie those who have imbibed the ideology of a 'divine man' (*theios aner*) which was prevalent in Hellenistic synagogues.

4d. Pneumatics (if I may use the term, "charismatics"), ie those who emphasize the manifestations of the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit.

5d. I prefer the first view because Paul tells us that:

1e. They are Jews (11:22). Probably from Jerusalem (11:5), similar to the certain ones from James (Gal 2:12).

2e. They preach another Jesus (11:4 cf Gal 1: 8-9).

2c. The characteristics of Paul's opponents:

1d. They operate according to worldly wisdom (1:12).

2d. They peddle the Word of God for profit (2:17).

3d. They commend themselves, and must also depend on letters of recommendation (3:1).

4d. They are smugly self-sufficient (3:5).

5d. Their ministries are ministries of death (3:6-7).

6d. They condemn men (3:9).

7d. They are deceived and spiritually blinded (3:12-18).

8d. They use secret and shameful ways, including deception and distortion (4:2).

9d. They are perishing (4:3).

10d. They are blinded, and cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (4:4).

11d. They preach themselves (4:5).

12d. They tout themselves as “masters,” not “servants” (4:5).

13d. They take pride in what is seen; they emphasize the outward (5:12).

14d. They are unbelievers, wicked, and in darkness. They are of Belial, worship idols and are unclean (6:14-18).

15d. They contaminate body and spirit (7:1).

16d. They live by the standards of this world including how war is waged and weapons are used (10:2-4).

17d. They argue with God and are pretentious (10:5).

18d. They are disobedient to God (10:6).

19d. They compare and classify themselves by their own standards; they are unwise (10:12).

20d. They are overly boastful and intrusive (10:13-16).

21d. They commend themselves (10:18).

22d. They preach another Jesus, Spirit, and Gospel (11:4).

23d. They think themselves as “super-apostles” (11:5).

24d. They are boastful (11:12).

25d. They are “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ;” they also masquerade “as angels of light and servants of righteousness” (11:13-15).

26d. They boast in a worldly manner (11:18).

27d. They are fools (11:19).

28d. They enslave, exploit, take advantage of others, push themselves forward, slap others on the face, and are boastful (11:20).

29d. They claim to be Hebrews, Israelites, Abraham’s descendants, and servants of Christ (11:22-23).

30d. They claim to be “super-apostles” (12:11).

31d. They are a financial burden, and they exploit the Corinthians (12:13-18).

#### 1a. PROLOGUE (1:1-11)

The Pauline epistles usually follow this order: (1) An introduction (1:1) (2) the Christian greeting (1:2), (3) the thanksgiving (1:3-11), (4) the content proper (1:12-13:10) and (5)

the concluding salutations (13:11-14). The epistle of 2 Corinthians has all the 5 sections:

1b. The Introduction (1:1)

In the introduction, the author identifies himself and his readers

1c. The writer (1:1a)

1d. The Apostle Paul

The Greek word *apostolos* can be taken in 2 ways: (1) the usual sense of “a messenger.” An example being Barnabas (Acts 14:14). And (2) the exclusive sense of “an Apostle,” ie an Apostle of *the Lord*. Anyone can be an “apostle” but not everyone can be an “Apostle of Jesus Christ.” There are only 12 such Apostles of the Lord. The number 12 is fixed (see Acts 1:15-26 cf 6:2. 1 Cor 15:5, Rev 21:14). The latter is the meaning here since Paul calls himself “an apostle of *Jesus Christ*.” He is a special messenger, specially chosen by Christ for a special purpose – to preach and write the inspired Word of God. The Apostles were infallible in both their preaching (1 Thess 2:13), and writing (2 Tim 3:16). The content of the epistle is, thus, “God-breathed.” When one reads the book, it is as if God is speaking directly to him.

Paul adds that he is an Apostle “by the will of God.” He was not a self-made or self-proclaimed Apostle. All such are pseudo-apostles. God called him to be an Apostle (cf Acts 9).

2d. The brother Timothy

Paul mentions Timothy and calls him “the brother.” This indicates 2 things: (1) Timothy is a

Christian. He is a brother in the Lord Jesus Christ. The church exists as a family. Every born again believer has this special relationship with God (our Father) and with one another (our brothers and sisters).

(2) Timothy is an associate. As a polite gesture, Paul usually includes the names of his valued co-workers, then present with him, in his letters. Timothy was therefore not co-author with Paul. The frequent occurrence of the singular personal pronoun "I" bears proof of this fact (cf 1:13,15,17,23 etc).

2c. The readers (1:1b)

1d. The church in Corinth

This church in Corinth is the same church of 1 Corinthians. The Corinthian was the most problematic church of the NT. The church was divided, carnal, immoral, suing one another in public courts, falling into idolatry, doubting the apostleship of Paul, abusing the holy communion, misusing the spiritual gifts, and questioning the resurrection of Christ. Paul had written 1 Corinthians to correct these problems, but evidently some problems continued to exist, especially the problem of questioning Paul's apostleship. It seems that false apostles had since infiltrated the church and were viciously maligning Paul. Paul is very aware that the gospel is linked very closely to his apostolic ministry. The denial of his apostolic office would eventually lead to the destruction of the gospel message. It is not Paul's ego, but the salvation truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is at stake

2d. The saints in Achaia

Achaia was the Roman province south of its northern counterpart, Macedonia. Corinth was the capital city of Achaia. Apparently, the Corinthian church was not the only church in Achaia. We know of 2 other churches in this region, the church in Cenchrea (Rom 16:1), and in Athens (Acts 17:34).

Christians are also called “saints,” meaning, “holy ones.” This term does not teach “sinless perfection.” The example of the Corinthian saints would bear this fact. The designation is simply a positional title for believers.

## 2b. The Christian Greeting (1:2)

The Christian greeting of “grace and peace” is common in most of the epistles of the NT (both Pauline [1 Cor 1:3, Col 1:2, Phlm 3], and non-Pauline [1 Pet 1:2, 2 Pet 1:2, Rev 1:4]). The Apostolic greeting usually consists of these 2 words: (1) *charis* (grace), and (2) *eirene* (peace).

### 1c. Grace

The conventional Greek salutation is *chairein*, meaning “rejoice.” Instead of using this standard term, Paul used the word *charis*, “grace,” which became a unique Christian greeting. The word denotes the undeserved love of God to mankind by the condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ whose life-sufferings and cross-work made it possible for man to be reconciled to God.

### 2c. Peace

The usual semitic greeting is *shalom*, which means “peace.” This word is usually being translated by the Greek *eirene*. The word “peace” logically follows “grace.” Before there can be true peace, grace must come. The idea of peace has to do with messianic

salvation. It is a peace with God when a person acknowledges his sin and places his trust in Christ (Rom 5:1).

3c. The source of grace and peace

The gifts of grace and peace come from, our Father in heaven who has made salvation possible through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a *chiasmus* here: "Grace be to you" (A), "and peace" (B) "from God our Father" (B1), and "from the Lord Jesus Christ" (A1).

3b. The Thanksgiving (1:3-11)

1c. For divine comfort (1:3-7)

Paul underwent tremendous suffering for the gospel of Christ. Christians are not spared the hardships of life. Added to that is the persecution from the unbelieving world (cf John 15:18-20). The Lord, however, has not left us destitute. Paul teaches that our God is a God of compassion and of comfort. The attributive participle, "comfort" ("who comforteth," v4), is written in the present tense, indicating a continued, non-stop action. God promises to *keep on* helping us in times of distress. He wants us to be very dependent on Him. Moreover, He is not one who cannot feel *with* us. He is sympathetic to our pains and hurts because Christ the God-Man has experienced them: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:15-16). As we are helped in our sufferings, we also gain the necessary experiential knowledge to help others who may be going through the same trials.

2c. For divine deliverance (1:8-11)

Paul, here, gives special thanks to the Lord for rescuing him and his fellow-workers from trouble in Ephesus (cf Acts 19). The trouble they went through was apparently very severe. Paul said that they “despaired even of life ... we had the sentence of death in ourselves (8b-9a)” They certainly thought that they were going to die. Paul says that he went through this terrible time in Asia. But exactly where? “In Asia” probably means “in Ephesus.” “During the period of his Ephesian ministry (Acts 19:1-20:1) Paul suffered several traumatic experiences, including personal dangers and possible imprisonments. The Acts of the Apostles mentions only the riot caused by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-41), but there are a number of references in the Epistles which lead us to suppose that the troubles Paul experienced at Ephesus were more serious and more numerous than Luke would have us believe. The opposition reached such a pitch that Paul refers to it as ‘fighting with wild beasts’ (1 Cor 15:32). He also uses the language of the spectacle in the arena to describe the ignominy to which he had been subject in his work as an apostle (1 Cor 4:9). At a later date he was in such serious trouble that he considered death to be the inevitable outcome of his afflictions (2 Cor 1:8-10), and he gives a lengthy catalogue of his sufferings and hardships endured for the sake of the Gospel (2 Cor 11:23-9), some of which must have happened to him during his stay in Ephesus. He tells of Prisca and Aquila who risked their necks for him (Rom 16:4); warns Timothy of his adversary Alexander the coppersmith who had done him great harm (2 Tim. 4:14-17); and describes his work in Ephesus in terms of ‘an open door ... and many adversaries’ (1 Cor 16:9).” (Roy Yates, “Paul’s Affliction in Asia: 2 Corinthians 1:8.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 53 (1981), 241-5).

## 2a. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO THE CORINTHIANS (1:12-7:16)

1b. The Change of Paul's Plan of a Visit to Corinth (1:12-2:13)

Paul, now, deals with the opposition he has been getting from the people in Corinth. The Corinthians were accusing Paul, probably at the instigation of the false teachers, for being insincere and fickle-minded because he did not keep his word that he would visit them. Was such an allegation justified?

1c. The sincerity of his original plan (1:12-14)

Paul had to explain the change of plans. He does not immediately answer their accusation. He first appeals for their objective appraisal of his ministry among them. They knew very well the quality of his ministry among them. He could not out of a good conscience declare that his ministerial conduct was characterized by "simplicity and godly sincerity." The word *haploteti*, translated in the KJV as "simplicity" has the idea of singleness of purpose and motivation (against fickle-mindedness). The other word, *eilikrineia*, translated here as "sincerity" has the idea of pure and unadulterated motives. The former word therefore answers the charge of double-mindedness, and the latter the charge of insincerity. His previous intimation of a visit was done so out of a pure heart. Paul meant what he said, and said what he meant. Paul was happy that some of the Corinthians did believe that he was sincere. In any case, the truth of the matter will bear out at "the end (v13)," ie "the day of the Lord Jesus (v14)."

2c. A defence of his change of plan (1:15-22)

1d. The original plan explained (1:15-17)

The data here is a little complicated. How many times did Paul visit Corinth already? Is the visit of v15 his second or third visit? Kent

comments, “Difficulties in translation and somewhat confusing data pose problems for the interpreter. The matter is complicated by the mention of an itinerary in 1 Corinthians 16:5 which differs from the one referred to here. It seems unlikely that the reference in this verse to a second visit which had to be cancelled referred to Paul’s next contemplated trip, for he had already been in Corinth twice by the time of this writing, and his next visit would be his third (12:14; 13:1). It is better therefore, to understand Paul to mean that he had planned to come to Corinth first before proceeding to Macedonia. The ‘second benefit’ (KJV) ... is explained in the following verse as resulting from a double visit...

