

*The Bible Notebook*

# 2 CORINTHIANS

Volume 2

A Verse by Verse Study

By

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DEDICATION

To

Mark Sanders

*I love you, my son*

## SEE INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 1 FOR BACKGROUND

### **H. Paul's Ministry, 6:1-10.**

**Highlighted by  
Righteous Living, Endurance in Affliction, and Numerous Paradoxes.**

**6:1 - WORKING TOGETHER WITH HIM.** *“And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”* We are all co-workers with God in the ministry of His Kingdom. It is His plan to use the redeemed in ministry and evangelism. Remember that God does not need us, we need Him. He is complete within Himself, and our contribution will not make Him more complete. We are nothing without Him - whereas He is complete within Himself, we are incomplete within ourselves, and will remain so until He completes us. There are three ways in which God completes us - Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification (Rom. 8). In Justification, we are delivered from the penalty of sin (once for all time, by a judicial pardon). In Sanctification, we are being delivered from the power of sin (as the Holy Spirit fills us, nurtures us, preserves and protects us from the point of our Justification to the point of our Glorification). In Glorification, we will be delivered from the presence of sin (for ever), at which time we will have been completed.

By His grace He saves us, and by His grace we are included in His plan to bring the lost into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is a ministry of grace. Our part is a response, in the Holy Spirit, to the grace of God. The first incentive for working with Him is His love for us; the second is our love for Him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:10,11, 19).

**IN VAIN.** That is, in emptiness, nothingness. God loved us enough to give His Son to die for us (John 3:16). Jesus humbled Himself more than any other person ever has (Phil. 2:5ff) and went to the cross and died for us so that we might have eternal life through faith in Him. He did not save us just to get us into Heaven in the “Sweet Bye and Bye,” but to get the life, character, and power of Heaven into us, beginning in the here and now. It is God’s purpose that every Christian be His ambassador, and ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20) . It is our responsibility to take His message of salvation to lost people. But this message too often falls on deaf ears and empty hearts - and we are talking about the believer’s ears and heart here. The lost person may turn a deaf ear to the Gospel, but the Christian should never turn a deaf ear to the commission, thus making all God has done to save the lost be in vain.

During the 1980s, there was a great emphasis on the ministry of the layperson in the Southern Baptist Convention. If the emphasis had been totally scriptural in its conception and application, this might have been one of the greatest blessings the largest non protestant denomination in history had ever known. However, during this time there was a marked increase in the number of Southern Baptist pastors who were terminated - "forced termination" is a term used for firing the pastor, or voting the pastor out of his position. Each Southern Baptist Church is an autonomous church (self governing under the leadership of the Holy Spirit); but also a cooperating church in partnership with some 45,000 other Southern Baptist Churches. The goal is to continue planting churches until there are 100, 000 SBC churches within a generation - each of which will be autonomous churches cooperating with each other in this great ministry of reaching the lost for Jesus Christ.

There was the "year of the laity," in which it was stressed that every Christian is a minister of the Gospel. And every believer does indeed have a ministry. There were those who were convinced that some people in the denomination conceived of this emphasis at that particular time to dilute the influence of conservative pastors who were leading in the conservative resurgence within the convention that had begun a few years earlier. Those who were not a part of the conservative resurgence called it a "take over."

It became the conviction of some people that the emphasis on the ministry of the layperson was not designed simply to get all believers involved in reaching the lost and ministering to the needs of people in general, but to counter the influence of strong, conservative pastors who were leading many churches in support of the conservative resurgence. The message many church members received was not that God intended them to be involved in reaching the lost and ministering to the needs of those in their community. The message received by some was more like: "I am as much a minister as my pastor. Why should I follow him if I don't agree with him? If he doesn't do what I want him to do, or if I don't like what he is preaching, we will get rid of him and get someone else in. We will get a younger person so he can reach young people. If he is too "negative" we will replace him with someone who will preach on peace and joy and leave social issues and personal soul winning alone." This reasoning, as well as the charge that this was the motive behind the emphasis, seems preposterous on the surface. Indeed, many who supported the emphasis were totally innocent of any wrong motives. But many who were receiving the message seemed to taking on a different attitude toward their pastor, some even to the point of treating him with contempt.

Jimmy Furr, my brother-in-law, was at the time a missionary with the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board - now the North American Mission Board - of the Southern Baptist Convention. In this capacity, he was leading conferences on cults, the occult, and New Age Movements all over America. In the early 1990s, Jimmy and I were talking about the shocking rise in forced terminations in the pastorate. He asked, "Johnny, to you know what is behind this? I am convinced that it is the emphasis on the ministry of the laity." Here was a denominational worker charging that a denominational emphasis was behind the increase in forced terminations! While he did not charge that those who were promoting that emphasis had designed it for that purpose, he did believe that it was having that effect.

If that seems absurd, one must remember that many of the pastors who were behind the

conservative resurgence held a strong view of pastoral authority. In some cases, the rigidity of their position put them at odds with some of their church leaders. To a few of those pastors the scripturally sound doctrine was simply assumed and asserted, without understanding that while pastoral authority is scriptural, many church leaders were not about to give up their power. It was easier to get a new pastor. One director of missions in Louisiana confided in me that one pastor search committee after another came to his office for help in finding a new pastor. Almost invariably, they told him they were looking for a young man so that he could work with their young people. Indeed, the main qualification some sought was youth. He concluded after a period of time that their main concern was not in reaching the youth, thought they really did want a good youth program. He said, "What I am hearing is that they really want a young pastor so they can control him."

With the right emphasis, the emphasis on the ministry of the layperson could be a blessing to the local church and community. If it involves the layperson in evangelism and service God will be honored. In fact, those who are not doing that are living in sin and rebellion against the Lord. However, if this emphasis is adopted to justify some strong leader's rejection of the authority of the pastor, that which is designed for good can become evil. An arrogant church member can make comments about the pastor in his home that will effect the way his children and grandchildren will look on their pastor as long as they live - if he holds the current pastor in contempt, his children may well hold all pastors in contempt.

A close friend had to stand and listen to a teenaged girl rant and rave about all the things she did not like about him - which was nothing more than the reflection of the attitude of her overbearing father who was upset because the pastor had preached against gambling, drinking, and partying. The teenager shouted her opposition and charges that he did not love the people in the presence of others shortly before he was to preach. I had followed this pastor's ministry for twenty years and knew that the members of a church he had served for half that time loved him and respected his leadership. Every time I saw some of his members they were singing his praises. Had he suddenly changed? Absolutely not. He had suddenly offended some modern day "but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say" (3 John 9).

Scripturally, there should be no conflict between the authority of the pastor and the ministry of the laity. The wise pastor will not assume that the church is going to grant him all the authority to which he is scripturally entitled. Practically, he is given the authority the church which calls him as pastor gives him in the job description. If they do not hold a scriptural position, he may lead them to a higher view, but he will not force it on them. Many years ago, Dr. Howard Spell stood before a Bible class at Mississippi College with a small rope in his hand. In his demonstration he laid the rope on his desk, and holding it by one end, he began pushing against it. Of course, it began to fold and twist in all directions. Then he said, "That is what happens when you try to push people. Now look what happens as I begin to lead (pull) the rope. It goes anywhere I lead it. You can lead people but you cannot push them."

There is one other thing that needs to be addressed while we are on this subject, and that is the attitude of fellow pastors toward the pastor whose is forced to resign. Sadly, many of those who

seemed to have been his friends will hold him at arm's length. If he visits or calls they may offer encouragement in private, but when the word gets out that a pastor is "in trouble" and may be forced to resign - regardless of the charges - most of the local pastors in his denomination will avoid him as if he had AIDS. This is no exaggeration! It happens all the time. The pastor I mentioned above contacted me after he had moved to another state to bring me up to date on his new work. In his e-mail note he thanked me for my friendship and support, adding that only one pastor had stood by him "- ONLY ONE. You." I might add that this pastor had the support to have voted his opposition out, but would not put the church through that. A few weeks before this man resigned. I had stood with several pastors following a meeting when one man announced, "I'll tell you a church that is about to come open....." There was no sympathy in his voice - and he had gone through a forced termination himself a few years earlier.

But what is the point? And, what does that have to do with this passage? Simply this, both the special ministry of the pastor or other staff member, and the ministry of the layperson must be Bible based. We only go astray when we reject the scriptural model and devise our own model for ministry.

**6:2 - NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME.** *"For He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION'.."* Parenthetically, Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8. This passage reveals the Lord's willingness to hear and to save the lost. It also stress the sense of urgency with which each person should hear God's word and respond to it.

Joe was a handsome and popular young man of twenty. He was especially popular with the girls in the area, but adults also enjoyed having him around. They teased him and he responded with humor and a smile. My grandfather tried several times to persuade Joe to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. Joe would listen and then respond, "I know I ought to, but I am having too much fun now. When I am older I plan to become a Christian."

We were all shocked when we heard the news that Joe had drowned trying to save someone else from a swollen river. My grandfather made a statement I will never forget. He said, "That's the third person I have talked with about accepting the Lord who put Him off with the same excuse, and neither of them lived three days." This is not the norm - many people postpone making a decision for Christ for a lifetime - but it certainly got our attention.

Some reject Christ for years and nothing seems to happen to them - that we can see. But the fact remains that sooner or later the lost person is going to hear that invitation for the last time. Once as I walked away from the grave-side of one who had died without Jesus, I asked the funeral director if he could comprehend how so many people could hear the Gospel and not call on the Lord for salvation. He said, "I don't know, I'm not a Christian." I had to ask, "Will you tell me how you could sit through a funeral service and stand there for the grave-side service and walk away without calling on the Lord to save you?" He didn't seem to sense the urgency of my question, or why I was so concerned for him.

I cannot imagine going to bed at night without knowing that Jesus Christ lives in my heart. If I were a lost person driving along the highway and suddenly discovered that I was lost and understood the consequences of rejecting Christ, I would quickly, but very carefully, pull over and stop and I would not pull back onto the highway until I knew for sure that I had received eternal life.

Sadly, most people do not seem to understand the heinous nature of saying “No” to God. They do not seem to comprehend what a horrible sin it is to say, “Maybe later.” Arrogance and rebellion reach new heights when the creature looks his Creator in the face and says, “I don’t need you,” or “I don’t want you.” I have dealt with kidnappers, rapists, robbers and murderers, and I have seen some of them repent and receive forgiveness and eternal life. But no person will ever be forgiven as long as he looks his Creator in the face and says, “maybe later.”

**6:3 - GIVING NO CAUSE OF OFFENCE IN ANY THING.** *“Giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited...”* The child of God must not give others an occasion to stumble. The reason this is important is spelled out: “in order that the ministry be not discredited.” It is a sad commentary on the lives of some church members when the thing that turns many lost people off on the church is what they find in the local church. As someone said, “The reason I don’t go to that church is that I have been to that church.”

We can train our people to answer excuses given by lost people for not accepting Christ, but it is not going to help if the charges against some church members are true. We must deal with those excuses, but the first thing the church needs to do is to clean up her act! There are many who do not cause others to stumble in one area, but present serious problems in other areas. Some church members abstain from alcohol, drugs, violence and immorality, but are seen as greedy, meddlesome and condescending in relating to lost people. Sometimes those who pray the longest, sing the loudest and testify the most intensely are the first to use their tongue against others through criticism, slander or gossip.

A few television evangelists have caused the Gospel to be discredited. They have caused other ministers to be discredited as well. But those scandals will never cause the church to be discredited as much as church leaders live inconsistent lives, or simply have no compassion for the lost. We are called to come out from the world and be holy (separate), and failure to do so is a serious offense against God. It brings the individual under divine judgement, and gives lost people just the excuse they may be looking for to justify their rejection of Christ.

Many pastors are well aware of the depth of this problem in the local church. If the pastor takes a strong stand against gambling, alcohol, abuse of the Lord’s Day, rock music, or immodest dress, he does not really have to worry about the world attacking him. His church members will get him first!

**6:4 - COMMENDING OURSELVES AS SERVANTS OF GOD.** *“But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in*

*distresses...*” Paul gives us a summary of his argument about the dignity and glory of the ministers of Christ as servants of God. He does so in three aspects: (1) with “in” (*en*), verses 3-7a; (2) with “by” (*dia*), verses 7b-8; (3) with “as” (*hos*), verses 9-10. “The negative view with *en* we have in verse 3, then the positive in verses 4-7a. Each word carries a story that can be filled in from Paul’s own life as a preacher with an echo in that of us all” [12: 234].

**IN MUCH ENDURANCE.** The Greek word is not easily translated and it is not easily interpreted. Nevertheless, it is very important that we understand it. It does not mean to sit with hands folded in an attitude of resignation as trouble sweeps over us like a tidal wave. It is not the attitude expressed by the plaque showing a man hanging onto the end of a rope. Underneath the picture are the words, “When you get to the end of your rope, tie and knot and hang on.” While it is better to hang on than to let go, there is something better. This word “describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them and transmutes them” [2: 237]. Barclay quotes Chrysostom who called this attitude “the root of all goods, the mother of piety, the fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbour that knows no storms” [2: 237].

**AFFLICTIONS.** There were internal pressures, common to all men, which Paul had to deal with daily, but which became very intense at times. One only needs to study the life of Paul, including the three missionary journeys, shipwrecks, imprisonments, trials and persecutions to see how each of these words related to him personally. Take any word and as you read the Scripture you will be able to document Paul’s personal experience with it.