“The precise itinerary (as originally planned) called for a sea voyage from Ephesus to Corinth, then a land journey to Macedonia, a second visit to Corinth on the return, and finally a trip to Judea with the assistance of the Corinthians.... When Paul had written 1 Corinthians, he had given a different route, planning to come to Corinth by way of Macedonia (16:5). Obviously one of those plans had changed, for he was already in Macedonia and planning to visit Corinth afterward (9:2-4). Even assuming the accomplishment of the painful visit..., certain features of the plan as first announced (1 Cor 16:5) had been altered, and this had led to charges of vacillation. Yet the unpleasantness that had erupted had ruined the prospect of that dual blessing from a two-phase visit” (Kent, *Heart*, 40).

Paul admits to the change of itinerary but it was not because of lightness. Paul was probably quoting his accusers when he used the words, “lightness,” and “yea, yea, and nay, nay (ie “when I say yes, I actually meant no”).” The definite article is attached to them. In other

words, his decisions are not frivolously but carefully made.

#### 2d. The accusation refuted (1:18-22)

Paul defends his integrity by appealing to the trustworthiness of the Lord and the truth of the gospel. This passage may be taken to prove the infallibility of the Apostolic ministry. His veracity was attested by whom he was serving, namely, God, and by what he was preaching, namely, the gospel. It is ridiculous for the Corinthians to separate his ministry from his message. Paul is in effect arguing, "God was the one who commissioned me, are you therefore accusing God for being fickle?" The gospel message which you have received unto salvation, are you saying that its promises are untrue?" Answers to both questions are of course in the negative. The absurdity of their accusation is also attested by the undeniable effects of the Apostle's ministry. For the Corinthians were fully aware of their (1) establishment in Christ, (2) anointing, (3) sealing, and (4) possession of the Holy Spirit. All of the above indicate the certainty and security of their saved position in Christ. Paul is therefore intimating, "Since all these blessings are true, and are evident in your own lives, why do you therefore doubt the integrity of my ministry, unless you are denying their veracity as well?"

Paul's change of plans did not involve motive but circumstance. Man may propose, but it is God who disposes. The Corinthians needed to understand this principle.

#### 3c. The reason for the change of plan (1:23-2:4)

The reason why Paul changed his intended travel schedule was because he did not want to cause further pain or sorrow to the Corinthians. He had already paid

them a second visit, the “painful” one, but the problems remained. A severe letter was then written, the one written “with many tears” (2:4). Paul tells them that he takes no delight in such visits and letters. He desires rather to see them for a happy purpose under joyful circumstances.

#### 4c. The pardoning of the offender (2:5-11)

The difficulty here is in identifying who this offender was. There are 2 views: (1) the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5: 1, or (2) a person who led the church in questioning Paul’s apostleship. The first view has the advantage of evidence from 1 Corinthians but seems out of place in the present context. The second view is based on conjecture, but fits the flow of thought in the passage. Paul’s experience from his painful visit provoked him to write his severe letter. The offender was then taken to task by the church. The man subsequently realized his improper behaviour towards Paul and was extremely sorrowful. Having received news from Titus of the situation, Paul writes this letter to counsel the church to forgive the repentant sinner. The man has suffered enough (v6) and should be brought back to the fellowship of the church. This is done for 2 reasons: (1) “lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (v7). The word “swallow up” has been used of a lion devouring its prey (I Peter 5:8), of Egyptians drowned in the sea (Heb 11:29), and of death being completely done away by resurrection (I Cor 15:54). And (2) “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (v11). The devil might have seized the opportunity to split the church even more, or cause the offender to gradually backslide from the faith.

Since the passage is sufficiently ambiguous. It is not wise to be dogmatic over the identity of the offender. However, Kruse has presented a credible scenario for identifying the offender as the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5:1 [Colin G Cruse, “The Offender and

the Offence in 2 Corinthians 2:5 and 7:12." *Evangelical Quarterly* 60 (1988): 129-39]. He suggests the following sequence of events:

- (1) Paul received an oral report from either members of Chloe's household (1 Cor 1:11) or from Stephanus, Fortunatus or Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17) saying that one of the members of the Corinthian congregation was living in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother (1 Cor 5:1). The apostle wrote, strongly rebuking the church for its attitude to this blatant sin, and calling upon the congregation to take disciplinary action against the offender. He was to be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor 5:2-5); to be driven out from among the believers (1 Cor 5:7,13).
- (2) When the Corinthians received Paul's letter they failed to carry out immediately the disciplinary action for which he had called (there is no evidence to the contrary in the extant correspondence).
- (3) When Timothy arrived in Corinth, having been sent there by Paul from Ephesus (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10,11), he found the offender both undisciplined and unrepentant. Timothy returned to Ephesus and reported this state of affairs to Paul.
- (4) When the apostle heard the news he made his second visit to Corinth. Paul too found that the offender had not been disciplined, and the latter, being quite unrepentant, mounted a strong personal attack against Paul and his apostolic authority, especially his authority to discipline him. In his attack the offender made use of criticisms of Paul's ministry voiced by Jewish Christian intruders who were lurking in the background. The members of the church did not come to Paul's defence as he expected they should have (2 Cor 2:3), so he felt it wise to withdraw from the situation and return to Ephesus.
- (5) From Ephesus, he wrote his 'severe' letter (2 Cor 2:3,4; 7:8,12) in which he rebuked the Corinthians for their failure to come to his defence, and

demanded that the one who was guilty (not only of incest, but now also of rejecting the authority of the apostle) be disciplined by them. This letter may have been carried by Titus to Corinth, but whether this was the case or not, it was from Titus returning from Corinth that Paul anxiously awaited the news (2 Cor 2:12,13).

- (6) When Paul met up with Titus in Macedonia he learned from him that the church had finally taken disciplinary action against the offender who presumably had subsequently repented of his misdeeds.
- (7) The apostle became concerned for the repentant offender, and urged his readers to forgive and comfort him lest it be Satan alone who should gain advantage in the end (2:6-11).
- (8) Aware that the Jewish Christian intruders (whose criticisms had been used as 'ammunition' by the offender in his attack) were still lurking in the background, Paul included a number of statements defending the integrity of his mission and showing how, through all the ups and downs of it, the Lord still led him in triumph (1:8-14; 2:14-7:1). Finally, feeling the situation had improved sufficiently, Paul raised again the matter of the collection, urging his readers to complete what they had begun a year ago (chs 8,9).

Although Kruse's arguments in favour for the above scenario is not entirely convincing, it is admitted that it might possibly be the historical situation.

#### 5c. An account of his alternate plan (2:12-13)

Instead of going ahead with his original plan mentioned in 1:16, Paul decided to visit Macedonia first. Leaving Ephesus, he went to Troas to preach the gospel because the Lord had opened a door of opportunity for him to start a church there. It is never wise to refuse any God-given opportunity or invitation to minister the Word. Meanwhile, Titus was in Corinth

with the severe letter. Paul had made arrangements for Titus to meet him in Troas and was anxiously looking forward to the news from him. Seeing that his coming was delayed, he departed for Macedonia hoping to meet Titus on the way. He found no peace of mind until he received the report from Titus. The writing of the severe letter was not a retaliation on the part of Paul against the church for the painful visit he experienced. It was for the well-being of the church. The letter was written out of a heart of love, not bitterness.

2b. The Nature of Paul's Ministry to the Church in Corinth (2:14-6:10)

1c. The victory of the ministry (2:14-17)

The Christian ministry, says Paul, is a triumphant ministry. The word "triumph" here is derived from the Greek *thriambeuo* which can be translated in the following ways: (1) to cause to triumph, (2) to triumph over (win a victory); (3) to lead in triumph (as a victorious soldier); (4) to lead as captives in a triumphal procession. The word is used only one other time in the NT in Col 2:15. The picture of a Roman triumphal procession is in view. Plutarch's *Aemilius Paulus* gives us an idea of what went on: "The people erected scaffoldings in the theatres for equestrian contests, which they call circuses, and round the forum, occupied the other parts of the city which afforded a view of the procession, and witnessed the spectacle arrayed in white garments. Every temple was open and filled with garlands and incense, while numerous servitors and lictors restrained the thronging and scurrying crowds and kept the streets open and clear. Three days were assigned for the triumphal procession. The first barely sufficed for the exhibition of the captured statues, paintings, and colossal figures, which were carried on two hundred and fifty chariots. On the second, the

finest and richest of the Macedonian arms were borne along on many wagons... After the wagons laden with armour there followed three thousand men carrying coined silver in seven hundred and fifty vessels, each of which contained three talents and was borne by four men....

“On the third day, as soon as it was morning, the trumpeters led the way, sounding out no marching or processional strain, but such a one as the Romans use to rouse themselves to battle. After these there were led along a hundred and twenty stall-fed oxen with gilded horns, bedecked with fillets and garlands. Those who led these victims to the sacrifice were young men wearing aprons with handsome borders, and boys attended them carrying gold and silver vessels of libation. Next, after these, came the carriers of the coined gold.... After these followed the bearers of the consecrated gold ... and then those who displayed all the gold plate of Perseus’ table. These were followed by the chariot of Perseus, which bore his arms, and his diadem lying upon his arms. Then, at a little interval, came the children of the king, led along as slaves, and with them a throng of foster-parents, teachers, and tutors, all in tears....

“Behind the children and their train of attendants walked Perseus himself, clad in a dark robe and wearing high boots of his country.... He, too, was followed by a company of friends and intimates ....

“Next in order to those were carried wreaths of gold, four hundred in number, which the cities had sent with their embassies to Aemilius as prizes for his victory. Next, mounted on a chariot of magnificent adornment, came Aemilius himself, a man worthy to be looked upon even without such marks of power, wearing a purple robe interwoven with gold, and holding in his right hand a spray of laurel. The whole army also carried sprays of laurel, following the chariot of their general by companies and divisions, and singing, some of them divers songs intermingled with jesting, as the ancient custom was, and other paeans of

victory and hymns in praise of the achievements of Aemilius,... (trans B Perrin in Loeb ed *Lives* VI, 441-7).

Note the chiasmus in verses 15-16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ,"

(A) "in them that are saved,"

(B) "and in them that perish:"

(B1) "To the one we are the savour of death unto death;"

(A1) "and to the other the savour of life unto life."

"In verse 14 the fragrance referred to the gospel which was proclaimed by Paul and his associates. In verse 15 the preachers themselves are identified with the gospel they preach. They are called a 'fragrance of Christ' because they are the deliverers of that gospel.

"Paradoxically these messengers of the gospel were a harbinger of diametrically opposite results to two groups of people. 'Those who are being saved' and 'those who are perishing' describe the two kinds of responses to the preaching of the gospel. At the Roman triumph the aroma of the incense was a token of victory and honor for the conquering legions, but a sign of sure execution to the captives of the parade.

"... To unbelievers the preachers who announced the gospel were proclaiming a message of eternal doom which would eventually be experienced in the unbeliever's destruction.... To those who responded in faith, the gospel preacher had brought a message which comes from Christ, the source of true life, and produces eternal life." (Kent, *Heart*, 56-7).

Paul and his co-workers preached the unadulterated gospel out of pure motives. They were not among those who "corrupt" the gospel. The word "corrupt" here is the Greek *kapeleuo*, which means "to engage in retail business, with the implication of deceptiveness and greedy motives." There were "rice-bowl" preachers who peddle the gospel for profit.

2c. The accreditation of his ministry (3:1-18)

#### 1d. The recommendation of his ministry (3:1-3)

The opponents of Paul have questioned the credentials of Paul. They declared that Paul's character was suspect because he did not possess any letters of recommendation. Such letters were commonly brought by travelling brethren as proof that they were Christians and honest persons. This practice is not unfamiliar to us today. When you applied to study in FEBC, you were required to submit letters of reference from your pastor and employer. These would serve to inform the school of your standing before the people in your church and place of work.

Paul tells the Corinthians that they are his credentials. They are living proof of his effectiveness as a minister of the gospel. Their transformed lives authenticated the work he had done among them. A recommendation letter written in the fleshly tables of the heart is worth much more than one written with ink on hard tables of stone. This is because a paper recommendation does not prove or guarantee a successful ministry; but the evidence of changed lives does. There are many with accredited degrees in divinity and theology, but are failures in ministry! "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor 10: 12). I apply this to myself as well.

#### 2d. The power of the ministry (3:4-6)

Paul acknowledges that his ministerial competence is not due to his own talents or abilities. He was inadequate for the ministry but was made sufficient by Christ. He gave God all the glory. His success was altogether due to the Lord who has made them able ministers of the new covenant. Paul's ministry is a ministry of power because it is of the Spirit and not of the

letter. Hodge likewise took the phrase “not of the letter, but of the spirit” with the antecedent “ministers,” rather than “testament.” This reading, he commented, “is favoured by the whole context. Paul contrasts two dispensations; one he calls the letter, the other the spirit. He says he is minister of the one, not of the other, and afterwards, vs 7.8, he speaks of the ministry of death and ministry of the spirit; the ministry of condemnation and the ministry of righteousness. That the words *letter* and *spirit* as here used mean the law and the gospel is plain, first, because it is the law and the gospel which he proceeds to compare in the following verses; and secondly, because there are terms which he elsewhere uses in the same sense. Thus in Rom 7,6 he speaks of the oldness of the letter and the newness of the spirit. In Rom 2,27 he characterizes the Jew as being of the letter, ie as having the law. Comp. also Gal 3,3. If it be asked what is the ground of these designations, why the law is called letter, and the gospel spirit, it may be answered in the first place, that the law is called *gramma*, *letter*, for the same reason that it is called *graphie*, *scripture*. It was something written. Not only was the decalogue, the kernel of the Mosaic economy, originally written on stones, but the whole law was a volume known as the *writings*. And in the second place, the law as written was something external and objective. It was addressed to the eye, to the ear, to the understanding. It was not an inward principle or power.... It held up the rule of duty to which men were to be conformed, but it could not impart the disposition or ability to obey. It was, as it were, a mere writing or book. On the other hand, the gospel is spiritual, as distinguished from what was external and ritual. It is the power of God, Rom 1,6; the organ through which the Spirit works in giving life to the soul. These words therefore express concisely

the characteristic difference between the law and the gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was *letter*, the other *spirit*." Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1950), 55-6.

"Augustine similarly emphasizes that 'the Apostle's words, 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life', have no reference to figurative phrases', but 'must be understood in the sense ... that the letter of the law, which teaches us not to commit sin, kills, if the life-giving spirit be absent, forasmuch as it causes sin to be known rather than avoided, to be increased rather than diminished, because to an evil concupiscence there is now added the transgression of the law'. Contrasting Sinai and Pentecost, he says: '*There* it was on tables of stone that the finger of God operated; *here* it was on the hearts of men. *There* it was outwardly that the law was registered, so that the unrighteous were terrified by it; *here* it was inwardly given, so that we might be justified by it.... When the works of love are written on tables to alarm the carnal mind, there arises the law of works and 'the letter which killeth' the transgressor; but when love itself is shed abroad in the hearts of believers, then we have the law of faith, and the spirit which gives life to him that loves'.

It must be underscored that though the Christian in a sense is no longer "under Law" (Gal 5:18; Rom 6:14), it does not mean that he is absolved from the demands of the Law; for the *agape* that is required of him is precisely the keeping of the Law (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14).

3d. The glory of the ministry (3:7-11)

The old covenant was a glorious covenant. The Mosaic Law reflected the holiness of God. The warnings to the Israelites against drawing close to the Mount upon the punishment of death was symbolic of the unapproachability of God. "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off." (Exod 20:18). The decalogue itself was marvellously given for they were written with the finger of God (Exod 31:18). Moses' face also reflected the glory of the old covenant. "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount. that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him." (Exod 34:29-30).

If the ministry of the law was glorious. the ministry of grace is even more so. The new covenant saw God condescending to become man in order to be his representative and substitute for salvation. Moses was not able to see the face of Jehovah on the Mount, whereas the New Testament people saw the face of Jesus in Palestine. The Epistle to the Hebrews details for us the surpassing glory of the new covenant. For Christ has now "obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb 8:6).

4d. The superiority of the New Testament ministry (3:12-18)

Since the New Covenant is better than the old, it has replaced it. The KJV used the word “abolished” in the sense that Christ has “fulfilled” it (Matt 5:17-18). Classic dispensationalists have often used this text to support their theory of the abrogation of the law. When Paul said that the Law has been abolished, what did he mean? The answer is in “the sense that its powers, as a death warrant, are annulled by faith in the Gospel. Thus, Calvin... says, ‘I understand that the abolition of the law of which mention is here made as referring to the whole Old Testament, in so far as it is opposed to the gospel, so that it corresponds with the statement, – the law and the prophets were until John.’” Timothy Tow, *The Law of Moses and of Jesus* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986), 32.

Kent explains v14 in this way: “This dramatic procedure of Moses was confronted by the spiritual hardness of Israelites hearts. Most of them failed to understand the true nature of the glory of Moses’ face. Paul explained that the same spiritual dullness existed among the Jews of his day. Just as the veil hid the fading glory of Moses’ face from Jewish observers, so the same sort of obscuring veil seemed to hide the true meaning of the old covenant when the Jews read it. They were unable to see that it was transient, that it pointed to Christ, and that it would be replaced by a new covenant.”

“The obscuring veil of unbelief remains unlifted for Israel because it is removed *only in connection with Christ and His work. Only by faith in Him can a person see the glory of the new covenant, as well as the replacement of the old by the new*” (Kent, *Heart*, 62; italics mine).

### 3c. The honesty of the ministry (4:1-6)

1d. They have preached the whole counsel of God (4:1-4)

Paul has full confidence of the ministry he had received from God. He remembers his Damascus experience, and nobody can tell him that God did not call him into the ministry. Further, his ministry was not characterized by dishonesty or deceit. He preached the gospel as it is, nothing more, nothing less. He did not withhold any part of the truth from them. Neither did he manipulate the gospel for his own personal gains. In the same strain, he declared to the Ephesians, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26-27).

Paul adds that those who are against his ministry and his message are blinded by the devil, "the god of this world" (cf John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Eph 2:2). To those who wilfully and habitually rebel against the truth of the gospel, there comes only a judicial hardening and blinding. Jesus' indictment for those who repeatedly reject His Word was, "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt 13:14-15). Paul himself issued a similar indictment, "And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom 1:28).

#### 2d. They preached not themselves (4:5-6)

This is a good memory text: “For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (v5). Paul’s ministry was a thoroughly *Christodoxologic* (Christ-glorifying) ministry, not a selfishly anthropocentric one. His preaching consistently reflected the key phrase, *Iesoun Christon kurion*, translated predicatively, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” What does it mean to preach oneself? Hodge answered, “To preach one’s self is to make self the end of preaching; that is, preaching with the design to attract to ourselves the admiration, the confidence or homage of men.” (Hodge, *Corinthians*, 87).

The ability to understand and believe the gospel did not come from Paul, for Paul had earlier said, “who is sufficient for these things” (2:16). Illumination comes only from the Lord. For the God who said, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen 1:3) is the same God who gives spiritual light to enlighten the hearts and minds of His people.

#### 4c. The hardship of the ministry (4:7-5:10)

The thesis of this section is verse 7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” What is this treasure that Paul speaks of? This treasure is the “knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” spoken of in the previous verse. The understanding of the gospel and all its implications are given to, or stored in earthen vessels. In ancient times, earthen wares served as storage cases. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in clay jars. Clay is not a particularly strong material. It cracks easily. Paul used it metaphorically here to refer to both (1) the physical body, and (2) the human personality. We are

physically frail and weak. Our bodies are subject to hunger, thirst, tiredness, pain, sickness, and disease. Not only that, we are also sinful, subject to all kinds of temptations, and evil desires. If this fact does not humble us, nothing will. The work of the ministry demands total dependence upon the providence of God. In and of ourselves, we are poor instruments for the preaching of the gospel, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." All the glory is due to God, not us. Every ounce of strength and success in the ministry comes from the Lord and no other.

1d. The preservation through hardship (4: 8-18)

1e. The types of hardship (4:8-12)

1f. In a series of 4 contrasting parallels, Paul reveals the kind of suffering ministers of the gospel had to go through.

1g. Troubled ... not distressed

Paul faced constant opposition from both the Jews as well as the Romans in the course of his ministry. For example, at Corinth he was thrown out of the synagogue for preaching Christ, but a house church started in the home of Justus, even Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and many others believed to form the first nucleus of that church (Acts 18-6-8). Another example: while he was imprisoned in Rome, Paul testified, "But I would ye

should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." (Phil 1:12-13).

2g. Perplexed ... not in despair

There is a play of words here. Literally translated, the clause reads, "being at a loss but not being utterly at a loss." Lenski has it this way: "being at a loss, but not having lost out." R C H Lenski, *Interpretation of First and Second Corinthians* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1946), 977-8. Hodge paraphrases it thus, "constantly doubtful what way to take, and yet always finding some way open." (Hodge, *Corinthians*, 93). Paul could be thinking of his near escapes like the one where he was trapped, but God provided a way out for him through a window, delivered by a basket! (Acts 9:25).

3g. Persecuted ... not forsaken

The former persecutor now becomes the persecuted for the same faith which he persecuted others for. Paul has since realized that Christians

are not alone when they face persecution. In the Damascus experience, Jesus told him that when he persecuted the Christians, he was actually persecuting Him (Acts 9:4). Now that he was being persecuted, he could find grace from the Lord. Christ will never desert His people.

4g. Cast down ... not destroyed

Literally translated the compound verbs in Greek may be rendered this way: "knocked down but never knocked out." Paul may be referring to his experience at Lystra where the people "having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe." (Acts 14:19-20).

2f. The Christian ministry involves suffering. Inasmuch as Jesus suffered while He was on earth, so did the early disciples. They endured the trials so that the gospel may be sent out. The Lord was pleased to use weak bodies and personalities to perform his glorious work of soul-saving. "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (v12).

2e. The strength through hardship (4:13-18)

Paul cannot help but to preach the gospel. He had to proclaim what and whom he had believed. Furthermore, he knows that this earthly life is not the end of one's existence. Even if he were to be killed in the ministry, he knows that the Lord will resurrect him one day together with all the saints. Finally, he rejoices over the fact that his ministry will not be in vain for all things done will reap rich dividends to God's glory.

Paul was willing to go through all the hardship because what really counts is the renewal of the inner, and not the outer man. The physical body is temporal but the spiritual life of the Christian is eternal. The hope of eternal bliss in heaven spurs the Apostle on through the momentary afflictions he had to face.

2d. The reward of hardship (5:1-10)

1e. The future body (5:1-5)

Paul uses the metaphor of a tent to refer to the temporariness of our physical bodies. We will one day receive a permanent dwelling, one which is "not made with hands" (Heb 9:11), ie not man-made but God-made.

But what is this building from God? "Three possible identifications deserve mention. Some commentators see here a reference to heaven itself, or to the believer's mansion in heaven (John 14:2). However, this does not offer as clear a parallel to the physical body. One expects

something more closely personal, that with which the believer is clothed (5:2) and without which he is naked (5:3). A second view, by far the commonest, sees the building as a reference to the resurrection body. This is properly analogous to the physical body which is destroyed at death, and answers the contextual terminology regarding being clothed and not being naked....