One of the internal pressures he points to is afflictions, or more literally, things that press down upon us. The word originally meant to exert physical pressure, squeeze, or crush. As used here the word refers to things that place great pressure or weight on the spirit; things like sorrow and disappointments which would crush the will and spirit if they are permitted to do so.

The called-out servants of the Lord in America know a lot more about this kind of suffering that they do of persecution involving imprisonment and physical torture. Pastors are maligned, oppressed, and humiliated by some, treated with contempt by others, and systematically opposed, slandered and threatened with forced termination by others. Some of the reasons for “firing” a pastor would be amusing if not so sad. It is a sad commentary on the state of the church when one studies the reasons for forced termination and discovers that few involve moral failure or heresy.

In his book, *A Hill on Which to Die*, Judge Paul Pressler discusses the price he and his family have paid for his part in the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. He points to lies about his motives, lies about illegal activities, slander, plots, and direct confrontation. He went on to mention the price many have paid, including forced termination. And indeed, there have been pastors who were forced to resign when they came down on the wrong side in this issue, as have some when they incurred the wrath of some director of missions, editor of a state paper, or some other denominational worker.

I made the statement many years ago, and I stand by it today: the meanest people many of our children have ever seen have been members of their own local church. Those children and young



people are unprepared for their Sunday School teacher's assault on their pastor, youth minister, or their parents. There are preacher's kids (PKs) who have been persecuted and afflicted because some church member wanted to hurt the pastor and decided that the way to hurt him most was to attack his family. One particular woman was particularly harsh in statements she made about me in the presence of one of my sons. As her frustration increased, so did the viciousness of her attacks.

Those afflictions to which some pastors are subjected are compounded when they look to a fellow pastor, only to discover the this so-called friend wants nothing to do with him. There are pastors who will befriend a drug addict, help an alcoholic, visit a person who is in jail, seek help for pregnant teenager, or counsel an abusive husband or father, who will withdraw fellowship from a pastor who is known to be "in trouble" with his church. Oh, he will be more than happy to hear him out in private - where else is he going to get the latest information to share with fellow pastors at the coffee shop? - but when they attend the pastors conference at the director of missions' office, they may well manage to avoid seeming to encourage him. This is especially true if the director of missions has been placed in a position of having to choose sides between the pastor and the church.

I received a call from a member of a pastor's family, asking me to meet with two members of the family and a friend. I was told that a man had stood in a Sunday evening worship service and called the church into a business session - against all the by-laws of the church. He just happened to have enough support there to accomplish his purpose. He entertained a motion to fire the pastor and when the pastor was voted out, the man announced that a highly respected retired pastor who lived in the area would be with them for services the following Sunday.

The pastor's wife, his daughter, and a friend from the church asked me if I thought they should call the director of missions (DOM) and ask him to intervene, in light of the nature of the business meeting. I told them that they might well call the DOM, but I advised them to anticipate two things: First, he probably already knew about the situation. They learned that he not only knew about it, ut that he had helped orchestrate their moves. Second, I cautioned them that the DOM would listen to them, but at some point he would begin to reason that regardless of who is right and who is wrong, this man is no longer a pastor in my association, and I am going to have to work with this church after this family is gone. It gets pretty easy to rationalize along about that time. His conclusions may be right, but he should be very careful to stand for what is right in the sight of God, and not just what is expedient for himself.

A few years later, I was visiting with a friend who was serving as a DOM in another association when a problem in a local church was mentioned. He told me that church leaders has decided that they wanted to get rid of their pastor and wanted him to moderate the meeting. This DOM met with the leaders of this church and reviewed with them the way they had treated recent pastors. He told them that everyone in the area knew how they had treated pastors in the past, and the their past was hindering their opportunities to grow. He warned them what another forced termination would to their reputation. He cautioned them to resolve their differences with their pastor and seek ways to work together. They did that, and after a few years the church began to rebuild its public image, or more to the point, its credibility.

**HARDSHIPS.** The word literally means the necessities of life. There are some hardships which no one can escape in this life (necessary part of this life). Residents of the San Francisco have no control over when or where the next earthquake will hit, but they can build structures designed to withstand an earthquake of a certain magnitude.

There are other hardships which are inescapable and beyond your control. Sorrow is a hardship which an individual may expect. Normally, you have no control over the death of a loved one. Death comes to each person. It is just a matter of time. You may have no control over the disease that threatens your life, or the drought which may bankrupt you and your neighbors.

In facing the hardships which are a part of life, one must determine with what attitude he will face them. As a matter of fact, that may be the last decision some people will ever make for themselves. The triumphant endurance of the believer will enable him to face the necessary hardships of life.

**DISTRESSES.** The word means to press together in a narrow place [19: 1729]. It might be used of an army caught in too narrow a pass to maneuver. In the vernacular, it means to be caught between a rock and a hard place. The attitude of triumphant endurance, in the power of the Holy Spirit, will enable the Christian to face distress victoriously, rather than yield to spiritual claustrophobia (feeling that the walls are closing in on you).

**6:5 - IN BEATINGS.** “*In beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger...*” Paul moves on to external tribulations he has faced, and which others may be called on to face. The Christian, especially the faithful minister of the Word, may face physical suffering. It has been said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. While we should not stretch that idea too far, it is a fact that the church has shown greatest signs of growth and demonstrated greatest spiritual power during times of persecution. Persecution and others trials have never weakened true faith, only defined it and deepened it. The grandfather clock said, “Don't take away my weights. That's what keeps me going!”

Paul had experienced his share of beatings and other forms of persecutions. He will have more to say about this in 11:23-24. It is sufficient here to point out that his beatings had been very severe. It was only by the grace of God that this frail, sickly man survived the torture.

In many Islamic countries Christians can be beaten by Muslims without fear of reprisals. The way the media and liberal politicians are promoting Islam and opposing Christianity there may well be a time when Christians may be attacked by Muslims or others in America. If we do not defend our freedom, we will lose it.

**IN IMPRISONMENTS.** Clement of Rome reported that Paul had been imprisoned no fewer than seven times. We know that he had been imprisoned in Philippi before he visited Corinth the first time,

and that following the writing of 2 Corinthians he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem, in Caesarea, and in Rome (probably twice).

Throughout the ages Christians have been imprisoned for their faith. History is filled with examples of how God reached into some jail and blessed one of His servants and often through them blessed the world. John Bunyan is an outstanding example. Christians beyond number have been imprisoned by communist governments for their faith in Christ. In the Soviet Union millions of Christians were either sent to prison, to Siberia, or to mental institutions because of their faith. But God has both blessed and used some of those prisoners in amazing ways. Similar stories have reached us from China, Cuba, and other places.

There is intense persecution of Christians in the world today. Sadly, Americans seem to have chosen to disregard the fact that new converts to Christianity in Third World countries are often ostracized, beaten, stoned, or in some cases killed. Their children are taken and sold into slavery. And the United States is as silent as the UN. With the help of the United States, the Christian government was taken away from South Africa and it was turned over to Communists. But you never heard that from the media in America. They have their "cause," and that cause is race relations and anything that supports their New Age (postmodern) philosophy regarding diversity.

Make no mistake about it, slavery was - and is - an abomination, evil beyond anything my mind can comprehend. Does that mean that all people who have ever owned slaves were evil. In the New Testament era, that is, the contemporary world of Paul's day, new converts regularly came from among both slaves and slave owners. If the church had become a one issue institution on earth, thus changing the message of the Cross, while diverting the attention of those saved and sent out with a message of salvation Gospel. Any attempt in that day to free slaves would no doubt have resulted in the slaughter of masses, if that is what it took to put down the uprising. The focus of the Gospel was on the salvation of the souls of both slaves and slave owners and the implementation of the Golden Rule in all relationships until such a time that society could be brought to the point that it would reject slavery. In fact, slavery was abolished as a system, thanks largely to the efforts of Christians in Great Britain.

Americans are very selective in its stand on slavery. Thomas Sowell, has written so eloquently on the subject of slavery, states that all cultures and all races have furnished their share of slaves, and slave owners. To many American, slavery is a black/white issue, and indeed to some it may well be that this is the case. However, the Civil War - which was a horrible war, though hardly civil - was not fought solely over the issue of slavery. Robert E. Lee freed his slaves before Lincoln did. Karl Marx believed in spreading Communism through revolution. If people in any country did not want a rebellion, they would either attack that nation and force them into submission - thus enslaving the population - or they would begin a systematic propaganda campaign to divide that nation, setting labor against management (and owners), have riots against haves, educated against the uneducated - until they took over the education system, minorities against the system those in power, women against men. Elements within the media have systematically served that end in America. The liberal media has its agenda, whether they will admit it or not, and that agenda, while I will not call it

Communitistic, has tended to serve that philosophy.

The media plays up any racial strife - or imagined slight - but consistently refuses to treat fairly the persecuted Christians of the world today. Pundits weep and wring their hands over the slavery that existed in America two hundred years ago but turn blind eyes to the millions of slave in Africa and Asia who do not serve their political and social agenda. Thus, Christians can be killed or imprisoned, and their children sold into slavery, and the media is silent. Blacks can kill blacks in Africa without raising a collective eye in the media. Any slight against a homosexual makes the news, and joke or epithet that can be construed as ethnic can get one fired or suspended if the media gets behind it. There is but one institution the media, as a whole, will not defend. That is the Church, or Christianity, especially if it is evangelical.

Christianity has subjected to opposition, misrepresentation, and alienation in recent years in America. The media never misses an opportunity to try to deny Christians rights they promote for Islamic peoples, for witches, and New Age religions. This is so blatant that Conservative Jewish columnists Don Feder and Mona Charen have felt compelled to come to the defense of Christians in recent years. They, however, find little support in the liberal media. As this attitude escalates, Christians are going to be denied basic rights - that is happening at Christmas time right now. It is happening in public schools right now. If we do not have a spiritual awakening Christians may actually be facing severe challenges in the near future. Persecution of Christians may well be tolerated in America if we continue down the road we have been traveling for the last seventy years.

**IN TUMULTS.** He is probably thinking of all the mob violence he had seem and by which he had suffered. Paul had seen his share of it, but it did not end with him. John Wesley tells such an experience when a mob came “pouring down like a flood” upon him and dragged him into town and along the main street. When he tried to escape through an open door, a man caught him by his hair and pulled him back into the street where they continued parading him through the main street.

There are stories of such tumults from most every period of history, including early American history. Baptist history is filled with accounts of such treatment. Baptists are neither Catholic nor Protestant - in fact, Baptists have been persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants. While we might like to assign these kinds of tumults to an earlier period and feel that they cannot be repeated today, we had better think again. Evangelicals are facing strong opposition today from many Humanists, New Agers and Atheists. Their attitude is not “live and let live.” They are taking the fight to the Christians and the church had better sit up and take notice. Pro-Lifers are being imprisoned in many places because of opposition to abortion. Pro-abortionists, have an agenda that should concern Christians very deeply. They have had a lot of success in the courts and at the polls. A law passed to combat organized crime is being tested against those who practice passive resistance before abortion clinics.

It is possible that Christians may be imprisoned in America in the future because of their stand on other issues. If one finds this unbelievable, he does not understand that we are now living in post-Christian America. If that time should come, what are you going to do? I know what some

church members will do. They will label those who take a stand fanatics or nuts and align themselves with the other side!

**IN LABORS.** Paul moves now to the toils and labors one must accept as a part of his commitment to Christ and His commission. The great missionary apostle may well be our greatest example in serving Jesus Christ. The Christian life is a glorious life, but if it is a fruitful life, it is not an easy life. Even the saint's prayer life is often filled with agony of soul. The called out minister, whether pastor or, missionary or evangelist, knows his life will be filled with hard work. But it is work he gladly accepts.

**IN SLEEPLESSNESS.** Jesus spent many sleeplessness nights in prayer. Paul obviously spent many sleeplessness nights, praying, preaching, teaching, traveling, and probably at times in anxiety. In the Scripture we find him preaching at midnight:

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead (Acts 20:9).

Today pastors often spend sleepless nights, or get very little sleep some nights because of illness, a death, out of town hospital calls, late visits from troubled individuals, or in prayer and study. For years, some of my most productive hours have been from 10:30 PM - 2:00 AM. My family is asleep, the phone is not ringing, and I don't need as much sleep as some people, and I don't have to shut myself off from members during the day. I might add that as I have gotten older I have adjusted my schedule somewhat.

**IN HUNGER.** The KJV has "fastings," and the word was used of voluntary fasting, but it seems from this context that Paul has in mind times when he could not eat because of his ministry, or because of other circumstances. Periods of hunger might have been associated with trials and distresses. Adrift at sea, one finds little to eat. Imprisonment placed one at the mercy of those who scheduled meals as well as the cooks. According to some accounts prisoners and children in work houses three to six hundred years ago in England might expect a little bread and a foul smelling soup which consisted of water with a few pieces of potato or turnip in it.

Paul focuses on trials and tribulations in order to consider some of the qualities God has used in his ministry. Because he had remained faithful to God through all these trials God's name had been glorified and His Kingdom advanced. There are, and always have been men who tell us they have been called by God, who admire Paul and preach teach people about his faithfulness, yet they feel that they deserve to live under far better circumstances. The pastor who lives in a mansion and drives a BMW to church may well have a problem identifying with Paul.