“A third view sees here a possible reference to an intermediate body which the believer has until the resurrection. One should not be dogmatic about this because the biblical evidence is not certain; however, this passage could be interpreted in this manner. To see here a reference to an intermediate body would answer Paul’s concern that the loss of his physical body by death would leave him naked. If the ‘building from God’ is the resurrection body, then he would be naked until the resurrection. Furthermore, there is some biblical evidence for intermediate bodies between death and resurrection. Moses and Elijah were not disembodied spirits at the transfiguration, but did possess visible bodies (Matt. 17:3, et al.). The martyrs of the tribulation wore white robes after their deaths but prior to their resurrection (Rev 6:9-11). If anyone questions that an intermediate body would by definition not be ‘eternal’ as this verse states, the answer could be found in the similar terminology used regarding the kingdom. It is described as lasting one thousand years (Rev 20:1-5), and at other times as being eternal (Rev 11:15). Apparently it merges into the eternal state and yet its basic character is

not significantly changed. (Kent, *Heart*, 80-1).

All believers are guaranteed this joyous estate in heaven. For God has given to us his personal guarantee: “the earnest of the Spirit.” The word *arrabon*, “first installment, downpayment, pledge, guarantee, security deposit,” denotes “the first or initial payment of money or assets, as a guarantee for the completion of a transaction or pledge.” It serves as an indication that what God has begun He will ultimately bring to completion.

## 2e. The judgment seat (5:6-10)

Since our heavenly estate is so much better than our present earthly existence, Paul says that it is certainly better to be “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (v8). But there is a necessary purpose for us to remain in the flesh. There is a need to give a good account of ourselves in our service to the Lord. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (v10).

What is this “judgment seat of Christ?” The Greek word for “judgment seat” is *bematos*. In classical Greek, and Roman literature, the word meant “tribunal,” especially “judicial bench.” It was often an elevated stone platform where the governor conducted legal business, or where athletes were crowned (cf. Matt 27:19, John 19:13, Acts 12:21, 18:12). The judgment seat of Christ is, as the name implies, a seat of judgment. All Christians will be judged on that day. But what is the nature of the judgment? What did Paul mean when he said that we will be judged

for the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad? Answers to the above questions may be found in Hoyt's 2 articles on the judgment seat. Hoyt concludes that there are positive and negative aspects to the judgment of the Bema of Christ. "The issue of the *bema*," he says, is "not a question of sin to be punished, but rather a question of service. The believer's life will be examined and evaluated in regard to his faithfulness as a steward of the abilities and opportunities which God had entrusted to him. Faithfulness will be graciously rewarded while unfaithfulness will go unrewarded. Thus the primary purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to reveal and review the Christian's life and service and then to reward him for what God deems worthy of reward. Not only is the purpose of this event future manifestation, but it also should serve as present motivation for contemporary godly living." Samuel L Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980): 38-9. On the negative side, "The Bible suggests that there will be shame at the judgment seat of Christ to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the measure of unfaithfulness of each individual believer. Therefore, it should be each believer's impelling desire to be well-pleasing to the Lord in all things. Although Christians apparently will reflect on this earthly life with some regret, they will also realize what is ahead for them in the heavenly life. The latter realization will be the source of boundless joy....

"The elements of remorse, regret, and shame cannot be avoided in an examination of the judgment seat of Christ.

But this sorrow must be somewhat relative because even the finest of Christians there will be some things worthy of unceasing remorse in the light of God's unapproachable holiness. This would mean that the finest of Christians could be sorrowful throughout eternity. However, this is not the picture that the New Testament gives of heaven. The overwhelming emotion is joyfulness and gratefulness. Although there is undeniably some measure of remorse or regret, this is not the overriding emotion to be experienced throughout the eternal state ....

“The judgment seat of Christ may be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the judgment seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is make faithfulness inconsequential.” Samuel L Hoyt, “The Negative Aspects of the Christian's Judgment.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980): 130-1.

### 5c. The motivation of the ministry (5:11-21)

#### 1d. The fear of the Lord (5:11)

Paul had a reverential fear of God. He knew whom he was serving. He understands that God is going to hold him accountable for all

that he does and speaks. For Paul in another place said, "... for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Cor 9:16). He has tried to convince the Corinthians of the integrity of His ministry. His ministry is approved before God, and now he hopes the Corinthians will see that his apostleship is wholly legitimate as well.

#### 2d. The benefit of the saints (5:12-13)

Paul clarifies that what he has said concerning himself is not for the purpose of promoting himself. He needed to defend his integrity on account of what his opponents have been accusing him of. His defence would also give his loyal followers answers to the accusations of the false teachers. All that Paul did, be it his zealous preaching, or his sobriety, were all done to the glory of God and for the benefit of the believers.

#### 3d. The love of Christ (5:14-15)

"The love of Christ here means Christ's love for us, not the love of which he is the object. This is obvious, because the apostle goes on to illustrate the greatness of Christ's love to us, and not of our love to him...." His love, "*Constraineth* us, ie controls and governs us. The word *sunecho* means also to restrain, a sense which many adopt here. 'The love of Christ restrains me from acting for myself.' This is a more limited sense, and is not required by the usage of the word, which is often used to express the idea of being pressed as by a crowd, or figuratively, by calamity or sorrow. This is no better version for it in this passage than that adopted by our translators. 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' It coerces, or presses, and therefore impels. It is the governing

influence which controls the life." (Hodge, *Corinthians*, 133).

#### 4d. The importance of the ministry (5:16-21)

The gospel ministry is a ministry of reconciliation. It behoves every Christian to preach the gospel, and be a witness for Christ. That is because the gospel is the only message that can reconcile man to God (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Tim 2:5). When man is reconciled to God, he becomes a "new creature." He was once a slave to sin, but now no longer for the Spirit who now resides within him gives him the ability not to sin. Formerly, he was unable not to sin, now he is able not to sin.

God has given the message of reconciliation to His servants. They are to proclaim the gospel, announcing God's reconciliation of man and urging people to accept the gospel and thus be reconciled to Him (see 5:20; also Col 1:20-22).

"God through Christ was involving Himself in the work of reconciling sinners, not the task of condemning them (cf. John 3:17, 'For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him.'). The announcement of this tremendous act of grace on God's part had been committed to Paul and the other apostles, and in a sense to every believer, in the Great Commission." (Kent, *Heart*, 89-90).

Paul then says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (v20). "Deissman (*Light from the Ancient East*, p379) points out that these 'words of St Paul stand in quite a different relief when we know that *presbeuo* and *presbeutes* were the proper words in the Greek East for the Emperor's Legate.' ...The dignity of an Apostle comes once more to the front. He is the

representative of Christ the Reconciler, and behind Christ is God. As in i.1; 1 Cor i.1; Gal 1:16, he holds his office, not from any human being however distinguished, but from the Father. It is a high position, and it involves a great responsibility. 'The ambassador, before acting, receives a commission from the power for whom he acts. The ambassador, while acting, acts not only as an agent, but as a representative of his sovereign.

6c. A synopsis of his ministry (6:1-10)

1d. The appeal of his ministry (6:1-2)

Paul appeals to the readers that they "receive not the grace of God in vain." This statement should not be taken to mean that a believer can fall from grace, ie lose his salvation. Paul was probably refering to the Judaizers within the church who corrupted the gospel message of God's free gift of salvation by teaching that works must be added to it. Hodge explained, "the 'grace of God,' here spoken of does not mean the actual forgiveness of sin, nor the renewing, sanctifying influence of the Spirit, but the favour which the apostle spoke in the preceding chapter. It is the infinite grace or favour of having made his Son sin for us, so that we may become the righteousness of God in him. This is the grace of God of which the apostle speaks. He exhorted men not to let it be in vain, as it regarded them, that a satisfaction for sin sufficient for all, and appropriate to all, had been made and offered to all who hear the gospel. In precisely the same sense he says, Gal 2, 21, 'I do not frustrate the grace of God.' That is, 'I do not, by trusting to the works of the law, make it in vain that God has provided a gratuitous method of salvation.' That great grace or favour he did

not make a thing of naught. In Gal 5,4, he says, 'Whosoever of you are justified by the law, are fallen from grace.' That is, 'ye have renounced the gratuitous method of salvation, and are debtors to do the whole law.' So in Rom 6:14, it is said, 'We are not under law, but under grace.' In no one of these cases does 'grace' mean either the actual pardon of sin, or inward divine influence. It means the favour of God, and in this connection the great favour of redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ having died for our sins and procured eternal redemption for us, the apostle was most earnest in exhorting men not to allow this great favour, as regards to them, to be in vain. It is the more evident that such is the meaning of the passage because it is not so much a direct exhortation to the Corinthians, as a declaration of the method in which the apostle preached. He announced the fact that God had made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, and he exhorted all men not to receive the grace of God in vain, that is, not to reject this great salvation. And finally, this interpretation is required by the following verse. 'Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.' This is appropriate as a motive to receive the offer of pardon and acceptance with God, but it is not appropriate as a reason why a renewed and pardoned sinner should not fall from grace. There is therefore no necessity to assume, contrary to the whole analogy of Scripture, that the apostle here teaches that those who have once made their peace with God and experienced his renewing grace can fall away unto, perdition. If reconciled by the death of his Son, much more shall they be saved by his life. Nothing can ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Whom he calls, them he also glorifies. They are kept by the mighty power of

God through faith unto salvation.” (*Corinthians*, 153-4).

The appeal goes on. Since the gospel message is being proclaimed and forgiveness is available to all who would receive it, the time of salvation is *right now!* “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” (cf Isa 49:8). Throughout his ministry, Paul not only preached fervently the truth of the gospel but also persuaded men vigorously the urgency of believing it.

#### 2d. The conduct of his ministry (6:3-10)

Again, Paul expresses the hardships of his ministry. Unlike the medieval popes and priests who lived in wanton luxury at the expense of the people, who scorned the sufferings of the ministry and thrived in the lusts of the flesh, Paul’s ministry was characterized by integrity in both its external manifestations (vv4-5), and internal motivations (vv6-10).

#### 3b. The Injunction of Separation by the Apostle to the Church (6:11-7:16)

##### 1c. The appeal for affection (6:11-13)

In this section, Paul issues a very emotional appeal. He addressed them as “O Corinthians.” This emotive expression is only used by Paul on 2 other occasions: (1) to the Galatians when their threatened defection greatly troubled him (Gal 3:1), and (2) to the Philippians, in warm appreciation for their kind gifts (Phil 4:15). Paul says that he has opened his heart to them. He had spoken to them freely and without restraint. He shared with them his heart. He poured his affections and feelings upon them, and obviously loves them very much.

The Corinthians have not responded to Paul in the same way. Their affections for Paul have been meagre. The verb *stenochoreisthe* means “to cramp.” It has the idea of narrowness (Kent, *Heart*, 101). Paul has opened the floodgate of affection to them, but they have been very cold toward him.

Paul had to urge them to draw close to him. To have the kind of relationship which a father and his son should have, where there are no barriers, things to hide, or strings attached.

#### 2c. The requirement of separation (6:14-7:1)

In view of the ecumenical activity and rampant apostasy that are happening in the Christian world today, this passage of separation is extremely relevant. It is clear that Paul was teaching separation from idolatry and false teachings and this teaching is applicable to both the church and her members.

#### 1d. The command of separation (6:14a[i])

Paul’s imperatival injunction *Me ginesthe heterozugountes apistois* categorically states the doctrine of separation. The word *heterozugountes*, a *hapax legomenon*, is derived from the words *heteros* (‘another’), and *zugos* (‘a yoke’), hence it means “to be unequally yoked.” In using this word Paul must have had in mind the OT agricultural legislation: “Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together.” (Lev 19:19, Deut 22:10). In Deut 22:9-11, the prohibition of mixing together different kinds of seed or animal is due to physical incompatibility. The ox being a stronger animal cannot work comfortably with the weaker ass. [Another reason suggested is that “the ass, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weeds, has a fetid breath, which its yoke-fellow seeks to avoid, not-only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long

continued, death; and hence it has been observed always to hold away its head from the ass and to pull only with one shoulder." Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945), 672-3.] Anyway, be it due to differences in strength or to bad breath, both animals are incompatible work-fellows.

The negative *me* is a negative of will, wish, or doubt. ["if the negative *ou* denies the *fact*, *me* denies the *idea*." A T Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1934), 1167.] The negative *me* here is used with the present imperative which seeks "to bring to an end a condition now existing." (BAGD, 518). The imperatival clause should therefore be translated, "do not go on (or even think of) becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers, as you are already doing."

## 2d. The object of separation (6:14a[ii])

The Corinthians were commanded to separate themselves from the *apistois*, "unbelievers." An *apistos* is someone characterized by unbelief. [Noun suffixes which are *-os* endings may indicate "chief characteristic. Hence an *apistos* would be a man "completely given up to unbelief." See William Douglas Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The MacMillan Co, 1952), 13.]

The cultural and epistolary contexts evidently point to 2 groups of people: (1) the unconverted heathen, and (2) the false teachers. [Both groups apply since an *apistos* is "one who does not believe the good news about Jesus Christ—'one who is not a believer, unbeliever.'

*Estin apistou cheiron* 'he is worse than an unbeliever' 1 Tm 5.8." The word *apistos* in 1 Tim 5.8 does not merely refer to 'one who does not believe,' but more importantly *the specific content of what is not believed*. Paul describes false teachers as those who "corrupt the Word of God" (2 Cor 2:17, 4:2,21; 11:3,13). The presence of such false teachers in the Corinthians church is certain.]

### 3d. The reasons for separation (6:14b-16)

#### 1e. The incompatibility of good and evil (6:14b-16a)

This section contains a series of 5 rhetorical questions (*tis*). The parallel contrasts seek to indicate that there is nothing ecclesiastically and eucharistically common between a believer and an unbeliever. Note (1) the words of *unity* (fellowship, communion, concord, part, and agreement), (2) the words of *sanctity* (righteousness, light, Christ, believer, and temple), and (3) the words of *iniquity* (unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, and idols).

The first rhetorical question is *tis ... metoche dikaiosune kai anomia*, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness." The word *metoche* is a *hapax legomenon*. It means "partnership," or "sharing." It has the idea of "a relationship involving shared purposes and activity." The verb form of the word has the following semantic ideas (1) to share in, (2) eat, drink, (3) belong to. This word has a very strong religious and philosophical connotation. There are 2 theologically significant aspects to the word. It indicates (1) a mystical sharing, and (2) a

philosophical participation. (NIDNTT, sv “Fellowship; *echo*,” by J Eichler, 636). There is nothing intrinsically common between righteousness and lawlessness.

The second rhetorical question (*tis koinonia photi pros skotos*, “what fellowship has light with darkness”) likewise explains that light is in the opposite extreme to darkness. “Darkness” reveals the chief characteristic of both bad ministers and unbelievers who believe in falsehoods and teach heresies. The source of this darkness lies in the “god of this world” who blinds the minds of the unregenerate. The Greek *koinonia* is popularly translated “fellowship.” The word *koinonia* occurs in the Pauline corpus 13 times. It is not used in the Gospels and is typically a Pauline term. It has the idea of “close union and brotherly bond between men.” (NIDNTT, sv “Fellowship, *koinonia*,” by J Schattenmann, 640-1). There can be no closeness between light and darkness. It is impossible to mix the two together. They are mutually exclusive.

The third rhetorical question reads *tis ... sumphonesis Christou pros Beliar*, “what concord hath Christ with Belial?” The word *sumphonesis* means “agreement.” (BAGD, 781). It implies “a type of joint decision.” It has the idea of a contractual agreement between business partners (eg. Matt 20:2). The use of “Christ” and “Belial” as opposites is an attempt to ridicule any such absurd alliances.

The fourth rhetorical question *tis meris pisto meta apistou*, “what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” contrasts the believer with the unbeliever. The word *meris* means “part,” “share,” or “portion.

(BAGD, 505). The Christian has nothing religiously or doctrinally in common with the reprobate to the slightest divisible or distinguishable part. Calvin says, “‘As there is an irreconcilable variance between Christ and Satan, so we also must keep aloof from partnership with the wicked.’ When, however, Paul says that a Christian has no participation with an unbeliever, he does not mean as to food, clothing, estates, the sun, the air ... but as to those things that are peculiar to unbelievers from which the Lord has separated us.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, nd), 259.

The final rhetorical question states, *tis sugkatathesis nao theou meta eidolon*, “what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” The word *sugkatathesis* means “joint agreement, joint arrangement, mutual agreement.” It literally means, “a putting down or depositing along with one.” Hence, “of voting the same way with another, and so agreeing.” When Paul used the word *naos* here, he is speaking of the church. [For an example, see Ephesians 2:21. The immediate context argues for a “local church” idea. Note that the “temple” is “of God.” This phrase is used only in 2 distinct ways in the NT: (1) the Jewish temple (Matt 26:61) and (2) the local church (1 Cor 3:16-17). The context rules out the temple.] The word *eidolon* means “an idol” (“an object which resembles a person, animal, god, etc. and which is an object of worship.”). Kent aptly remarks, “Although Greek and Roman pantheons had no difficulty in adding still another idol to their temple collections, such a concept is

absolutely incongruous in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” (Kent, *Heart*, 103-4).

#### 4d. The sanctity of the Christian church (6:16b)

In a nutshell, Paul summarizes his premise for separation by this climactic clause, *hemeis gar naos theou esmen zontos*. *Hemeis* is here placed in the beginning for emphasis. Paul is reminding the Corinthians that they are the people of God, both individually (1 Cor 6:19) as well as corporately (1 Cor 3:16). The word *naos* appears again in this verse to stress the fact that the temple of God or the Church must keep herself from any sort of defilement. The word *naos*, as distinguished from *hieron*, is the inner sanctuary which encompasses the most holy place. The OT demands for the sanctity of this place cannot be stressed enough (see Lenski, *Interpretation*, 1084-5). The adjectival participle *zontos* (“living”) is significant. It seeks to make a contrast between the true God of the Christian faith and the dead idols of heathen religions.

To add support to his argument, Paul cites the OT for authority. He quotes a combination of Lev 26:11, and Ezek 37:27. The verb *emperipateso* has the effect of making the quotation express Paul’s point more explicitly. The identification of God in both his actuality (dwelling) and activity (walking) with His church and people behooves a careful spiritual conduct which will not compromise His deity. A true spiritual communion between God and man can exist only when personal and ecclesial loyalty toward God is absolute. The Pauline exhortation here is couched with covenant terminology.

#### 5d. The result of separation (6:17-7:1)

This section is introduced by *dio* which is a relatively emphatic marker of result, normally denoting the fact that the inference is self-evident. It can be translated “therefore, for this reason, for this very reason, so then.” The word usually introduces a purpose/result clause (Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, 245).

1e. A restatement of the command (6:17a)

Similar to the OT economy, covenant blessings in the NT are bestowed only when covenant stipulations are obeyed. It must be noted that salvation is not the issue here. As in the old economy, covenant violation did not lead to covenant abrogation. The gift of salvation is unconditional but the rewards thereof are conditional upon faithful service (1 Cor 3:12-15).

The imperatival clause *exelathate ek mesou auton kai aphoristhete*, “come out from among them, and be ye separate” is a restatement of the opening injunction, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” This citation is taken from parts of Isa 52:11 and Ezek 20:34,41.

The aorist imperative *exelthate* comes from the word *exerchomai* which literally means “come out.” In this context, it has the idea of coming out in order to forsake; J H Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Company, 1889), 223. The construction *ek mesou auton* indicates the direction and source of departure. It is a moving away from the midst of them (“unbelievers,” etc, v 14ff).

The second aorist imperative in this verse is *aphoristhete* which is derived from *horizo* meaning “to make a boundary, or to mark off from others by boundaries, or limit, and to finally separate from others.” (Thayer, *Lexicon*, 90). The idea of separation is intrinsically tied to the word. Peter Masters comments, “Paul tells us that we are to be separated in the sense that a boundary is determined or set which we must never cross. The false teachers and their errors must be *out of bounds* to us; *beyond the horizon*. We must never have fellowship with false religionists at any level. The apostle uses the strongest available words to command us never to be in fellowship with any religious teachers or denominations which deny the Word of God and uphold false doctrine.” See “The Command to Separate.” *Separation and Obedience, A “Sword and Trowel”* supplement by Peter Masters and John C Whitcomb (Elephant and Castle: The Metropolitan Tabernacle, 1983), 4. It is evidently an OT concept: “And ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy, and I have severed you (*ho aphroisias humas*) from other people, that ye should be mine.” (Lev 20: 26).

The third imperative in this section is written in the present tense (*haptesthe*). When the negative *me* (which often accompanies the aorist) is used with the present tense, it denotes stopping an action already in progress. It may thus be assumed that the Corinthians were already participating in things unclean. The word *akarthartos* here has to do with the ceremonially or religiously unclean; in this case idolatry. The above obligations are

prerequisite for the blessings promised in 6:17b-18.

2e. The rewards of the command (6:17b-18)

The restoration of fellowship with God exists in 3 levels: a restoration of (1) companionship, (2) fathership, and (3) sonship.

First, the clause *kago eisdexomai humas*, “and I will receive you,” promises the restoration of companionship. The citation is probably derived from Ezek 20:41. Obedience to the doctrine of separation results in divine fellowship which is far better than what the world has to offer. This thought is perceived in the word *eisdechomai* which literally means “to receive into” and has the idea of “to accept the presence of a person with friendliness – ‘to welcome, to receive, to accept, to have as a guest.’” It is similar to the Hebrew *qabatz* “to gather” which signifies the “reception of the rejected people into gracious fellowship with God.” In other words, divine friendship is extended to those who remain separate.

Second, the clause *esomai humin eis patera*, “(I) will be a Father unto you,” promises a paternal relationship. 2 Sam 7:8,14 is the likely passage in the mind of Paul when he wrote this statement. This second promise is closely tied to the next which is that of sonship (cf Jer 31:9, Isa 43:6). Calvin’s comments on this verse is worth noting: “... a recognition of the great honour to which God has exalted us, might be a motive to stir us up to a more ardent desire for holiness. For when God has

restored his church which he has gathered from the profane nations, their redemption is attended with this fruit, that believers are seen to be his *sons and daughters*. It is no common honour that we are reckoned among the sons of God: it belongs to us in our turn to take care, that we do not show ourselves to be degenerate children to him. For what injury we do to God, if while we call him father, we defile ourselves with abominations of idols! Hence, the thought of the high distinction to which he elevated us, ought to whet our desire for holiness and purity." (Calvin, *Corinthians*, 262).

The promises of separation are tremendous. However, it must be realized that the rewards are, on no account, given because of personal merit. The promises of restored relationship is wholly a work of grace. The title *kurios pantokrator*, the "Lord almighty" makes this clear. The bestowal of them are however conditional upon obedience.