Traditionally, until recent years when a pastor was called - or assigned - to a new church he knew he would be living in a home provided by the church. He would live near the church, if not next door. He was on the job twenty fours a day, seven days a week. During the last fifty years many

churches sold the parsonage and began providing the pastor with a housing allowance so that he might buy or build his own house. This is a much better provision for the pastor, and it is right in most cases for the church to do this because it helps avoid problems that arise when a pastor reaches retirement and has no equity built up in a house, and now that he has no housing allowance his retirement income is inadequate. He can only make ends meet if he can find an interim pastorate or do part-time secular work.

Here is where a blessing can be a problem. When one who does not own his own home is contacted by a church some distance away, the pastor who does not own his own home can relocate without problems associated with selling his house in the current location and buying another when he moves to a new field. This pastor may be more willing to consider the call from another church “God’s will,” whereas a pastor who owns his own home may find that the “God’s will” may be influenced by his success in selling his house and finding another in the new location. There may be temptations either way. The pastor who does not own his home may be more tempted to move to avoid facing a bad situation or a potential problem. The pastor who owns his home and considers this the home in which he wants to live when he retires may well be tempted to find it “God’s will” to stay even when he is being called to a new work.

Satan will take advantage of either situation and use it to tempt the man of God to make the wrong decision, and if not successful in that, to get him to make whatever decision he must make for the wrong reasons. However, not all temptations come directly from Satan. Temptations also come from the flesh and from the world.

Paul is the single greatest example of faithfulness, loyalty, and commitment to God, especially in facing trials, the world has ever witnessed. This is by the Lord’s choosing because the accounts of his suffering for his Savior were inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is a lot easier to admire Paul than it is to risk getting into a situation in which one may be called on to follow his example.

**6:6 - IN PURITY.** *“In purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love...”* We might sum up what some of the Greek writers wrote about this virtue by saying that the word denoted the “careful avoidance of all sins against the gods” [2: 240], and careful attention to all the gods expected of them. For us, the word points to the godly life in which one avoids all that would contaminate his life and strict obedience to all the positive qualities God would develop in one’s heart.

Purity is a virtue and a quality of life God would develop in each person. America entered the post-Christian period in her history in the middle of the last century and the deeper she moves into this phase of her history the less value she places on purity. Impurity is flaunted, virginity mocked, and perversion of every virtue pushed to new limits. For years the entertainment industry watched and learned what would sell. Since Clark Gable used a four-letter word in *Gone With the Wind*, the entertainment industry has “pushed the envelop” of moral decency. As Americans gathered around the television in the fifties and sixties, programs grew more violent, more profane, more vulgar, and anti-Christian.

Christians joined the lost in their weekly feast at the feet of ungodly producers, directors and actors who followed the camel's nose under the tent wall philosophy by incrementally introducing new words and themes which they would test to see just how much people would accept. Evangelists in the early part of the Twentieth Century often used the illustration of putting a frog into a pan of hot water. If you dropped a frog into a pan of boiling water, it would jump out so quickly it would not be burned, but if you put it into a pan of lukewarm water and then increased the temperature degree by degree it would sit there until it was too late to jump out. People began to laugh at earlier television shows like *Leave it to Beaver*, and others that portrayed a decent traditional family with a father and mother. The popularity of the *Andy Griffith* show today is proof that people will watch programs that are clean and wholesome, yet Hollywood refuses to produce that type programs.

Using programs like *MASH* and *All in the Family*, the entertainment industry pushed the definition of decency and purity to the limits. When *The American Family Association* and similar organizations called for boycotts of certain products or companies, we were told that the only way we could change things was to hit the big companies where it hurt. They would withdraw sponsorship if they started losing money or if they received too much bad publicity. Lists were published regularly showing the chief sponsors of shows to which Christians should object.

Sadly, the war was waged without the support of many church members. If it had not been for the impurity of the church itself the movie and television industry would not have been so successful. Even liberal theologians were announcing that "you cannot legislate morality." The simple fact is that legislation has always been used to protect society from immorality. As new generations of movie goers and television fans reached maturity, they accepted, and even demanded more "mature" entertainment. I find it disturbing that professing Christians sit in theaters or before the television set and watch programs filled with profanity, vulgarity, nudity or near nudity, and moral depravity and perversions of every kind without seeming to find it inconsistent with their profession of faith in a holy God. If someone had come into our home and used some of the words commonly found in TV shows today my father would have thrown them out of the house. If they had used some of those words in front of his family someone would have had to carry them out.

Once when my sister was a teenager, my father came in and sat down in his favorite chair, picked up his copy of the *Commercial Appeal* and reading the news of the day. As he was reading, there came into his peripheral vision a pair of exposed legs. He very clearly and firmly demanded, "Girl, you get back in your room and put some clothes on!" Looking up, he saw the shocked expression on my sister's visitor who had driven out to visit without his knowledge.

My family used to laugh at a great uncle who came in from the field to discover several ladies standing in his yard. They had brought some clothes for his wife to alter. As he opened the gate and stepped into the yard they turned toward him, only to hear him say, "Excuse me," as he did an about-face and start back out the gate. One of the ladies called out to him, "It's all right, we came from town like this." They were dressed in shorts and his first impression was that he had walked in on a fitting and he wanted to avoid embarrassing them.

Sadly, many people in the church place little value on purity. Jesus is coming again and He will be coming for His bride. He expects his bride to be pure, but today His bride is stained with the impurities of the world.

**IN KNOWLEDGE.** The minister of the Gospel must seek the kind of wisdom that can be translated into practical service for God. He must study to expand his mind, but he must relate to people in a practical and realistic way. In preaching, this means communication; in ministry, it means practical service. Some people seem to know what to do and when to do it for the greatest benefit of the person in need.

The Bible is careful to distinguish between knowledge and wisdom, both of which are important to the child of God. A person may place great value on knowledge and pursue it relentlessly without valuing the wisdom necessary to make a practical application of it. When a medical doctor becomes addicted to drugs or alcohol, or when an attorney breaks a law, they are showing a lack of wisdom, even though they may have more knowledge than others in society about that which leads to their downfall.

Knowledge comes to the Christian as he studies God's Word and as he listens to his pastor and Sunday School teacher proclaim the Word of God. He may, however, gather knowledge about the Bible without having the wisdom to make an application of it in his daily life. The truly well educated person places great value on both knowledge and wisdom.

The late Dr. Leo Eddleman, who was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, was visiting in our home once when we were discussing education. He made a statement I have never forgotten. He told us that he advised his daughters to "get enough education that no one will ever look down on you; and then go on and get enough education that you will never look down on anyone else."

**IN PATIENCE.** The word for patience means "a willingness to bear up under." In the New Testament the word usually refers to patience in dealing with other people. Often translated forbearance or longsuffering (KJV), it points to the person who has the power to avenge himself, but does not. It might also denote the wise person who has both the knowledge and the command of his tongue to humiliate one with limited wisdom, but he would never do it.

Patience is used in the New Testament to denote far more than we often intend today. It may include the quality that enables one to avoid losing control when someone else does something obnoxious, like making meaningless repetitive noises, asking personal questions, or violating the rules of etiquette. Patience is willing to bear up under trials without giving up or running away.

**IN KINDNESS.** This is one of the great words of the New Testament. Any explanation of this word would involve the use of a number of other great words of the Christian life, such as gentleness, patience, love. Barclay quotes another commentator who describes kindness as "the sympathetic kindness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain" [2: 241].



**IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.** All the words in this verse denote the work of the Holy Spirit which we call Sanctification. The saved person can no more produce Sanctification than he could accomplish Justification. He was totally dependant upon the Lord to save him when he trusted in Jesus. He is just as powerless to nurture and mature his own soul in the Lord. This is accomplished when the believer permits the Holy Spirit to take control of his life.

**IN GENUINE LOVE.** Or, in unfeigned love. The word for love is *agape*, which is so common in the New Testament. It is the unselfish love which is sometimes defined as unconquerable benevolence and good will toward others. It always behaves itself in an unselfish manner, never does things for selfish reason, never uses others for personal gain or advantage. It is the spirit that will always seek the highest good for others, regardless of whether they deserve it or not. It is the spirit that never seek revenge, and would never demand one's rights at the expense of another person.

Agape is not an emotional response to individuals or circumstances. It is an attitude which God can command and one to which the saint can respond with the mind and will, and not just emotions. In essence, it is a mental attitude type of love.

It is good that the word "genuine" is included, because there is a lot of pretense in human relations. Many who condemn and criticize others when their back is turned, make quite a show of love and concern for them on Sunday morning at church. God makes a sharp distinction between genuine love and love that is not honest and genuine. The former He blesses; the latter He calls hypocrisy!

A friend received a phone call from a lady who brought up a fellow choir member's name: You know we love each other, but..." He stopped her: "Don't tell me that! You can't stand each other, you can hardly tolerate each other." The lady denied it, but her minister of music had asked her pastor, "Do you know what's wrong with our choir?" The pastor thought about it a minute and asked what he had in mind. The Minister of Music answered, "We have choir members who can't stand each other; they can barely tolerate each other." Their lack of love - or their feigned love - was reflected in their singing.

**6:7 - IN THE WORD OF TRUTH.** *"In the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left..."* Here we find the equipment the minister must have for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God is the One Who does the equipping, and the first gift is the gift of His Word, the word of truth. Every Minister of the Gospel must have a strong faith in the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God. We may use different terminology in referring to the Scripture, but we must never water down the claims the Scripture makes for itself. As Paul writes to Timothy: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

When more conservative people began using the term "inerrant," I knew they had come up with a term that fit my convictions about Scripture. Every word of Scripture, since it is God-

breathed, is infallible. Inerrancy is a theological conviction. I spoke with a denominational leader who expressed concern for those who held an uncompromising view of Scripture. Understanding his position, I agreed that we have extremists on both sides of the issue, but stressed that I hold an inerrant view of Scripture. He quickly added, “Oh, I do too, I just don’t use the term.” I replied, “I understand why in your position you might choose not to use the term, but I do use it.” When there is a stronger term, I will embrace it.

They way I see it, If God could not have given us a perfect (original) manuscript, why call Him God. If He could have done it, but would not, what kind of God is He. Since I spell my God’s name with a capital “G,” I have no problem with the inerrancy of the original manuscripts. I am fully aware of the fact that there are textual problems in manuscripts, as there are in translations.

I was talking with a pastor at a funeral when I asked him if he was familiar with the Holman Christian Standard Bible. I had only recently joined the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources and had been assigned to the Broadman and Holman Committee, the division responsible for publishing Bible and books. The Holman Christian Standard Bible is a favorite project and the more I read it the better I like it.

The pastor I had asked about the HCSB gave me a rather stern look and snapped, “You can’t improve on the real one.” When I asked for an explanation, he said, “You can’t improve on the King James.” I resisted the temptation to ask if he thought Paul and Silas used the King James translation. I never thought to ask, “Since the King James is the perfect translation, would it not stand to reason that the earliest rendering of the KJV would be the best?” Of course, most of us would have a real problem reading the old English.

Dr. Gene Jeffries, President of Cambridge Graduate School, showed me the first copy of the modern translation of the 1525 Tyndale New Testament which had recently been translated from the old English, which had only recently been completed by Dr. William Cooper of London. I found it interesting that Dr. Cooper’s translation of the New Testament sold more copies in England than *Harry Potter* in the year 2000. The Anglican Church had bought thousands of copies for use in their services.

**THE POWER OF GOD.** God gives to the spirit-filled believer the most wonderful power in the world. Any Christian who has not seen mountains moved in his life, or in the lives of others, is simply not walking with God in faith. The Holy Spirit has not been permitted to do the work in his life to accomplish the purpose for which He was sent: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

**WEAPONS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The Lord equips us “by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left.” This means that God equips us with the weapons of righteous for defense (left hand) and for attack (right hand). The right-handed soldier held his sword in his right hand and the shield in his left hand (or on his left arm). See Ephesians 6:11ff for more on the

Christian's weapons.

**6:8 - BY GLORY AND DISHONOR.** *“By glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true...”* Bruce makes the points that the “The vicissitudes of the apostolic life are summarized in pairs of antitheses, somewhat after the fashion of I C. 4. 10-13; 2 C. 4:8f” [4: 212]. For a contrast between honor and dishonor 2 Timothy 2:20:

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and **some to honor and some to dishonor.**

Unfortunately, the church at Corinth had been visited both by men of honor and men of dishonor; by men of evil report and men of good report (or is he saying that there were both good and evil reports about him and his work?). Paul had been slandered, but he remained true to his calling. The true minister and the false minister are set side by side here for the sake of contrast. One should be able to distinguish between the minister of God and the minister of the world, but those lacking in spiritual discernment are often deceived by dishonorable ministers. Those who born after the day of the sensational tel-evangelists of the seventies and eighties may find it hard to believe how many people followed - and supported - people like Jim Bakker of PTL fame, Jimmy Swaggart, and Oral Roberts. People were constantly asking me about these men and others and I soon learned that if you did not give then your enthusiastic endorsement some of those people would dismiss you as one of those pastors who were not spiritual. If you advised caution in support of these ministries there were some people who questioned your relationship with the Lord.

All of the dishonorable ministers did not fade away with the fall of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. Caution is needed in evaluating the ministry of those who have such ready access to masses through radio and television. I have often encouraged people to listen to, or watch such men of integrity as Charles Stanley, Billy Graham, James Kennedy, John MacArthur, Adrian Rodgers, and Charles Swindoll. Many people listen to David Jeremiah on a regular basis. Woodrow Krol and a number of others are heard daily on BBN (Bible Broadcasting network) and AFR (American Family Radio). I would discourage people from watching those who resort to crowd manipulation, constantly taking large audiences from the peaks of euphoria to the depths of horror.

How do we know the difference between those who are honorable and those who are dishonorable? Those who proclaim the Word of God with integrity stand apart from those who manipulate people for decisions, money, or prestige. One thing that concerns me is that throughout the years there have been people who watched and supported financially the more sensational radio and television personalities, who were not faithful to the local church. It is particularly disturbing when people living on a fixed income are encouraged to send “seed” money to some television evangelist to “keep them on the air,” or to feed those hungry orphans in their orphanage in a Third World country.

The tithes and offerings should be given through the local church. This is the Scriptural pattern established in Acts and the Epistles of Paul. When one has supported the local church he may

be led to help support certain other ministries, but the local church should come first. This includes our worship attendance, our witnessing, and our giving. Any preacher who would seek to feather his own nest at the expense of the local church is dishonorable.

**REGARDED AS DECEIVERS AND YET TRUE.** One possibility here is that Paul is contrasting himself as a true apostle with deceivers who are false ministers. Another possibility is that while Paul was not a deceiver, he had been called one. He will reject the slanderous charges made against him and faithfully carry on his work for Jesus Christ.

This is a good place to stop and admit that most of the things Paul has written require serious study. Let's face it, even though he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was an intellectual and his thoughts are deep. Peter agrees:

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to **the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction** (2 Peter 3:14-16).

Because those who are shallow (untaught) are not able to understand theology; they often distort the truth. Most pastors can recall some ludicrous statements made by people who were absolutely persuaded of their own wisdom and insight. People need to be taught - they need to read the Bible; they need to study the Bible; they need to hear the Bible taught; and they need to hear the Bible preached. Sunday School is one of the greatest opportunities for the teaching of people of all ages. Vacation Bible School has afforded a wonderful opportunity for children and young people to be saved and to learn something about the Bible. Vacation Bible School (VBS) provides children with three hours of time each day for five days, or fifteen hours of Bible study. That is the equivalent of one whole quarter of Sunday School. The problem is that some VBS programs spend more time on recreation, arts and crafts, music, refreshments, and practice for the commencement service than on Bible study.

I listened to Gene Mims, President of Church Resources, LifeWay Christian Resources, in his report to members of the Board of Trustees at the September, 2001 meeting in Glorieta, N.M., state that Southern Baptists had reported record numbers of professions of faith through the 2001 Bible schools. This is a tremendous report. Dr. Mims added that, "If you are not using our Bible School materials, you are not using the best Bible school materials." Even if he is right, and until I am convinced otherwise, as a Trustees I am going to support that evaluation. However, we still have a problem. The literature is written for the masses, for children in pioneer areas, children in the inner city, children with little background. It is written to take children wherever they are, and give them enough information to win them to faith in Jesus Christ. That is not the problem; the problem is that material written for this purpose may not always provide enough serious Bible study for the Bible School in the Bible Belt where many of the children are being taught the Scripture every Sunday in

Sunday School. Three VBS workers with a total of almost one hundred years experience teaching children and young people, both in Sunday School and public schools, complained to me that even during the time record numbers were being saved - thought not in their churches - Bible Study was sacrificed for crafts, recreation, and other activities. Little time was actually given to teach the Scripture.

Stephen Olford, the man more preachers had rather hear preach and teach about preaching than any other in the last half century, has charged that there is a famine in America today; not a famine in the traditional sense, but a famine in expository preaching. If there is shallow preaching from the pulpit, weak Bible study in Sunday School, and limited time for Bible Study in VBS, an untaught generation of believers is inevitable. Polls prove that even those who attend services on a regular basis know little about the Word of God.

It is a shameful indictment of both the church and the Christian home when children and young people can grow to maturity without gaining a knowledge of the Word of God. The church has compromised for one reason or another, the home because parents have deemed other things more important. The church has failed, possibly because it is in competition with other area churches that have decided fun and games are more important than Bible study. Some of the churches that major in contemporary to rock music, trips to distant conference centers, restaurants every Sunday night after church, and mall visits have not only not taught the Word of God to children and youth, they have also distorted the sound doctrine.

Shallow teaching cannot produce mature believers. Instead, they distort the truth. That is why it is essential for the church to continually preach and teach the Word of God. To fail to teach the Word of God to our children is to prepare them to distort the truth to their children on down the line.

**6:9 - AS UNKNOWN YET WELL KNOWN.** *“As unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death...”* To those who did not really know him, Paul remained obscure and disdained - hard to understand, even to Simon Peter. Some of them believed he lacked proper credentials. His critics said he was a nobody, an insignificant teacher. This view was due in part to the work of the deceivers from Judea who were bringing charges against Paul to destroy him and his work. Yet, he was well known and his credentials were fully recognized by the faithful, the well informed, the ones who mattered most (see 11:6).

**AS DYING YET BEHOLD, WE LIVE.** There were many paradoxes in Paul's life. One is that after all that was done to silence or kill him, he still lived and continued to preach and teach. Man would have killed him but God had preserved his life. Is there any wonder he would write to the Philippians, “For, to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

Many years ago, the widow of my father in the ministry, Mrs. M. C. Waldrup, sent me an article which she had folded and inserted in my Christmas card that year. The title caught my attention: *One Solitary Life*. Of course, that One Solitary Life referred to Jesus. There is absolutely

no one in history to compare with Jesus. He is the most important Person who ever walked on earth. But I cannot help but think that if we move from Jesus our Savior to His servants, if we wrote of the “one solitary life” that best exemplified the Christ-life in teachings, courage, and sacrifice, it would have to be Paul. Few people have ever faced the opposition and persecution he faced, yet no one has made the contribution he made to the cause of Christ, including his teaching ministry, his writing ministry, and his total commitment to his Lord.

**AS PUNISHED YET NOT PUT TO DEATH.** He had been close to death on many occasions, but he continued to live and to carry on the work to which Jesus called him on the Damascus Road. Paul lists some of the punishment to which he had been subjected in his second letter to the church at Corinth:

Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more **imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.** *Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in **dangers** from rivers, dangers from robbers, **dangers** from my countrymen, **dangers** from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, **dangers** among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 1:23-28, emphasis added).*

**6:10 - AS SORROWFUL, YET ALWAYS REJOICING.** *“As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”* Christian history reveals that many believers have adopted Paul’s attitude. He had faced more persecution, more trials, and more distress than we can imagine, yet nothing could prevent his rejoicing. Many martyrs have demonstrated this same attitude. Polycarp, the aged Bishop of Smyrna, though tied to the stake with flames leaping to engulf his body, thanked God for finding him worthy of death for Jesus. “Eighty and six years,” he proclaimed, “have I served my Lord. How can I deny Him now?” The enemies of the Cross sought to silence Polycarp, but at his death it seemed as though God reached down and took the ashes and scattered them across the world, and everywhere they fell, revival fires broke were ignited.

**-AS POOR YET MAKING MANY RICH.** He had little materially, but he shared spiritual riches with others. Is it possible that the reason American Christians are often spiritually powerless and miserable is that they get caught up in the quest for material things, and once they possess them they spend so much time tending to them that they have too little time to worship, pray, witness and study the Word of God? This may well be effecting a much greater percentage of church members than one would think. It may have a greater impact upon the faithful nucleus than even the wisest among us realize.

**AS HAVING NOTHING YET POSSESSING ALL THINGS.** The paradox continues as he practically repeats the previous phrase. He might seem to be a homeless wanderer, yet he possessed spiritual blessings beyond number. He might seem impoverished, yet in the only things that will survive this world, he was rich. In considering wealth, the Christian should never place too much value on the things that can be lost, stolen, or destroyed. “He might seem to have nothing, but having Christ, he had everything that mattered in this world and the next” [2: 243]. Martyr Jim Elliot made many statements which have challenged the faithful. I remember reading a statement which I copied in the front of a New Testament: “Be sure when the time comes for you to die, the only thing you have to do is die.” He also said, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for that which he cannot lose.”

It is interesting that when a certain magazine publishes its annual report on the world's wealthiest people, or the wealthiest people in America, they never list anyone like the Apostle Paul. There was a weekly television program entitled, “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” It would be interesting to ask someone who watches that program regularly if he has ever seen the lifestyle of anyone like Paul featured on the show.

If Paul were living today, one could imagine all the prayer request for this poor soul in our services. Many would pity him because he had nothing, not understanding that having nothing, he was “yet possessing all things.”

### **III. PAUL’S EXHORTATIONS ARE PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL, 6:11-7:16.**

#### **A. He Exhorts Them to Be Open Toward Him, 6:11-13.**

**6:11 - OUR MOUTH HAS SPOKEN FREELY TO YOU.** “*Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.*” He has spoken frankly to them. He has kept nothing back in preaching the Gospel to them. Once again, Paul sets an example for all ministers of the Gospel. Paul’s philosophy and his convictions about preaching are expressed in one of his letters to his son in the ministry, Timothy:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

**OUR HEART IS OPENED WIDE.** His heart was enlarged toward them. The church at Corinth had dealt him a lot of grief, but his heart was still open to them and his message flowed out of

a full heart. Since America entered the post-Christian era in its history, attitudes toward the Lord's servants changed. When I was a ministerial student at Mississippi College professors and older ministers cautioned that there were a lot of girls in churches who would love to marry a preacher - and there is nothing their mothers would like more than to see their daughter married to a pastor.

While the single young pastor needed to be warned about the potential danger in personal relationships, especially on the church field, his advisors were not aware of how much things had changed since they were single ministerial students. Even though a young lady might have been attracted to the young pastor on a personal level, the modern young lady's mother was more interested in her daughter's security. The last thing she wanted was to see her daughter married to a preacher! No longer was the local pastor the most admired and respected person in the community - if he ever was. Within another twenty years there were other problems. During the last quarter of the Twentieth Century, a major problem was forced termination of pastors. Seldom was the primary cause for the forced termination of a pastor either theological or moral. Explanations commonly went something like this:

He had been here three years and that is long enough.  
He didn't reach young people.  
His wife never really fit in.  
He got crossed up with the deacons.  
He got us in that building program.  
He wanted to change too many things.  
Our church was not growing.  
He was just not like Brother Jones.  
He was too negative.  
He wouldn't take a stand on issues.  
He preached on hell.  
He never preached on hell.  
He didn't visit.  
He visited at the wrong time and stayed too long.  
He put his daughter in a private church school.  
He put his daughter in the public school.

When a pastor has been subjected to such abuse he must pray that God will give him an enlarged heart. He must love the unlovely, even those who are all but unlovable. I well remember a time when I was receiving some criticism and when I refused to be drawn into a squabble over some issue, those critics seemed more incensed than ever. They said ugly things about me to people who were close to me and a few - very few, thankfully - decided to abuse my family. We were like fish in a barrel, and it does not take much courage to arrack a pastor who cannot defend himself without doing more damage. After much prayer, I came to the conclusion that I could not defend myself and I could only wait for the Lord to either deal with this problem or move me to a new place of service. As I studied their behavior I came to realize that the worst thing they could possibly do to me is to provoke me into acting like they were. It would be far better to have to get out and find some other



kind of work, wait on the Lord to provide another place of service, or tighten the belt even more than to sin by harboring the wrong attitude toward another person. Yes, you can love those who persecute you! Many pastors need to pray for an enlarged heart.

I have reached the point in life, and the ministry, where I am not the least bit interested in moving to another church, so I am not circulating resume's, or trying to impress anyone. I happen to be in a situation in which members have shown love for their pastor, respect for his family, and appreciation for his preaching. Therefore, what I am about to say is not in any way for my benefit, but out of concern for other pastors who are far too often subjected to criticism and abuse by those who had pledged their support. Someone needs to say this and since we are not hearing it from many denominational workers who might have and influence, and since one who is being attacked by some egotistical, self-serving tyrant, I want to stress this one point:

Sir, if you are attacking your pastor, condemning his family, and feel justified because you are being encouraged by some faction in your church, please do not think of yourself as a hero. You are not a hero, you are a spineless bully and a coward who is taking his best shot at a man who cannot defend himself without getting down in the dirt with you. Any thing he says you will twist to serve your purpose and hurt him in any way you can. And you will do it all in the name of love and service to the Lord. You, Sir, are no Paul, you are a Corinthian who will attack anyone who preaches against your sins or defies your preconceived ideas of the role of a pastor. You insisted that you want a pastor who will preach against sin, but what you did not tell him is that you want him to preach against his neighbor's alcohol and drug abuse, not your egocentric desire for preeminence.

I don't care how many times you tell yourself that you are doing the Lord's work, you Sir, are a coward if you are saying harsh things to your pastor or against your pastor, or if you are attacking his family. I don't care how many people in your family, church, or community are encouraging you and making you their hero, you are as much a gutless coward as a fifteen year old bully in a class of twelve year old boys. He is three years behind in school and his classmates can do everything better in the classroom, but he thinks he is making up for that difference by intimidating them, or even beating them up on the playground. He is not beyond hitting someone while he is being held by others. That is exactly how defenseless many pastors are when attacked by someone who is related to half of the membership - or one who provides jobs for half the membership.

Your pastor can pray for you, and he may try to provide the answers you demand, but you have already made up your mind - you don't want answers, you want a pound of flesh. You do not care how he will provide for his family, you do not care that his reputation will be damaged by your charges, and you do not care if his ministry is destroyed. All you want to do is to defeat him, and drive him out of your church and your community. You are already looking forward to your next pastor. You will be as excited about him as you were the current pastor when he moved onto the field,

and you will probably make the same commitment to support him.