### 3e. A reiteration of the command (7:1)

The final restatement of the law of separation contains a negative as well as a positive thrust. Negatively, Paul says, *katharisomen heautous apo molusmou sarkos*, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh." The word *katharisomen* (1 Aor Act Subj, 1 Pl; a hortatory subjunctive, translated "let us") is derived from the root *katharizo* which means "to make clean," "purify," or "heal." Here, it has the idea of cleansing from ritual contamination or impurity. This is corroborated by the prepositional phrase "from (*apo*) every filthiness of the flesh and spirit," ie, an

ethical-religious ablution. The word *molusmou* “is always used of moral uncleanness which springs out of heathen associations. The “flesh” represents that which is sensual, and the “spirit” represents that which is psychological. Compromise of any sort, in both the physical and spiritual realms, is strictly forbidden.

Positively, there is the need for continual progress in personal and ecclesial holiness. The present participle *epitelountes* from *epiteleio* “to complete,” “finish,” or “succeed,” is the same word used in Philippians 1:6 where Paul says, “he which hath begun a good work in you will *perform* (*epitelesei*) it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The Corinthians were exhorted to do the work of purification so that they might be holy for the Lord demands: “And ye shall be holy unto me; for I, the LORD, am holy, and have separated you from other people, that ye should be mine.” (Lev 20:26). The fear of God (*en phobo theou*) should be their motivation. Lenski says, “Love prompts one to do what pleases God; fear prompts one to refrain from what displeases God.” (Lenski, *Interpretation*, 1092).

#### 6d. The authorial intent of 2 Cor 6:14-7:1

It is my conclusion that the meaning of 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, on the bases of (1) the local church context to which Paul was writing, (2) the idolatrous society wherein the Corinthians live, and (3) the false teachers who have infiltrated the church, has to do primarily with separation of the church and her members from unbelief and apostasy.

Therefore, in a day of rampant apostasy, it is the duty of the church to remain separate, guarding her purity in both faith and practice.

3c. The sentiments of Paul (7:2-4)

Paul enjoins the Corinthians to “receive” him. The word *choresate* literally means “to make room for.” It has the idea of being friendly disposed to another person. There should be no reason why they should not for Paul did not treat anyone unjustly, nor did he corrupt any of them, or made money out of them. His ministry among them was characterized by honesty and purity. They should not have listened to those false charges laid against him.

The Corinthians were very close to Paul’s heart. If he was facing death, he would be thinking about them, and if he was alive, he would be living for their benefit. Paul is therefore comforted by the good news received from Titus that the church is now kindly affectioned towards him and is repenting of their ways.

4c. The report from Titus (7:5-16)

1d. The repentance of the Corinthians (7:5-13a)

The severe letter which Paul sent through Titus bore fruit. It resulted in the repentance of the Corinthians. There are 2 kinds of repentance: (1) worldly repentance, and (2) godly repentance. The former is a superficial sorrowing. It is a repentance in the sense that there is regret. When a wrong is done, guilt is felt because man is by nature a moral being. But this repentance is not a repentance before God. It is a selfish kind of repentance. An

example would be Judas Iscariot who regretted his actions but it was a repentance unto death—he committed suicide (Matt 27:3-5).

True repentance is “a turning from sin to holiness, from a state of sin to a holy state. It is a real change of heart. It is a change of views, feelings and purposes, resulting in a change of life. Godly sorrow *worketh* repentance, ie that sorrow on account of sin, which arises from proper apprehensions of God and of our relation to him, necessarily leads to that entire change in the inward life which is expressed by the word repentance, and which is connected with salvation. It is not the ground of our salvation; but it is a part of it and a necessary condition of it. Those who repent are saved; the impenitent perish. Repentance therefore is *unto salvation.*” (Hodge, *Corinthians*, 182-3).

#### 2d. The warm reception of Titus (7:13b-16)

“An additional blessing occurred for Paul when he saw the high spirits of Titus at his return. Titus’s reception at Corinth had refreshed his spirit. It had been a confirmation of the good things Paul had told him about the church in spite of its recent problems.

“In all likelihood Titus had undertaken this trip to Corinth with considerable trepidation. His feelings may have been similar to those of Timothy on an earlier occasion when Paul had to urge the Corinthians not to intimidate him if he came (1 Cor 16:10-11). In the case of Titus, the wholesome reaction of the Corinthians to him greatly eased his mind, and brought him a spiritual refreshment....

“Paul was gratified that the Corinthians had not disappointed him in their treatment of Titus. By the way they had received Titus, they had proved to Titus that Paul had not exaggerated their virtues....

“Not only had Titus discovered that Paul had not misjudged the good qualities of the Corinthian believers, but he also continued to be emotionally stirred as he remembered their ready response to his ministry. Instead of receiving him with suspicion or hostility, they had been prepared to obey. In fact, they had received him “with fear and trembling.” This phrase occurs three other times in the New Testament. It is used of Paul’s own feelings when he first visited Corinth (1 Cor 2:3); of the proper attitude of the Christian slaves toward their masters (Eph 6:5); and of the way all believers should conduct their lives before God (Phil 2:12). It need not depict a cringing and terrified panic, but rather a humble and respectful understanding of one’s position. In the case of the Corinthians, they may have realized their problems before Titus arrived, and were in the proper frame of mind to respond obediently to the apostolic instructions which he would deliver.

“Thus the report of Titus brought joy to Paul’s heart and renewed confidence that his faith in the Corinthians was not misplaced. The church at Corinth had its problems, but the important thing was that it had begun to deal with them in accordance with scriptural and apostolic directives. Paul would not need to hesitate in visiting them again.” (Kent, *Heart*, 115-7).

### 3a. PAUL’S REQUEST FOR FUNDS TO HELP THE POOR CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM (8:1-9:15)

The Corinthians were told in 1 Corinthians (16:1-3) to start a relief fund for the poor saints of Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians, Paul reminds them to continue with the collection which they had started a year ago (2 Cor 8: 10). The collection was probably delayed owing to the many problems that plagued the church. Now that things have settled down, they were urged to complete what they had started (2 Cor 8:6). From Rom 15:25-27, we know that the collection was successfully completed. There was a contribution from Corinth.

1b. The Responsibility of Giving (8:1-15)

1c. The example of the Macedonian Christians (8:1-7)

To encourage the Corinthians to be generous in their giving, Paul cited the example of the Macedonian churches (ie Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea). These churches gave above and beyond their means and ability. "What made the contribution of the Macedonian churches so impressive were the circumstances out of which it was made. There had been a "great ordeal of affliction" in these churches. Reference to some of this persecution is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 2:14, as well as in Acts 17:6-9, 13. Nevertheless an abundance of joy, which opposition and suffering could not remove, was present in the Macedonians' hearts. This was all the more remarkable because the pressures imposed by deep poverty were also on them. Hated and attacked by outsiders, and constricted by serious economic needs, they did not allow any of this to deter them from giving a truly generous offering. They obviously had put the interests of others far above their own. The example of the widow's mite comes to mind (Mark 12:41-44). The depth of their poverty was far exceeded by the wealth of their generous spirit." (Kent, *Heart*, 123).

Furthermore, they did not have to be cajoled into giving. They themselves had begged the missionary team for the privilege of giving. "Even though the collection project had already begun in Galatia prior to

Paul's arrival in Macedonia (1 Cor 16:1), he had apparently not begun promoting it in Macedonia. Perhaps he felt that the afflictions and poverty that confronted those churches at that time would make it unwise to urge a campaign to raise funds for use elsewhere. The Macedonians might well have responded that someone should be raising funds to help them. When they became aware, however, of what other churches were doing, they began begging Paul "with much entreaty" that they be given the privilege of participating.

"A very literal rendering of the phrase is: 'begging of us the grace and the participation in the ministry to the saints.' Inasmuch as the word 'grace' (*charis*) was used a few lines earlier to refer to God's bestowal of a generous spirit, it could easily be so understood here. The sense then is that the Macedonians asked for the privilege to receive and display this gracious gift from God so they could participate in giving to the saints in Jerusalem. In spite of persecution and poverty, they did not want to miss any of the grace of God, including the grace of giving." (Kent, *Heart*, 123-4).

## 2c. The example of the Lord (8:8-9)

The Corinthians were told to consider also the sacrificial example of Christ: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." This reminds us of the theological cliché: "The Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God." Phil 2:5-8 details for us the humbling of the Son of God: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found

in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

If Christ has given all of Himself for the church, should not the church do the same for one another in times of need?

### 3c. The advice of the Apostle (8:10-12)

Paul urges the Corinthians to finish what they had started with reference to the collection. He wants them to give out of a willing heart. The size of the gift is not important. What counts is the spirit or attitude in which it is given.

### 4c. The responsibility of churches to one another (8:13-15)

Paul is not advocating socialism or communism here. The Apostle did not coerce or force the churches to give. The collections were purely voluntary affairs. He also explained that all material blessings have their source in God. If they were rich, it was by the providence of God. They were to be wise stewards of the goods that God had bestowed them. Now, that their brethren in Jerusalem are in need, there is a real duty on the part of wealthier Christians to help the poorer ones.

In support of the principle of equality, Paul cites an OT passage: “He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.” (Exod 16:18). “The historical reference is to the manna in the wilderness where this principle of equality was illustrated. Those who had collected the most were able to use only what they needed, and the excess rotted (Exod 16:19-21). Those who gathered less found that it was sufficient. In both instances God’s direct action is implied, in causing the excess to be destroyed and in making the smaller amounts cover the need.” (Kent, *Heart*, 130). If one will not be a good

steward of the Lord's material blessings, or is selfish with his goods, the Lord may take his riches away.

2b. The Sending of Representatives (8:16-24)

The following with some modifications is taken from Gromacki, *Stand*, 141-5.

1c. Their identification (8:16-22)

1d. Titus (8:16-17)

Paul gave "thanks to God" that He had placed "the same earnest care into the heart of Titus" which He possessed for the church at Corinth. They were likeminded. In that sense Titus was much like Timothy (cf Phil 2:20). Both had a genuine concern for others.

Paul had sent Titus originally from Ephesus, and the associate went "with fear and trembling" (7:15). Now he was anxious to return because God had created a special love within his heart for the Corinthians. He missed them. When the apostle exhorted him to go back to Corinth from Macedonia with the epistle of II Corinthians, he enthusiastically accepted the opportunity. Paul, however, wanted to make it absolutely clear that Titus was going "of his own accord."

He asked Paul to charge him to go back. In fact, Paul admitted that Titus had a greater enthusiasm for the Corinthians than the apostle did himself ("being more forward"). Since Paul's heart was enlarged to encompass all of the church (6:11), that was a striking testimonial to the size of Titus' heart.

2d. The brother (8:17-19)

Titus was accompanied by “the brother,” who also was sent by Paul. Who is this nameless person? No one can be dogmatic, but most speculate that it is Luke. It is possible that Paul was rejoined by Luke.

This anonymous brother is commended in 2 areas. First, all of the churches gave him “praise.” He was well known and esteemed highly wherever he laboured “in the gospel.” There were no negative criticisms of his life and ministry. Second, he was “chosen” by the churches to travel with Paul, to assist the apostle in gathering the collection, and to carry the gift to Jerusalem. The word “chosen” literally means “to stretch out the hand” (*cheirotoneis*). By a public vote through the raising of hands, he was selected and appointed by the churches to this task. This corporate choice shows that churches in the first century cooperated to achieve common goals. They did not always act independently of each other.

The importance of the collection was again stressed. It is “this grace” (cf 8:7). It was “administered” by Paul and his associates; it was not for them. It was designed to bring glory to God and to manifest the loving concern of willing hearts.