Why do I say you are a coward when you feel fully justified in your attacks? Why do I say you are a bully when others admire your courage? After all, by the time you finish the “He said” and “I said,” you have convinced yourself of your courage. **First**, you have violated a scriptural principle - godly people do not attack God’s anointed. **Second**, God called him to your church - you said so yourself. If God called him to your church, God will move him when He is ready. **Third**, If he is not guilty of a moral sin or theological heresy, you are attacking him for superficial reasons. **Fourth**, if you are convinced that it is time for your pastor to move, there is a way to get rid of him - pray that God will move him. Oh, you have been doing that for six months? Then God is not answering your prayers, is He? Wonder why? Of course, God may be saying “No!” Or, He may be saying, “Not yet.”

**Fifth**, God has promised that if you need anything you are to ask it in Jesus’ name, believing, and He will grant it (John 15:7). Do you believe that? Then why have you decided to take matters into your own hands by unleashing a salvo of abuse and attacks on the man God led you to call as your pastor.

There are times when a pastor must move - for any number of reasons that do not include moral failure or theological heresy. If those who are convinced of that have faith in God they may ask Him to move their pastor. That does not mean that they are to say a few prayers and then “put feet to their prayers” by trying to run off their pastor. They must pray until God answers their prayers.

If you must deal with your pastor about some failure, do so with compassion and love - genuine love, not feigned love. Do not let this become an ego trip when others encourage you. To attack a defenseless pastor is like shooting fish in a barrel - anyone can do it, but only an insensitive bully will. Remember that the Lord is not the Author of confusion, lies, and slander. You will stand before Him to give an account for the way you have treated His servant.

**6:12 - YOU ARE NOT RESTRAINED BY US.** *“You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.”* This is the same figure we find in verse 11. “Paul is not shutting the Corinthians out, or confining them to a narrow, inadequate corner of his affection. No, if there is any shortage of space it is on their side, literally, in their bowels, but the word is used, as often in Biblical Greek (cf. vii. 15), as we use ‘heart’ [3 - 192]. “Bowels” (KJV) were at one time thought to be the seat of emotions. What Paul means is that if there is any narrowness or restraint between them, it is not in his approach to them but in their response to him; not in his heart, but theirs.

**6:13 - NOW IN A LIKE EXCHANGE.** *“Now in a like exchange--I speak as to children--open wide to us also.”* It was his desire to see their hearts enlarged toward him as his was toward them (vs. 11).

## **B. He Exhorts Them to Be Separated from Evil, 6:14-7:1.**

**6:14 - DO NOT BE BOUND TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.** *“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”* The KJV renders it, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Literally, stop becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers." Some were already being unequally yoked with unconverted heathens. Marriage is certainly included, but other unions are almost certainly included.

Christians should not marry non-Christians. Parents, pastors and Sunday School teachers should teach children and young people this passage. We cannot wait until they are adults to stress this important guideline for Christians. If our young people never begin dating unsaved people, they are not likely to marry a person who is not a Christian.

Every pastor can recall times when a church member comes in to announce that he or she is going to marry an unsaved person. Often one of two things happens. Either the unsaved person promises to go to church or become a Christian after they are married and expects the pastor to be as naive as the bride to be of groom to be; or he makes a decision then and there and a month after they are married drops out of church. Happily, some are genuinely saved under those circumstances.

The Christian should apply this principle in business matters. It is not unusual for a Christian to find himself in a partnership with an unsaved person before he discovers that the lost person does not have the same values as the saved person does.

This is not always easy. My brother showed me an article in the American Bar Association concerning a group of Christian lawyers who discovered that they could not advertise for a Christian attorney to join their firm. They felt very strongly that they should look for a Christian, but found that they would be guilty of religious discrimination if they advertised for included the word "Christian." There may be many hindrances in honoring this principle, but it is still one we should take very seriously and honor it as much as possible.

**6:15 - WHAT HARMONY HAS CHRIST WITH BELIAL?** *“Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?”* Belial means worthless and is applied to Satan. Christ and Satan are arch enemies.

**IN COMMON WITH AN UNBELIEVER?** That is a fair question, but the issue is clouded when so many professing Christians live so much like lost people you cannot tell them apart. What an indictment it is on the Christian's life when he holds most things in common with lost people. Today many who profess to be saved drink alcoholic beverages, go to dances, listen to music filled with profanity and immoral themes, do not keep the Lord's Day holy, tell off color jokes and find filth entertaining.

At the time of this writing a new movie, “Blaze,” has just been released. The adulterous relationship between the late Earl K. Long, who was governor of Louisiana at the time, and a New Orleans stripper should be an embarrassment to the state and the nation. Instead of being shocked, the news media gave a lot of coverage to the cast and the story when it was being made. Following the release it received “rave reviews.” Have we lost the shock factor? What has happened when we take filth and make it entertainment? Is it not worse when Christians find such a movie entertainment?

**6:16 - WHAT AGREEMENT.** *“Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”* This repeats the argument of verse 15. The answer is obvious. There can be no agreement between the true God and false gods.

**WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD.** The temple represented the presence of God with His people. The background was the tabernacle, or tent of meeting. When God indwells the believer's heart, he becomes the temple of God. A full awareness of this fact should provide the Christian with the incentive to live a pure and holy life before his Lord. This should also remind us of the promise made in Revelation 21:3:

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God.

**I WILL DWELL IN THEM.** Paul quotes from a number of OT passages. In verse 16 the we find basically the same promise as Rev. 21:3 (above).

**6:17 - BE SEPARATE.** *“Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR; And I will welcome you.”* Every Christian is urged to come out from the world and be separate. The separated life is the holy life.

Personal separation involves not being unequally yoked (v. 14), not loving the world (1 John 2:15-17) though using it (1 Cor. 7:31), not having fellowship with sinning brethren (1 Cor. 5:11), and, on the positive side, exhibiting Christlikeness. See note on Acts 15:39 [RSB].

**DO NOT TOUCH ANYTHING UNCLEAR.** Here we see a transition from ceremonial to ethical purity. It is essential for every believer to bring forth the convictions of his heart and apply them on the street where he lives, plays, and works. One whose heart is unclean may mimic Christian behavior in public, some out of hypocrisy and others because they were taught certain standards in their youth. One can even selfishly obey the rules - to stay out of trouble, because it is good for business, or for approval. Ideally, one lives a clean and decent life because he has a clean heart. He lives a clean life because he is a clean person.

**6:18 - I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU.** *"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."* See, again, Rev. 21:3. We should thank God for all His blessings. The privilege of calling Him our Father is one of those blessings. What a privilege it is to be able to call our Creator 'Father'! All born-again Christians may call Him Father.

**SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY.** There are many titles for God in the Bible. "The Lord Almighty" is used in the NT only here and in Revelation. I checked three study Bibles and found that neither commented on this title at this point. That is understandable, but what a place for some sermonizing! He is Lord (Sovereign), and He is Almighty (omnipotent).

**7:1 - HAVING THESE PROMISES.** *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* These promises are the once in 6:16-18.

**LET US CLEANS OURSELVES.** Only God can cleanse, but we have the responsibility for seeking His cleansing. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

**ALL DEFILEMENT OF FLESH AND SPIRIT.** This "includes all sorts filthiness, physical, moral, mental, ceremonial, of flesh and spirit" [12: 238].

**PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.** This is not simply negative abstinence from evil. It refers to a progressive and aggressive growth in personal holiness. One does not suddenly receive sudden complete holiness as a sort of second blessing. Holiness is a matter of a continuous process of growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fear of God is a sense of reverence and awe before God, not the dread of the unknown or fear of a vindictive God.

### **C. Their Repentance Would Bring Joy to Paul and Revival to the Church, 7:2-16.**

**7:2 - MAKE ROOM FOR US IN YOUR HEARTS.** *"Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one."* Paul appeals to the Corinthians to open their hearts to him. He asks them to make a place for him in their hearts as he has made a place for them in his heart.

**WE WRONGED ON ONE.** If every minister of the Gospel could truthfully say "I wronged no one, I corrupted no one, I took advantage of no one," there would be greater confidence in the ministry and fewer jokes about ministers on television. This should apply to money, morals or doctrines. Many preachers who have never wronged anyone morally, nor taken advantage of anyone in financial matters cannot say that they have never corrupted anyone doctrinally.

**7:3 - I DO NOT SPEAK TO CONDEMN YOU.** *“I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.”* Even when he had to deal with controversial issues in a bold manner, his purpose was never to condemn them. They were in his heart to share in death and life.

**7:4 - GREAT IS MY CONFIDENCE IN YOU.** *“Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.”* Some of the members at Corinth had created a lot of problems for Paul, but he had not given up on them. He had confidence in most of the people and had actually boasted of them to other churches.

**I AM OVERFLOWING WITH JOY IN ALL OUR AFFLICTION.** They had to be touched by his attitude, both toward them and toward his afflictions. He has just shared with them something about his trials and tribulations and they knew they had contributed to his afflictions. But in spite of that, He loved them and his heart was overflowing with joy. This is not natural! The only explanation is found in the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

**7:5 - WHEN WE CAME INTO MACEDONIA.** *“For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.”* Paul returns to the account of his trip to Macedonia which he had mentioned in 2:13. As mentioned earlier, he was experiencing such great anxiety that he actually missed opportunities to preach the word in Troas. He says that he was "afflicted on every side."

**CONFLICTS WITHOUT, FEARS WITHIN.** There were threats from others, as well as internal anxiety. His life was in jeopardy in Ephesus and possibly there were still dangers in Philippi. I am sorry Paul wrestled with fear and anxiety, but since he did I thank God that the Holy Spirit inspired him to share it with me. About the time I convince myself that if I really trust the Lord I will not worry about little things, lo and behold, I start worrying about little things. I was amazed at the way I faced a serious heart attack and by-pass surgery. I could not believe the peace the Lord gave me as I considered the many possibilities. The nurses in Rehab were so amazed at the way I faced my situation that they asked me if I would consider teaching stress management! I thought I had the anxiety thing licked. I didn't! All I can do is confess the sin of worry and fear to the Lord and ask Him to forgive me and give me the victory once again.

**7:6 - GOD...COMFORTED US.** *“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus...”* God is concerned about His children and provides comfort for them when they are troubled. This concern is seen in Isaiah 40:1: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." The Gospel of Christ is designed to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.

God sent His Spirit to comfort His children. In fact, one of the most familiar titles for the Holy Spirit is Comforter (see John 14). Here, we see that God also uses other Christians

to comfort His children. Paul had been deeply distressed when he did not find Titus at Troas and in this state of anxiety he pressed on to Macedonia where he found Titus.

**7:7 - BY THE COMFORT.** *“And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.”* When he found Titus he found the comfort he needed. The arrival of Titus with news that the "tearful letter" had been a complete success and that things were much improved in Corinth brought joy and comfort to the Apostle. The joy and comfort Titus found in the Corinthians soon became Paul's comfort.

**7:8 - THOUGH I CAUSED YOU SORRY.** *“For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it--for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while...”* The tearful letter, or the sorrowful letter, caused Paul severe anxiety and genuine sorrow. He had regretted it at first, but now that he has learned the results of the letter, he has no more regrets. It disturbed him to make them sorrowful, but now he is happy he sent the letter. Their repentance made both his sorrow and theirs worth it all. The letter caused them sorrow for a brief time, but their repentance could bring a spirit of revival to the church which could be a blessing for years to come.

**7:9 - TO THE POINT OF REPENTANCE.** *“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.”* There is a difference between sorrow and repentance. A person can feel sorrow and never repent. A man may get drunk and abuse his family one day and the next day feel genuine sorrow, but take no steps to see that it will not happen again. One may commit adultery and later feel guilt, but then almost immediately put himself in a position to be tempted to commit the same sin again. In such case, the man experienced remorse, but not repentance.

People sometimes walk down the aisle in response to a disturbing sermon and take the pastor by the hand and say what ever they think he wants to hear. They will then be baptized and attend a few services, but before long you cannot get them to attend a service. In many cases like this, the person walked down the aisle under conviction, and never repented. Conviction may carry with it deep emotions. Repentance denotes a change in attitude toward sin. It means to turn away from evil. One may be under conviction without repenting, but when one repents, it is because the Holy Spirit has convicted him of sin.

**7:10 - SORROW...THE WILL OF GOD.** *“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”* Godly sorrow or sorry that is according to the will of God produces genuine repentance. The sorrow of the world produces death, but sorrow according to the

will of God produces repentance, "leading to salvation" and everlasting life.

**7:11 - THIS GODLY SORROW.** *“For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.”* They illustrated his point. He is now rejoicing that their sorrow had led to repentance. Their sorrow had worked genuine repentance, which was according to God's will. They had vindicated themselves with reference to Paul's charge by their changed lives.

**7:12 - I WROTE TO YOU.** *“So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.”* He wants them to understand why he had written the tearful letter. It was not for the benefit of the offender (see 2:6), or the offended (i.e., Paul). The real reason was "that our care for you might be made manifest" [12 - 241). This is the correct translation, rather than "your care for us."

**7:13 - WE HAVE BEEN COMFORTED.** *“For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”* The reason was that their sorrow had led to a genuine change of attitude. They had repented. His anxiety has been relieved.

**WE REJOICED...FOR THE JOY OF TITUS.** The Corinthians, in their repentance, brought joy to the heart of Titus and his joy brought much more joy to Paul's heart. Their repentance refreshed the spirit of Titus, thus giving Paul a double reason for joy.

**7:14 - BOASTED TO HIM ABOUT YOU.** *“For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.”* This is a condition of the first class, assumed to be true (If I have boasted to him - and I have...). He had boasted about Christians at Corinth. There were many faithful members there and the trouble was caused by a small minority. The majority had taken a strong stand and put the small group of trouble makers in their place. He now felt vindicated in his boasting. No doubt the boasting was in part to encourage Titus.

His boasting before Titus had proved to be true. This was another reason for Paul to rejoice. Because his assessment was right he had not been put to shame, which would have been the case if they had become hardened rather than repenting.

**7:15 - HIS AFFECTION ABOUND.** *“His affection abounds all the more toward you, as*



*he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.*” As Titus remembered their obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his affection for them grew, or abounded. Every minister of the Gospel understands this. If he doesn't, he should leave the ministry. If he does not love God's people and if he does not have the potential for a greater capacity for loving the Lord's work and His church, he has no business in the ministry.

**WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.** Titus had gone to them with a stern message and they had trembled at his words. They responded as God would have them respond. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:5, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.” Again, in Philippians 2:12 he wrote, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

**7:16 - I REJOICE.** *“I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”* The outcome of the tearful letter and the personal ministry of Titus brought joy, comfort, and hope to Paul's heart. It is easy to see from these verses why II Corinthians has been called both the most personal and the most emotional of Paul's letter. The rewards of the ministry are seldom material, but no material reward could have replaced Paul's joy in the way the Lord worked out this problem. The churches to which his had ministered brought great joy to him and he expressed it to them: "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). We should know this joy in the Lord, as Paul wrote to the saints in Philippi, " Rejoice in the Lord alway: [and] again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

#### **IV. THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS IN JUDEA WAS AN OCCASION FOR SOME INSPIRED TEACHING ON GIVING, 8:1-9:15.**

##### **A. Basic Principle for Giving in the Example of the Churches of Macedonia, 8:1-6.**

After a lapse of a year or more, Paul again brings up the collection first mentioned in I Cor. 16:1-4. At that time he had given instructions concerning the collection and transmission of the money, but in the intervening period of tension between him and some of the members of the Corinthian church their interest in the collection would have waned, and “he would have judged it unexpedient to remind them of it. But now, with the restoration of happier relations, the subject could be raised again, and Paul raises it, with all the delicacy and tact at his command” [4 - 220]. He wants them to give generously, yet voluntarily.

**8:1 - THE GRACE OF GOD.** *“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia...”* The grace of God, with reference to our salvation, means the unmerited love or favor of God by which we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). Here it refers to the love and generosity of the churches of Macedonia as demonstrated by their collection for the saints in Jerusalem. In a sense it refers to their participation in the grace of God which is manifested to man. The province was devastated by the Romans who occupied their land, yet they gave beyond their means.

Almsgiving was an important part of Judaism and “Jesus assumed that His disciples would continue to practice it, but He stressed the importance of avoiding ostentation and self-righteousness (see Mt. vi. 1-4)” [14 - 109]. This passage does not specifically lay down the New Testament law concerning tithing, but it does provide us with basic truths about Christian giving (tithes and offerings).

In verses 1-6 some basic principles of New Testament stewardship are outlined. First, Christian giving is a grace. Secondly, it can be practiced even during a time of poverty. Thirdly, it is a form of fellowship. Finally, the individual should first give (dedicate) himself to the Lord.

**8:2 - A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION.** *“That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”* Again, the word for affliction means to be under severe pressure, to be severely pressed down, almost crushed under the weight. From this and from Philippians we see that the Macedonian Christians were going through an especially intense period of tribulation. This fact made their generosity more amazing to Paul and it should have made the challenge to those in Corinth who had begun to collect the offering and then lost interest. Their example also puts the average Christian today to shame. Far too many follow the example of the Corinthians.

**DEEP POVERTY.** Paul makes this point here and in Philippians 4:15-16: "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." In Philippians he stressed the fact that their giving was sacrificial.

God is to be praised for accepting the gift of the poor as well as the wealthy. In Mark 12:42-43 we find the attitude of Jesus toward the gift of the poor: “And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.”

**THE WEALTH OF THEIR LIBERALITY.** God is more pleased with the widow's two mites given to glorify Him than a vast fortune given in such a way as to attract attention to the giver, given grudgingly to avoid embarrassment, or with mixed motives in which God is not the recipient of all the glory.

**8:3 - I TESTIFY.** *“For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord...”* Paul had personal knowledge of their generosity and the Holy Spirit inspired him to share his testimony. There is a right time and way and a wrong time and way to praise people for their giving. We must be careful when we begin to praise others for their giving, their talent, their purity, or their service. There are times when the listeners know the individual better than the speaker. Some preachers have lost credibility with some congregations because of this very thing.

Here the testimony is appropriate. The Holy Spirit is the divine author and He saw to it that this testimony was included. It would seem that the example of the Macedonian Christians would inspire the Corinthian saints rather than turn them off.

**ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY.** This is and always has been an acceptable guideline in giving the tithes and offerings. In the first place the tithe is one-tenth of one's income. It belongs to God and when the believer brings the tithe to the storehouse on the Lord's Day, he is simply giving God what already belongs to Him. He can only give an offering after he has given his tithe. The offering, which is that given beyond the tithe, is to be given according to one's ability at the time. An amount that would be a sacrifice one year may not be a challenge at all another year.

A former roommate of the writer had tried, without success, to convince his brother that every Christian should tithe. One occasion when the relative came for a visit, he waited until everyone was seated, then jumped up and exclaimed, "I have to lock my gun cabinet!" When asked why it was so important to lock the gun cabinet at that moment, he said, "If a man will rob God, he may steal from me."

**OF THEIR OWN ACCORD.** Paul did not have to beg them to give. When they learned of the need they wanted to give and gave without solicitation. They gave beyond their ability and of their own accord.

My mother was one of the most unselfish people I have ever known. She never announced what she was doing, but from time to time we discovered that she was providing food for one family, or clothing for another. She had a store until surgery for a brain tumor forced her to give it up. She saved clothing for her children and grand children. I found some shirts and pants once and someone told me she had put them back for her pastor, a

seminary student. Having had a son in seminary, she understood the need.

But it was after her surgery when the family started going through her books that we discovered the extent of her generosity. No examples will be given because it was her choice to keep it a secret. It was interesting that many of the people to whom she had extended credit seemed to think that her illness canceled their debt. Bills continued to mount, but they refused to pay what they owed her. She refused to send bills. I decided that I could live with her illness and eventual death, and with the way “friends” treated her. But I don’t know how I would have handled it if I had learned that she had been the one who was dishonest.

We knew that Mother was a faithful tither and gave an offering beyond that. It was a surprise to learn that while she was treasurer of her church, there were times when she would get a call from the bank advising her that they were refusing payment on a check to the church because of insufficient funds. Rather than embarrassing a fellow member, she would simply pay the amount and take the check home and destroy it, or hide it.

If she had been a wealthy person this would have been remarkable, but she never had much money. She first gave herself to God and she just put others ahead of herself. There were times, especially if there had been a crop failure, when we would have been below the poverty line, by today's standards. But she never knew it, because she was always involved with someone less fortunate.

**8:4 - BEGGING US.** *“Begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints...”* Literally, “with much entreaty begging of us the favor and the partnership in the ministry to the saints” [12 - 243]. Apparently, Paul had been reluctant to press them to help with the collection because of their poverty. So they begged Paul and his fellow missionaries for the privilege of participating in the gift for the poor saints. Their poverty did not blind them to the needs of those who had a greater need than they.

Paul is writing this somewhat delicately, but the example of the Macedonian saints would put those of Corinth to open shame. It was not his goal to embarrass them, but to motivate them. Generosity, like greed can be contagious. Not only do we find some Christians who are stingy while others are generous; but we find that some churches are known for being generous, while others are stingy.

**8:5 - THEY FIRST GAVE THEMSELVES.** *“And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”* This will explain such generosity every time! This is one of the basic principles in Christian giving All acceptable Christian stewardship begins with the believer first dedicating himself to the Lord and then giving out of this sense of this commitment to God. If one first gives himself to the Lord,

you will never have to worry about his money. As Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21).

**8:6 - CONSEQUENTLY WE URGED TITUS.** *“So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.”* The generosity of the Macedonians prompted Paul to urge Titus to go back to Corinth; and as he had begun the work of collecting the offering for the relief of the destitute saints in Judea, he should try to persuade them to bring it to completion. Titus was obviously the right person to send. He succeeded at Corinth where some of the most prominent names in church history failed.

### **B. Example of Jesus Motivates Believers in Helping Those in Need, 8:7-15.**

**8:7 - JUST AS YOU ABOUND IN EVERYTHING.** *“But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.”* We must not let the problems at Corinth cause us to lose sight of one other thing. The church at Corinth was one of the most gifted church of the first century. They abounded in the gifts of the spirit, as we see in I. Corinthians 12-14.

In verses 7-15 we find four reasons for giving. First, that we abound in Christian stewardship. Secondly, to prove the reality of the believer's love. Thirdly, to imitate the love of Christ. And last, to help meet the needs of others.

**SEE THAT YOU ABOUND.** They abounded in the gifts of tongues, prophecy, teaching, but they had not abounded in this collection for the believers in Jerusalem. Now it was time for them to abound in this offering.

**8:8 - NOT SPEAKING THIS AS A COMMAND.** *“I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.”* He is not putting pressure on them to give. He is not commanded them to give. He wants them to give voluntarily.

**PROVING.** Testing for the purpose of proving. The collection was not the most important test of God's love, but it was a good one.

**8:9 - THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”* How did they know? And how much did they

know? After all, these people had been totally pagan a short time before this. If they had spent the same amount of time in worship and Bible study as the average church member today, how much would they know of the grace of Jesus Christ? If they had grown no more from the point of their conversion than the average church member today, they could make a strong case for ignorance. Yet Paul knew what they knew because of his teaching ministry with them and because of others who had labored with them.

When the believer commits himself to the study of the Word under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the divine Author Who inspired the writing illuminates his heart that he will understand the grace of God. Today, he will need help from the pastor, Sunday School teacher, commentaries and other helps in order to interpret difficult passages; but he will know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ from his own search of the Scripture.

**THOUGH HE WAS RICH.** People love stories about riches, stories about rich people. The writer helped plan the program for the annual meeting of the Morehouse Baptist Association which was meeting for that session with the First Baptist Church, Bastrop, Louisiana. The Moderator asked me and others about making a change in the program. Miss Ann Criswell had been scheduled to sing and she was accompanied by Miss June Hunt, daughter of H. L. Hunt, who was a dedicated Christian and wonderful soloist. We asked her to sing for us. The man who introduced her could not hide his awe as he introduced her as the daughter of the richest man in the world. The speaker who followed her was Emory Wallace, pastor of First Baptist Church, DeRidder. He graciously thanked Miss Hunt for the special music and then added, “her father may be the richest man in the world, but my Father owns the whole world.” All over the auditorium people were nodding, and no one more sincerely than Miss Hunt.

**HE BECAME POOR.** Later, from a Roman prison Paul would write that 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” (Phil. 2:6-7).

Many people who have possessed great wealth, have lost it. Some have even given it away. Howard Hughes was among the richest people in the world, but for all the good it did him in the last few years of his life, he might have been better off if he had been on welfare. He was practically a slave to men who controlled his estate and were allegedly trying to rob him of his fortune with a bogus will.

Jesus voluntarily became poor. No one could have taken anything away from Him. He became poor for us that he might provide salvation for us.

**8:10 - I GIVE MY OPINION.** *“I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your*

*advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.”* Paul gave a deliberate opinion, or judgment, but not a command. He did not want them to give under pressure, but voluntarily from a loving heart.

**THE FIRST TO BEGIN.** A year earlier, these Corinthian had been the first to begin collecting this offering. At that time, they did not have to be encouraged to begin it, they expressed a desire to do it.

There are some Christians who are quick to begin a new fund raising drive, often putting others on the spot because they do not know all the circumstances. Sometimes those who are first to suggest the project are the first to abandon it. Then other members have a choice. Sometimes they lose interest and the church may be embarrassed because of a poorly supported program. The church may maintain a fund for years that everyone has lost interested in, but because the money was designated for a specific cause, they know it would be controversial to move it to another fund. The church may be forced to use funds need elsewhere to complete the program to avoid hindering their witness in the community.

It has been suggested that the faith that falters before the finish was faulty from the first. The Corinthians had the enthusiasm to begin, but lacked the commitment to see it through. Before you force your program on others, be sure it is worthy of their support and then plan to see it through to completion. It is easier to start a new program than it is to jump-start one that has run down.

**8:11 - THE READINESS TO DESIRE IT.** *“But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.”* They were eager begin the collection. They were quick the pledge. He now challenges them to show the same eagerness to complete it.

**OUT OF YOUR ABILITY.** The same principle applies to the Corinthian saints that applies to those at Philippi. They are to give according to what they have. In making an appeal for a ministry, one minister challenged the people to “give until it hurts, and then give until it feels good.” Whatever the dollar amount, one's gift to the Lord, or for His ministry, should reflect his love for the Lord. As a matter of fact, it will!

**8:12 - IF THE READINESS IS PRESENT.** *“For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.”* God wants your heart first. If He has your heart He will have your support. Remember that God knows your heart. Your neighbor may give a hundred times as much as you can give. God does not compare your gift with his. He judges it by what is in your heart - what is really in your heart and not what you may try to convince yourself and others is there.