### 3d. Our brother (8:22)

Another anonymous messenger is mentioned. He was not Paul’s physical brother, but rather a brother in Christ. Perhaps it was Silas or Apollos, but no one knows for sure. Two outstanding qualities about him are enumerated. First, he was “proved diligent in many things.” He had been tested as to his zeal, ability, and faithfulness on many occasions, and in each situation Paul saw that he had excelled. His performance on Christian service qualified him

for this important task. Second, he had an ardent zeal to see the collection finalized and taken to Jerusalem. Thus, Paul believed that this brother could help the other two to guide the Corinthians in the fulfillment of their pledge (“now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you”).

### 2c. Their responsibility (8:20-21)

Although Paul trusted himself and knew that God trusted him, he wanted to remain above reproach. In the first epistle (chapter 9), he informed the Corinthians that he was not in the ministry for what he could get out of it. He never took their money, nor did he handle any.

Now that a large sum of money was being collected, he assured everyone that he would not use it for his own selfish gratification once he was away from that region. He wanted to “avoid blame.” Although he had the general oversight (“which is administered by us”), he appointed others to gather and hold the money. He knew that it would a sizable amount (“abundance”). He also wanted the church to know that the messengers were not all “hand picked” by him. The churches bore the responsibility for the selection of some of the messengers (8:19,23). Paul knew that he was under constant scrutiny by his critics; therefore, he did not want to give them any grounds for the slightest suspicion of wrongdoing.

Thus, he was “providing honest things. The word “honest” (*kala*) refers to a good outward appearance. He knew that God looked on his heart (“not only in the sight of the Lord”), but that was not sufficient. Since men often judge (or misjudge) by the outward appearance, the apostle was careful to ensure that the welfare collection would appear right “in the sight of men.”

### 3c. Their accreditation (8:23)

Because some opponents still remained in the church, he felt constrained to commend these messengers. Since the church was impressed with letters of commendation (3:1), he now gave them one.

He identified Titus as his “partner” (*koinonos*). They shared a common love for the spiritual welfare of the church. He was also a “fellow-helper concerning you.” Both Paul and Titus had worked in the city of Corinth. They complemented each other’s ministry.

The two anonymous brothers are called “the messengers of the churches.” The word “messengers” is *apostoloi*, normally translated as “apostles.” It was used in the non-technical sense in that they had been commissioned directly by the churches to be treasurers of the collection. They had not seen the resurrected Christ and had not been appointed to the apostolic gospel ministry (cf 1 Cor 9:1). But they both lived and served for “the glory of Christ,” not for the furtherance of themselves or of the reputation of Paul.

#### 4c. Their reception (8:24)

In this verse, he admonished the church to receive the messengers. First, they were to be a testimony both to the messengers and to their sending churches. They were to be kind and hospitable. Second, they were to show “the proof” of their love for the poor and for Paul by the completion of their financial commitment. Third, they were to vindicate Paul’s boasting over their good spiritual qualities and over their initial zeal to give (7:14). He wanted the Corinthians to manifest in deed what he had said about them.

#### 3b. Further Encouragement on Giving (9:1-5)

“What Paul was doing in this paragraph was urging the Corinthians to bring their project to a conclusion. Their eagerness or readiness of mind had been quick to accept the

challenge in the past, and presumably they had made a start toward gathering the funds. Paul had used this enthusiastic beginning to stimulate the Macedonians toward a similar response. This statement clearly indicates that Paul was presently in Macedonia. Whenever he had occasion to speak about the collection, he would boast about those of Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital.... The Achaians, readiness of which he spoke was their willingness to accept the task, and does not contradict their possible unpreparedness (9:4), which refers to the completion of the task .

“Using the Corinthians and their neighboring Christians as an example for the Macedonians had been effective. The Corinthians’ zeal had stimulated most of the Macedonian Christians into accepting the challenge. They had worked harder because their Corinthian neighbors in the south had set a good example.

“... The possibility existed, however, that both Paul and the Christians at Corinth might face embarrassment if good intentions did not lead to a successful completion. For this reason Paul was sending three Christian brethren (ie Titus and two others, 8:16-24) to assist the Corinthians in finishing the collection. He wanted to be sure that readiness of mind was matched by achievement. Anything less would empty his boasts about them of any real effect, and could well cause a negative reaction to the whole project.

“... When Paul would make his next visit to Corinth (which would be his third one, 12:14; 13:1), he might be accompanied by some Macedonian believers. If it should happen that they would find the Corinthians to be lacking in action as compared to Paul’s boast about them, it could be acutely embarrassing to Paul, and even more so to the Corinthians themselves. Paul’s confident assurance of the Corinthians, generous spirit would be seen as lacking a basis. Although Paul softened the bluntness of this remark by mentioning his embarrassment first, it should have been obvious that the real embarrassment would belong to the church at Corinth.

“... With proper preparation, Paul expected the Corinthians’ gift to be generous and thus an exceptional blessing to the needy. It should not be skimpy, the sort that a

covetous man, who wanted to keep as much as possible for himself, would give.” (Kent, *Heart*, 139-41).

#### 4b. The Blessedness of Giving (9:6-15)

##### 1c. Blessings to the giver (9:6-11)

As the Lord has said, “freely ye have received, freely give.” (Matt 10:8). Paul told the Ephesians, “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35). For “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (v6). If a farmer sows only 1 seed in his field, he cannot expect to harvest 100 crops. But “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (v7). The Greek word for “cheerful” here is *hilaron*, where the English word “hilarious” is derived. Paul is saying that when we give, we should give with a happy disposition. There is a rabbinic saying which states that “receiving a friend with a cheerful countenance and giving him nothing is better than giving him everything with a gloomy countenance.”

When we give, God takes notice. He will not be indebted to us (and will never be). He promises to supply all our needs. This includes both physical and spiritual needs.

##### 2c. Blessings to God (9:12-15)

Paul says that the contributions of the churches to help the saints in Jerusalem will result in thanksgiving to God. The Jerusalem Christians will no doubt praise God for His goodness. Worship will result through the whole affair. All glory must go to the Lord for what gift can compare to His “unspeakable gift;” the gift of Christ.

#### 4a. PAUL'S DEFENCE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP (10:1-12:10)

There are critics who question the unity of the epistle, and suggest that chapters 10-13 are actually another epistle. It has been argued that the dramatic change in tone at this juncture of the writing supports that hypothesis. It is my contention that the support is purely conjectural. A change in tone is not strange to authors who write with feeling. When moods change, the style or tone can change as well. This is only natural in letter-writing where the correspondence is usually between 2 parties who know each other well, and who have a relationship.

The abrupt beginning of this part of the epistle is well explained by Meyer: "The difference of the subject-matter—with the importance of that which had now to be decided—and the emotion excited in the high and pure self-consciousness of 'the grievously injured Paul, so sufficiently explain the change of tone which at once sets in, and this tone, calculated for the entire discomfiture of his enemies, is just in the last part of the Epistle—after the church as such (as a whole) had been lovingly won over—so suited to its object, that there is no ground at all for the hypothesis of ch. x.-xiii.10 having formed a separate epistle." (Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2:389).

*[The following commentary on 10:1-12:10 belongs to Dean Emerson Marshall, "The Argument of Second Corinthians" (ThM Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1957), 73-86. For the purpose of this syllabus it has been edited. Also, the 'b' level headings are mine.]*

#### 1b. The Vindication of His Apostleship (10:1-18)

Paul immediately takes up charges which have been leveled against him by the opposing party. The emphatic position of *autos* distinguishes Paul from all others and it boldly sets forth his personality over against those of his opponents. This elevated the apostle to his position of authority, and from this position he exhorted the group at Corinth with a view to the factious element which was

opposing him. He exhorted them first by pointing to the qualities of our Lord.

1c. His stand (10:1-2)

The authority of the apostle is brought to our attention immediately. It was Paul himself who sought to reconcile the rebellious faction in the church. He brings before them the mild nature of our Lord as an added support to his admonition. This gentleness and mildness of Christ should cause them to reconsider and give heed to his exhortation.

The clause introduced by *hos* is a description given to him by the opposition. Their description of him revealed their own hearts. There were no meekness and gentleness present in such a defaming remark.

Though the opponents charge him with being brave only when he is away and that by letter, he begs them to reconsider so that when he is present, he will not have to use his boldness against those who consider him to be walking according to the standard of the flesh.

2c. His power (10:3-6)

Paul has just declared his stand. They make him to be a coward, and he walks according to the flesh. Paul is giving the reason for his plan. His normal life does exist in the flesh, but when it comes to spiritual matters, he does not use carnal methods as his opponents, but rather the weapons of his warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Therefore, if there is opposition, there is power through God to break down the opposing element.

The last verse concerns itself with the few that would still remain disobedient. Paul would not exercise the severe discipline until it was clearly

manifested that they would not submit to God, "... and who would persist in their disobedience."

### 3c. His defence (10:7-18)

Paul has just given a detailed account of the weapons which he uses in contrast with the weapons of his adversaries, and now he makes a defence against their charges. The abrupt transition into his defence is characteristic of the apostle. It is difficult to decide whether the opening clause, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance," is imperative or indicative, and if it is indicative, whether or not it is a statement or a question. It is preferable to see it as an indicative pointing out the fact that they give more attention to external things rather than internal matters which are more important.

The first reply that is answered is that of weakness (vv7-11). The opposing element claimed that they were of Christ, a Christ party, but he draws to their attention that he belongs to Christ for he can boast even more and will not be put to shame. This leads him to refer to the charges concerning his weakness. He argues that the authority evident in the letters will be exercised in deed; there is no difference in letter or deed.

The opponents were not satisfied to charge him with weakness, but they also charged him with going beyond the limits of his territory in the ministry (vv12-18). The critics of Paul were judging him according to their own standards (v12). Plummer says, "They set up their own conduct as a standard of excellence, and find their conformity to it eminently satisfactory and admirable. They are a community of Pecksniffs. Calvin takes the monks of his own time as an illustration...".

The use of *kanon* in the following verses is to be taken to mean province. Paul argued that he did not boast beyond the limit of his ministry, but in contrast to those who do boast beyond their measure we

ministered in the province measured to us of God (v 13). He further argued that he did not over extend himself into their province as though he had reached them, but on the contrary he had already arrived unto you (v14). The verb *phthano* means to "... come before or to precede, and thus it means 'we were first to come to you.'" (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:256). His method of operation was not labouring in other men's fields, but only where he had been accepted (vv15-16).

This section closes with an admonition to glory in the Lord. This is against the opposing element who were glorying in themselves and in other's labours. The commendation which is accepted is that of God.

## 2b. The Boasting of His Apostleship (11:1-12:10)

The apostle in the previous chapter refuted their charges of weakness and ministering beyond his limits. The conclusion of his defence was that no man should glory except in the Lord, and now he has come to the place of having to boast. The present peril of the false teachers and the opposing minority were constantly in the mind of Paul. His opponents would desire to undermine his work. Their charges and threats make it necessary for the apostle to boast.

### 1c. The reason (11:1-15)

Before the apostle could proceed with his boasting he had to set forth an adequate reason for doing such foolishness. The immediate connection with the previous chapter is with the thought of glorying. There is no connective particle introducing this section, but abruptly he makes a wish to the Corinthians regarding his boasting.

This section opens up with *ophelon* which expresses a wish in the present. He wishes that they would bear with him, and then he quickly follows with a positive affirmation they do (v1).

The reason for making such a wish is found in v2. He has espoused them to Christ as a virgin, and he has to keep them from being deceived. If they false teachers impregnate them with false teaching, they will lose their chastity.

A further reason is given portraying the church as Eve and the false teachers as a serpent. The danger is that their minds will be corrupted. the reason for fearing is seen in v4; they are putting up with all the false teachers. He further argued that the was not behind the least of those so called "... precious apostles of yours." And though he might be rude in speech, he was not in knowledge.