**ACCORDING TO WHAT A MAN HAS.** Communism has been a miserable failure in the application of their philosophy, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” Communism is materialistic and humanistic. They failed to recognize the fact that God created man a spiritual being with freedom to choose to follow Him or to rebel against Him. Man chose to rebel in what we call the Fall. Since the Fall, any person who is not recreated by the saving power and grace of God is going to have a problem with that philosophy. It is his nature to be self-centered, to want to receive more than he gives.

However, before the average Christian condemns the Communists, he should understand that dedicated communists give a lot more to the Communist cause than the average Christian gives to the cause of Christ. The Communist, at least during the period of aggression, reportedly gave thirty per cent of their income to the Communist Party. The Christian often feels that he has excelled if he gives ten per cent. It has been reported that twenty per cent of Southern Baptists give eighty per cent of the money given to the Lord's work. The other eighty per cent given the remaining twenty percent of the money. We are not giving according to our ability or circumstances.

**8:13 - NOT FOR THE EASE OF OTHERS.** *“For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality...”* Note carefully what he is saying. He is not saying that the collection was not for the relief of the needy. What he is saying is that the purpose was not to provide relief for others by afflicting them. The purpose was not “that others should be eased and you burdened” [4 - 223]. It is possible that this charge was made during the recent conflict between Paul and some of the Corinthians. If so, he answers that charge here.

**8:14 - YOUR ABUNDANCE BEING A SUPPLY FOR THEIR WANT.** *“At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality...”* Paul is not saying that you should help them because some day you may need their help. Possibly you have had someone help you and when you expressed your appreciation, he said, "That's all right, some day I may need your help." I recall the time a man stopped to help me when I had a problem with my automobile. I thanked him in the customary way of that day and that place by asking what I could do to repay him for the time and work. He replied, "Nothing, but when you see someone else stopped like this, you stop and help them."

The prospects of the Church at Jerusalem ever being in a position to help the church at Corinth were very slim. Another possibility is that “Paul means (as in Rom. 15.27) that the gifts which the Jerusalem church bestowed were spiritual, while it received material gifts in return” [4 - 223].

**EQUALITY.** Equal or fair. He means that it will balance out, not on the ledger sheet at



Corinth or Jerusalem, but before the Lord.

**8:15 - AS IT IS WRITTEN.** *“As it is written, ‘HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK.’”* He quotes from Exodus 16:18 to remind them of God's principle in providing manna in the wilderness according to the needs of the people: “And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

### **C. Care in Handling Offerings Motivates Faithful Giving, 8:16-9:5.**

**8:16 - THANKS BE TO GOD.** *“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.”* God is praised for what Paul saw Him doing in Titus and believed He would soon be doing in the hearts of the Corinthians. We should acknowledge Him as the One to be praised and not accept personal credit.

**WHO PUTS.** God had placed an on going zealous concern in the heart of Titus for the Corinthian church. If we are open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, He will place in our heart a genuine concern for others in general, and for individuals in particular.

Paul demonstrates remarkable wisdom in maintaining integrity with respect to the collection for the Jerusalem saints. At no time does he handle the funds directly. Further, he sees to it that there is corporate accountability, with no one individual being entrusted with the offering. These are valuable lessons for personal financial integrity and for making wise decisions as to what Christian ministries one should support. Where integrity and accountability are absent, generosity in giving is not a wise or responsible course of action. The authentic and genuine minister and ministry will seek to be credible "in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (v. 21) [BSB].

**8:17 - BEING HIMSELF VERY EARNEST.** *“For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.”* Titus had accepted the appeal concerning the completion of the collection and on his own initiative had gone to Corinth. In other words, Titus was motivated by the zealous concern God had placed in his heart and not by a command from the apostle.

**8:18 - WE HAVE SENT.** *“We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches...”* The word “We” might suggest that Paul is referring to the other missionaries who accompanied him. But as seen earlier he

is probably using the "ministerial we" in referring to his own decision.

**THE BROTHER.** We do not know who this brother was. Some have suggested that it was Luke, but there is no real basis for that identification. Ryrie suggests that he may have been either Luke or Trophimus. Whoever this brother was, he seems to have been well known to the church for his preaching of the Gospel. Titus, this unnamed brother and a third brother (also unnamed, v. 22), acted as trustees of the money to insure complete propriety in the handling of it (v. 21).

The church must always be very careful in the handling of the Lord's money. Most churches adopt a system for counting and depositing tithes and offerings so that protects both the church and those involved from any suspicion of wrong doing. The treasurer makes a regular report which the church must approve in a regular business meeting.

Carelessness or dishonesty in handling the Lord's money is no laughing matter, but the world is filled with people who make jokes about reports concerning the church and money. Following the shocking news of greed or fraud in some television ministries, all television evangelists saw serious cut-backs in receipts. People lost faith and television comedians had a field-day. The world is looking for any hint of scandal in the church. It is unfortunate when it finds a scandal, first because of the harm it does that church, but also because of the negative effect it has on other churches.

A man on my father's Mississippi delta farm suddenly became very popular with some of the members of a local church. He almost never attended the services, he was known for gambling and drunkenness. A member of the church explained his sudden popularity. The treasurer, he said, got into a crap-game and lost all his money and then proceeded to lose the church's money. Almost in a state of panic, he and a friend went to get "George" who promptly won back all the church's money. The story got a lot of laughs, but the church lost credibility. And that's not funny!

It is refreshing to find a Christian like this brother whose reputation for integrity had spread throughout the churches. When I became pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Bastrop, Louisiana, Ollie Canterbury, one of our deacons, made our weekly deposit at a local bank. The auditors counted the money and deposited it in a bank bag. The bank had the key, but Mr. Canterbury did not have one. He didn't want a key. One of the other deacons was trying to help the new pastor get acquainted with the people. Referring to Mr. Canterbury, he said, "If I had a million dollars, I would trust it with Ollie Canterbury just as soon as I would the Chase Manhattan Bank." A pastor loves to hear reports like that about members.

**8:19 - APPOINTED BY THE CHURCHES.** *"And not only this, but he has also been*

*appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness...*" The point is that this brother was appointed by the churches and not appointed by Paul. It was wise of Paul to let the churches appoint one who would accompany Titus to Corinth and then travel with Paul and others to Jerusalem with the offering for the impoverished saints. There were many, the Judizers in particular, who despised Paul and looked for any opportunity to criticize him. They would have been quick to question his motives in appointing a "friend" as a traveling companion on such a long journey. How could they know all the money reached the destitute people for whom it was intended? They might never see either of them again!

**8:20 - TAKING PRECAUTION.** *"Taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift..."* This was a wise precaution and one the church should always take. Two charges can destroy the witness of a church more quickly than almost any other. One is the charge of dishonesty or deception in money matters. The other is the charge of immorality. Precautions should be taken in both areas.

**8:21 - WHAT IS HONORABLE.** *"For we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."* Of all people, Christians should have regard for that which is honorable. In the first place, Paul was concerned with that which was honorable before God. If one was dishonest with God, he will almost certainly try to convince others that he is honest. We must always put God's approval first, but for Paul it was not enough to appear as honorable before God. Other people must see that what he does is honorable. "Paul took the utmost pains that no suspicion could be attached to him in this collection" [12 - 246].

**8:22 - OUR BROTHER.** *"We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you."* This is the second unnamed brother (see vs, 18). He does not identify him, but it is obvious that they knew him. There is a time to identify those who render a service for the Lord, but there may be times when we should not identify them by name. There are times when we may rob them of a blessing by identifying them publicly and praising them for their work. There are times when it is more important that only God knows what they are doing.

**OFTEN TESTED.** Because this brother in Christ had been "often tested" Paul had complete confidence in him. It has been suggested that this brother may have been either Apollos or Tychicus, but we do not know his identity.

**8:23 - AS FOR TITUS.** *"As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ."* Titus is Paul's

partner and fellow worker. It is interesting that Paul relates to his young friend horizontally and not vertically. A pastor, evangelist, missionary or Christian administrator can learn a lot from this. The staff member may be accountable to the pastor or administrator, but the pastor should always see him as a partner and fellow worker before the Lord. For one thing, it helps when the staff member is given freedom to let the Holy Spirit bless him and direct his work. It is also important for the staff member to avoid abusing this relationship.

**MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCH.** They are ones sent out (apostles in a general sense) by the churches and responsible to the churches for the handling of the collection. True messengers of the church are always “a glory to Christ.”

**8:24 - SHOW THEM PROOF OF YOUR LOVE.** *“Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”* Paul had boasted to Titus about the Corinthians’ loyalty to him personally (7:14), “so now he had boasted to him and his two companions about their prompt and generous contribution to the Jerusalem fund: he expresses his confidence that on this occasion, as on the former, they will not let him down, but give proof, before the other contributing churches of the genuineness of their Christian love” [4 - 225]. It is remarkable that in spite of the problems he had had with them, he still boasts of them. The trouble makers were in the minority. Many of the members had remained loyal to him, even if some of them had wavered for a time.

**9:1 - IT IS SUPERFLUOUS.** *“For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints...”* He does write to them about this ministry to the saints, but the writing should have been superfluous. Whose idea was the offering for the saints in Jerusalem in the first place? It was theirs! So, if a reminder was superfluous in any church it was the one at Corinth where the plan for the offering originated.

**9:2 - I KNOW YOUR READINESS.** *“For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.”* He knew the eagerness with which they had begun the offering and he had boasted of their example to Macedonian churches. The zeal of the churches of Achaia had provided an incentive for other churches. But now, if they do not fulfill their promise it would be a disgrace to them as well as to Paul.

**9:3 - TITUS.** *“But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared...”* Paul had sent Titus and his two companions ahead to challenge them to complete the collection so that his boasting would not be empty and so that they would not be caught off guard.

**9:4 - IF ANY MACEDONIANS COME WITH ME.** *“Otherwise if any Macedonians*

*come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to speak of you--will be put to shame by this confidence."*

This is a condition of the third class. They may come and they may not, but it is a good possibility that they will accompany him. He has handled this challenge very delicately up to this point, but now his challenge becomes more bold. He wanted them to be fully prepared when he arrived. If he was accompanied by Macedonians he, Paul (not the Corinthians), would be put to shame. To say that they would be put to shame might seem like a threat, so he says he will be put to shame and trusts that they will spare him that shame. After all, if he is put to shame, it will be because of his confidence in them.

**9:5 - I THOUGHT IT NECESSARY.** *"So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness."* It was both expedient and necessary to send the brethren ahead. The Corinthians had begun eagerly, but then faltered in collecting the offering they had promised. He had urged the brethren to go on ahead of him to both to challenge them to complete the offering and to prevent embarrassment when Paul arrived, possibly with Macedonians. After all, it was their example he had held up to the Macedonians to give them the incentive to gather their part of the money.

**BOUNTIFUL GIFT.** *"Your previously promised bountiful gift.* Wow! Is this psychology or sarcasm? Paul had been very tactful, but now he subtly slips in this caustic remark, the significance of which they would not miss.

**NOT OF COVETOUSNESS.** He wanted the offering to be voluntary and from a heart filled with Christian love. He did not want covetousness to be demonstrated in their giving. He did not want them to give grudgingly. God's people should bring both their tithes and offerings freely, without coercion. They should give generously, even when giving sacrificially. If they give grudgingly, the church can still use their money to pay the bills but the individuals themselves will not receive a blessing through their giving.

#### **D. In Giving You Reap What You Sow, 9:6-15.**

**9:6 - HE WHO SOWS.** *"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."* Here Paul states one of the basic laws we find in the Bible: God's Law of Sowing and Reaping. We find references to it in the Old Testament: (1) "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:" (Hos. 8:7). (2) "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy" (Hos. 8:7). Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-8).

The emphasis here is on giving. The principle is simple and fair: He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

**9:7 - LET EACH ONE.** *“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* There were many members of the church but each one must find God’s will for himself. Each person must examine his own heart.

**NOT GRUDGING.** It seems that some there were some then, as now, who might give, not of a generous heart, but grudging. There are always those like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4) who wanted the reputation for generosity, when in fact they are selfish and greedy. *“The Christian gift of giving ought to be exercised as an act of worship with preparation, purpose, and joy. Giving that is reluctant or coerced is not pleasing to God, "for God loves a cheerful [hilaros, Gk.] giver" [BSB]*

**GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.** The cheerful Christian giver is the believer who honors both the First and the Second Greatest Commandments. The cheerful giver will have even more reason to give cheerfully as He receives God's blessings As we read in Malachi 3:10, *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”*

**9:8 - GOD IS ABLE.** *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed...”* The point Paul is making here is that God is able to supply the generous Christian with enough to supply his own needs and enough to enable him to give to worthy causes. No amount of money can purchase the blessings that come through giving in the right spirit to the right cause.

**ALL SUFFICIENCY.** Paul shows that he was familiar with Stoicism, a philosophy with which his readers were well acquainted. Paul takes this word from Greek philosophy and *“applies it to the Christian view of life as independent of circumstances. But he does not accept the view of the Cynics in the avoidance of society” [12 - 248-249].* It expresses the

attitude of always being able to rely on one's own resources, without having to depend on others and it “describes the contentment which self- sufficiency engenders” [14 - 127]. The Christian finds contentment and joy in the all-sufficiency of God, not in his own sufficiency.

**9:9 - AS IT IS WRITTEN.** *“As it is written, ‘HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.’* Paul quotes Psalm 92:3, 9.