The Apostle turns from the matter concerning the false teachers corrupting the minds of the Corinthians and takes up the matter of not receiving support from the Corinthians (vv7-15). He opens up the section by asking them if he sinned by preaching the gospel freely to them. Owing to the fact that Paul failed to take money from the church, the Corinthians drew 3 erroneous conclusions: (1) a genuine Apostle would have used this right, (2) he did not have confidence in the church, and (3) he was making gain under cover. Paul goes on to prove that it is not because he does not love them, for he does (v 10), but the Apostle refused to take money from them in order that he may cut off the occasion of those who would use this fact to put themselves on the same ground as Paul (vv11-12).

Verse 13 gives the reason why Paul does not give opportunity for those desiring opportunity (vv13-15). Those who take such occasions are false apostles, workers of deceit. They were not genuine at all. The false apostles only outwardly conform to the standards of being apostles of Christ; they are hypocrites. The inward transformation would be *metamorphoo*. *Metaschematizo* is "the outward and accidental"

while *metamorphoo* is the “inward and essential.” (G Abbott Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 297). It is no wonder that they can fashion themselves as apostles, for even Satan fashions himself as an angel of light. There is no inward change in either of the false apostles or Satan. The ministers of Satan outwardly conform to be ministers of righteousness just like what the devil himself does in order to deceive. This indicates the origin of false teachers.

## 2c. His apostolic labours and trials (11:16-33)

The reasons for his boasting were discussed in the previous section. The false teachers were in a position of undermining his work and corrupting the minds of the Corinthian believers. Paul was not inferior to these false teachers even though they accused him of being rude in speech, yet in knowledge he excelled. He refused to let the Corinthians support him. It was not because he did not love them or because he was disinterested, but rather he refused that that he would not be put on the same plane as the false teachers. Men who live as such are false teachers, they only conform externally, and this is like Satan.

This section opens up with *palin*, “again,” which is used rhetorically to return to previously discussed points concerning speaking foolishly. He is not repeating what he had said in v4, but rather he is again speaking about acting foolishly. He first gives the necessity of his boasting (11:16-21). He starts out rather reluctantly to talk foolishly, and would rather that they thought he was not foolish, but if they were still persuaded that he was foolish, then they were to receive him as a fool. The purpose of this was that he may boast just as others. He enlarges upon what he means in v17 and then gives a reason for his glory.

The reason for his glory is that the opponents also glorified themselves, but they glorified themselves at the expense of his ministry and character. It is

necessary that even Paul boast (v18). The Corinthians were “wise” putting up with fools, and therefore, they will put up with him.

Having shown the necessity of boasting, the apostle begins his boasting of his labours and trials (11:22-23). The testimony of the Apostle puts to shame all other false teachers. The Apostle interestingly does not glory in his attainments but rather in his labours and trials.

The opponents of Paul pointed to their religious heritage as one of the features of their superiority, but Paul comes back with the same background proving that they did not have any superiority in this line. His answer to the last question is taken up in detail to show his superiority (v23). Verses 24 and 25 go on to demonstrate that he has suffered more as a minister of Christ than the false ministers. In v26 he goes on to expand on the idea of journeys often. Verse 27 is a further expansion of his sufferings. The burden is then enlarged by the care of the churches (v28). The care of the church had its effect on the Apostle, and this is related in v29. The apostle then asserted that if it was necessary to boast, he will do it in his weakness. The verification of these facts could be established by the heavenly Father who knows all things, and he calls on him for a witness (vv29-30).

### 3c. His excellent vision (12:1-10)

The Apostle boasted in his labours and trials in the preceding chapter, and now he will boast in his excellent visions (12:1-10). The boasting in his visions has a definite purpose. It is a bridge between his labours and trials mentioned in the eleventh chapter and his thorn in the flesh introduced in 12:7. The affliction of the thorn in the flesh finds its reason in the excellent visions.

Having declared that it was necessary to boast, we are reminded that there is no profit in boasting. Though there is no profit in boasting, yet he was forced

because of the boasting of the false apostles to boast himself. The apostle brings forward to the reader the excellent vision (2 Cor 12:1-6), and this preparatory for the affliction in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-10).

The Apostle's modesty is seen throughout this section. The third person is used in order to prevent any glory being attributed to himself.

One experience is singled out of the visions and revelations by the author. It had been kept secret by him for 14 years (v2). The incident is brought before the reader as if Paul was a spectator. His effort to keep in the background is obvious. It is left without a doubt to the reader's impression that this example is real. The nature of the experience cannot be fully related, for that which he heard cannot be disclosed.

Concerning such a person Paul will boast, but he himself will glory in his weaknesses. The desire is evident that he does not want to glory in self, but rather he is just the instrument of the Lord.

The reason for refusing to glory in such a vision is given in v6. He did not want others to think more highly of him than they ought. He would rather they judge him on the basis of what they saw or heard concerning him.

This unusual experience is given by Paul to give the reason for his affliction (vv7-10). It is because of this wonderful experience that the Lord gave him this affliction so that he would not be proud. Just what the nature of the affliction was cannot be dogmatically asserted. The interpretations given to the thorn in the flesh are: (1) evil suggestions, (2) fiery darts of Satan, (3) some predominant adversary, and (4) severe bodily affliction. Concerning this affliction, Paul beseeches the Lord 3 times that he would take it away. The Lord revealed that His grace was sufficient for Paul. Therefore, he rather rejoiced in his affliction in order that the power of Christ might dwell in him. *[Here ends Marshall's commentary]*

### 3b. The Proof of His Apostleship (12:11-13)

Paul says that he is in no way inferior to the other Apostles of the Lord. Jesus had promised his disciples that signs will accompany their apostolic ministry: “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mk 16:17-18). These are the signs Paul is talking about here. They are supernatural acts of power.

What is the purpose of signs? The word *semeia*, “signs,” here is significant. A *semeion* is “an event which is regarded as having some special meaning.” Such “an event with special meaning was inevitably an unusual or even miraculous type of occurrence.” The purpose of a sign was to indicate or draw attention to a particular fact. In this case, the “signs of an apostle” serves to authenticate the unique office and inspired ministry of the Lord’s chosen messengers. These signs were specially associated with the Apostles. They were signs *belonging to* an Apostle.

Paul certainly exhibited his ability to perform such signs. Acts 19:11-12 says, “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” (see also Acts 14:3,8-10, 19:6, and 28:1-8).

#### 5a. PAUL’S IMPENDING VISIT TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (12:14-13:10)

##### 1b. The Announcement of His Visit (12:14-18)

Paul announces his third visit to them here. His first visit was the founding of the church, and the second was the painful visit where they caused Paul much sorrow. Travelling incurred costs but Paul would not burden the church by receiving financial support from them. This principle is a golden rule for would be travellers, as Rev Tow always advises, “When visiting or travelling, always be a blessing and not a burden to others.”

Paul's refusal of support was an expression of his love for the church. He did not want to seek his own benefit but the benefit of the church. Furthermore, he was trying to shut the mouths of his opponents who may accuse him of taking advantage of the church. Paul challenged such to produce evidence that he or Titus were money-minded whenever they visited the church. None of his opponents could charge him, nor his companions with such wrongdoings. Paul need not fear such false accusations for as Sir Gallahad had rightly said, "My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure."

## 2b. The Apprehension of His Visit (12:19-21)

"In contemplating his forthcoming visit, Paul had several misgivings. He was fearful (but not certain) that his hopes regarding rectification of the Corinthians' problems may have been premature. Titus' report had greatly encouraged him, but the harsh realities of an on-site visit might provide a disappointing letdown.

"Paul was also aware that if the problems he might encounter on his arrival required him to act with sternness, this would not be welcomed by the Corinthians. The possibility existed of a mutual disappointment when his visit occurred.

"Specific instances are cited to illustrate the potential problems. Eight items, perhaps grouped as four pairs, suggest the types of situations which Paul suspected might still be present at Corinth. Strife and jealousy describe the quarreling and envy which had been prevalent at Corinth. Displays of anger and selfish ambition easily develop when problems fester and unworthy leaders exploit them. Evil speakings and whisperings describe the slanders, gossiping, innuendoes, and talebearing which keep a church in turmoil if its problems are not settled. Arrogance and disturbances depict the 'swellings [of pride] ... that ultimately cause all kinds of disorder.

"Another of Paul's fear was the possibility that God would humiliate him in the Corinthian's presence if he found their problems uncorrected. Paul took very personally

the difficulties of the Corinthian believers, and it would be a humbling experience for him if he saw that much of his labor had gone for nothing. He would mourn over those who had sinned and had not repented. The sins enumerated here are different from the jealousies and strife mentioned in 12:20. These seem to be largely instances of immorality, such as were denounced at considerable length in 1 Corinthians.” (Kent, *Heart*, 193-4).

3b. The Warnings of His visit (13:1-10)

1c. The apostolic threat (13:1-4)

Paul will no longer tolerate any opposition when he arrives. If opposition to his authority as an Apostle persists, he will deal with the matter judiciously. He will not take matters into his own hands (though he could) but will require 2-3 witnesses so that all things will be done properly and carried out publicly. He is adopting this wise OT judicial procedure so that everything will be out in the open. There will be no secrets. No opportunity will be given to those who would fabricate lies against him.

Paul warns the sinning members to correct their behaviour for he will not spare when he comes this time. Paul is asserting his apostolic authority here. In just what way he will not spare is not known. It is possible that some severe punishment like the one received by Ananias and Sapphira would be meted if the opposition and disobedience continued. Such a show of apostolic authority could be the “proof” that the Corinthians were looking for (v3).

2c. The ecclesial duty (13:5-10)

The Corinthians were told to examine themselves. “They had been trying the apostle, seeking proof of Christ speaking in him. He tells them they had better examine themselves and see whether Christ was in them.... ‘Ye would prove me—prove yourselves.’

Another idea, however, and perhaps a more important one is this, 'Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, seek it in yourselves. Know ye not that Christ is in you (unless ye be reprobates), and if he is in you, if you are really members of his body, ye will know that he is in me.' The passage in view is analogous to those in which the apostle appeals to the people as seals of his ministry, 1 Cor 9,1, and as his letters of commendation, 3,2. To *examine* and to *prove* mean the same thing. Both express the idea of trying or putting to the test to ascertain the nature of character of the person or thing tried. *Whether ye be in the faith*, that is, whether you really have faith, or are Christians only in name. This exhortation to self-examination supposes, on the one hand, that faith is self-manifesting, that it reveals itself in the consciousness and by its fruits; and, on the other hand, that it may exist and be genuine and yet not be known as true faith by the believer himself. Only what is doubtful needs to be determined by examination. The fact, therefore, that we are commanded to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith, proves that a true believer may doubt of his good estate. In other words, it proves that assurance is not essential to faith." (Hodge, *Corinthians*, 305). Someone has said that if you have never doubted your faith, you have never really believed.

6a. EPILOGUE (13:11-14)

1b. The Exhortation (13:11)

The Apostle closes his letter with a happy note. He tells them to rejoice, to be perfect, to be encouraged, to be of one mind, and to live peaceably. Apparently, this is, in a nutshell, the solution to their problems.

2b. The Greetings (13:12-13)

It was customary for them in those days and in that culture to greet each other (of the same sex) with a kiss. For us, a good, warm “holy” handshake will suffice.

3b. The Benediction (13:14)

The Apostle pronounced a three-fold blessing of grace, love and communion which are sourced in the 3 persons of the triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To Him be all glory and honour, Amen.