**HE SCATTERED ABROAD.** As one sowing seed. In verse 6 the metaphor is used of the individual who gives either sparingly or bountifully. Here God is the one scattering abroad (as one sowing) to the poor. God will give the generous giver the means to continue giving. This principle is seen in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:6-7, KJV).

**HE GAVE TO THE POOR.** Abraham has been quoted as saying that the Lord must love the poor because He made so many of them. Little children sing, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” There are countless poor children who have little more about which to sing. But how does He give to the poor? In the first place every drop of water and every piece of bread is a gift from God. The oxygen we breathe and the gravity that holds us on the earth are gifts from God. He also gives to the poor through His church and through His children.

The church has turned over the care of the poor to the government and in doing so it has lost credibility as well as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God for all people. The poor, of all people, need to be reminded of God’s love for them. Politicians may use the poor to serve their own interests. Let’s face it, it would not serve the purpose of many liberal politicians to get all the poor people off the welfare roles. They scare these people with horror tells about what will happen if the other party wins the election, and then make promises they can never keep in order to control masses. And it works because the media supports them. America has been moving more and more toward socialism since the Great Depression. People accepted it because they were led to believe that the alternative was another depression.

When Jesus said, “For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me” (Matt.26:11), He was not saying that we should not give to the poor. What He was saying was that the woman who had anointed His head with the costly perfume had but this one opportunity to do this for Him. She had a lifetime to give to the poor.

Where I grew up in the Mississippi Delta I often heard the comment, “He will give you the shirt off his back.” This was a testimony to his friend’s generosity and compassion. I have often said that my mother was so concerned for the poor in our area that she never

waited for any of us to “give someone the shirt off his back.” If there was a need she would give someone the shirt off my back, and no one would ever know it but the person wearing the shirt. Of course I would catch on when I saw what I thought was my shirt walking down the road.

It was a proud day when I had grown enough to wear one of my father’s shirts. Daddy had a sport shirt that I thought was the one of the most beautiful shirts I had seen and I was honored when he let me wear it to church one Sunday. I also wore it to school a few times, as I recall. Then the day came when my mother decided to take another step in helping some neighbors - who, to be perfectly honest, never did much to help themselves. My parents persuaded the father to come to our house and take a bath and shave. Then Mother gave him some of Daddy’s clothes. I don’t like to recall how I felt when he walked out wearing “my” favorite shirt. They started out to town to try to find work for this man, and since the cab of the farm pick-up was crowded, Billy (not his real name) climbed into the back. As they drove away, Billy was standing in the bed of the truck facing the front, looking cleaner than I had ever seen him, “my” beautiful shirt flopping in the wind.

What never occurred to Mother and Daddy was clearly revealed to them when they stopped in town and got out of the truck. Billy dropped down from the back of the truck and then they realized that they should have asked him to let them keep his snuff in the cab until they got to town.

Billy had taken a dip of snuff and when he needed to spit it looked as though he had simply spit into the wind and it all blew back on that beautiful shirt. There are people who would say, “I tried to help him this time, but never again.” But not my mother.

The ladies in our church were discussing this family when a lady who worked in a local country grocery store announced that you couldn’t help those people. “Those kids come into the store all the time and buy candy. If they have money to buy candy they can buy groceries.” She was adamantly opposed to helping the family and made her opinion known in the strongest terms. The pastor’s wife responded by pointing out that you could not deny the children food or clothing because their parents made some bad decisions, and surely you could not blame those children for wanting a nickel for a candy bar, like all the other children whose parents gave them a nickel and let them walk to the store.

Rejecting the lady’s argument against helping the family, ladies agreed to donate a sum of money and let someone go to the Bargain Center in town and purchase some clothes and take them to the children. As soon as it was decided, this lady volunteered to take the money, make the purchase, and deliver the clothes to the family. There was little doubt on anyone’s mind who take credit for the generous gift. Even that would not discourage my mother. Every year she had two or three gardens, and some years she would have us to plant corn or peas so she could share with our pastor and the needy in the community.



When Christians give to the poor in the right spirit, the Lord can use that to bring the lost among the poor to salvation. When the government becomes all things to all people they place their faith in the government, or in some politician, and lose respect for the church.

**9:10 - HE WHO SUPPLIES SEED.** *“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness...”*

God will supply the needs of those who would sow bountifully (vs. 6). Literally, “your seed for sowing.” God expects us to sow bountifully and He provides the seed we are to sow. The point here is the certainty of what God will do for the one who sows bountifully. “God is described as the universal Provider in language taken from Is. lv. 10” [14 - 127]. There is no support in this verse for those television personalities who continually tell their audience that their gift to that particular ministry is seed money. According to their claim, if you give them your seed money, God will bless you with great financial returns.

**9:11 - YOU WILL BE ENRICHED.** *“You will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”* This is a principle emphasized throughout this passage. The riches are not always financial. There are many godly people who give sacrificially, but never show a monetary profit from it. They do not expect to become wealthy by ministering to the needs of others, but they know that God will provide their needs. They will be enriched in the things that no one can take away from them; things they will not have to leave behind when this life is over.

**9:12 - THE MINISTRY OF THIS SERVICE.** *“For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.”*

Ryrie points out four things verses 12-14 teach us about the gift of money. It will (1) it will supply need (v. 12); (2) be a cause for thanksgiving (v. 12); prove their obedience (v. 13); (4) draw the Jerusalem Christians to them (v. 14, yearn for you) [21 - Footnotes].

**SERVICE.** The Greek word carries two meanings, public and work. He has in mind public service, either in worship to God or in ministry to the needs of others. Our word "liturgy" comes from the Greek word.

**FULLY SUPPLYING.** Or “fill up,” meaning to fill by adding to something. The Corinthian Christians were simply adding to the gifts of other churches in order to complete the offering. This principle is followed by many Christian denominations. The Cooperative Program, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925, is a superb example. Today, more than forty thousand autonomous Southern Baptist churches determine what percentage of their budget they will give to mission causes through the Cooperative Program. At the time of this writing I am on the Executive

Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Board of Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources (formerly the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board). During the past several months I have voted on a twenty-two million dollar budget for the Louisiana Baptist Convention and a four hundred, twenty million dollar budget for LifeWay. It has been my privilege to see the Lord's money given and dispersed to many causes.

Churches determine what they will give to help "fill up" or supply these budgetary needs. No one assess them one cent. The churches depend upon faithful stewards to meet local budgetary needs, and denominational agencies depend upon the generous gifts of the churches in order to accomplish their mission.

The cooperative effort in the offering for the saints in Jerusalem is a pattern for this cooperative effort in an effort to honor the Great Commission. Churches give to these cause with a conviction that it is the Lord's will for them to do so, and with confidence that the denominational agency will practice good stewardship in every cent that is entrusted to them.

**MANY THANKSGIVINGS TO GOD.** In addition to fully supplying the needs of the saints in Jerusalem, their gift and will overflow unto many thanksgiving to God.

**9:13 - PROOF GIVEN BY THIS MINISTRY.** *"Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all..."* This ministry will prove to the saints in Jerusalem their faith in God and their love for the Jerusalem church.

**THEY WILL GLORIFY GOD.** Actually, both the Christian who were giving the gift and the Jerusalem saints who received the offering would glorify God. "The Jerusalem Christians will welcome the gift as the visible evidence of the Gentiles' obedience in acknowledging the gospel, and will glorify God for his grace shown to them and through them" [4 - 228].

**9:14 - THEY...YEARN FOR YOU.** *"While they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you."* The recipients of the gifts will make the givers of the gifts recipients of their affection as they long for them "because of the surpassing grace of God" in all those who shared with them. Their generosity was a spontaneous overflow of the grace of God in their lives.

**9:15 - THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT!** The saints in Macedonia and Achaia were due a word of appreciation, but God is their real benefactor and deserves the greatest thanksgiving. Every person who renders a service to the Lord should remember his limitations and praise the Lord Who gives us the gift of His Spirit to accomplish His work. Paul expressed this idea in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

## **V. PAUL RETURNS TO THE DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY, 10:1-12:21.**

## **A. He Answers the Critics by Establishing the Authority of His Apostleship, 10:1-18.**

There is an abrupt and to some a very disturbing change from the end of chapter nine to the beginning of chapter ten. In fact, the change is so radical that many modern students have concluded that II Corinthians is not one complete letter but fragments of two or three letters. This is based on the subject matter and Paul's attitude and intensity. Chapter nine closes with high praise and thanksgiving for the faithfulness he was sure they would demonstrate in gathering the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Chapter ten begins on a combative note as Paul goes to war with his critics.

In 1 Corinthians Paul mentions a prior letter (Corinthians A) which is lost to us. We have I Corinthians (Corinthians B) and 2 Corinthians (Corinthians D). In this epistle he refers to a letter (Cor. C), written between the two in our canon. Some feel that parts of Corinthians A and C have been lost, but fragments saved in II Corinthians. They believe that this section, chapters 10-13, was originally a part of the "tearful letter."

This writer appreciates the strong case they make in support of this view, but rejects this theory in favor of the early view that we have, preserved by God in the Bible, Corinthians B and D (1 and 2 Corinthians). The early church and the early Church Fathers considered this epistle a unit. The view that it is a collection of fragments is a rather late development. If we accept the fragmented theory we are left with another problem. If chapters 10-13 is a part of Corinthians C and the balance of that letter was lost, then that means that there was inspired Scripture out there somewhere which God was unable to preserve in our Bible.

There are four great miracles associated with the Scripture. The first supernatural fact is divine source (and the fact that He would communicate with His creation). The second miracle is the inspiration of all the Scripture by the Holy Spirit (it is God-breathed). The third fact is the miracle of illumination (The divine Author indwells the Christian to help him understand it). The fourth miracle is the miracle of preservation. If inspired Scripture has been lost here, how do we know that this has not happened in numerous other books? Of course, the Holy Spirit might have inspired an editor to add this passage, but that raises further questions about the Scripture.

This section consists of a strong rebuke, not of the whole Christian community, but of trouble-makers whom the apostle calls "false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ" (11:13). "The apostle disputed these troublemongers' claims to be 'servants of righteousness' (11:15) and mockingly called them 'super-apostles' (11:5; 12:11)" [1 - 146].

These false apostles opposed Paul and tried to alienate him from the Corinthian church. They attacked him personally and they attacked his apostleship. They wanted to destroy him. Some writers, like A. T. Robertson, identify these false apostles as Judaizers, which is possible. However, a careful comparison with other Pauline Epistles (Galatians and Colossians) does not support this absolutely. We know what the Judaizers taught, but we are not told what these false apostles were teaching.

What we do know is that they were Jews from Judea who loathed Paul and tried to destroy his ministry. They felt superior to him and to the Corinthians. They felt morally, intellectually, and spiritually superior to him. They attacked Paul's appearance, his teaching and his apostleship.

Paul was equipped for spiritual warfare and he was not about to be intimidated by any enemy. They interpreted his meekness as weakness; his humility as cowardice. In fact, Paul was a man of peace and he found this kind of in-fighting with fellow Christians very distasteful. The boasting which they forced on him went against the grain. This counter attack was stressful to a man of peace. He promoted peace within the fellowship:

1. Romans 12:16: Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.
2. Ephesians 4:3: Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
3. Romans 14:19: Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Paul's desire for peace did not go so far as to seek peace at any price. He wrote to the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (16:17). In this case he could not avoid the enemy. They were attacking him and trying to take over the church, which would have destroyed it. He had to rebuke them in the strongest terms.

**10:1 - NOW I PAUL MYSELF.** *"Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!"* Possibly Paul takes the pen at this point as he begins the very personal and emotional defense of his ministry as he did in Gal. 6:11. There are those who say that Paul would never follow the last few verses of chapter nine with such a harsh attack on his critics. However, it is possible that what we have in 10:1 is a transitional statement which signals the rather radical change. He now begins a vigorous personal defense as well as a defense of his apostleship and ministry.

**URGE YOU.** He appeals to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Most of what they knew on that subject, they had probably learned from Paul. Human nature is not by nature either meek or gentle. Granted, there are many unsaved people who seem to have a more gentle nature than a lot of professing Christians. Sadly, many people would probably state that some of the most haughty, arrogant, and abrasive people they have ever known have been some church member. Jesus was both meek (without being weak) and gentle (without being passive). Paul urges that, even in the process of adding a sarcastic note about a charge someone had evidently made against him.

**MEEK WHEN FACE.** Paul might have been meek and peaceful, but when the time comes to engage the enemy his attitude seems to have been that the best defense is a good offence. From the

context it would seem that his critics had charged that he was humble, even cowardly, when he was with them where his critics could confront him face to face, but when he was absent from them he became bold and strong. Sardonicly, he quotes this charge.

Despite the recent reconciliation with most of the church, there were still some who refused to be reconciled. There are some church members who let Satan control their minds and emotions to such an extent that any attempt at reconciliation will only lead to a more vehement attack. The appeal for reconciliation may intensify the conflict. Is it possible that with the reconciliation God used Titus to bring about between Paul and the church actually caused the false apostles to intensify their attack on him? They may have sensed their opportunity for victory slipping away.

Paul had tried to manifest the character and nature of his Lord when he was with them, but they attributed his humility to cowardice. There are people who are not hindered by normal restraints like dignity, shame or embarrassment, who will attack the minister knowing that he is a still target for their poisonous arrows. If he gets into a shouting match with them, he is the loser. If he doesn't, they view his refusal as cowardice, or even guilt.

The world will never understand the Christ-life. The Christian who is walking in the flesh has as much difficulty understanding the virtue in humility and meekness as the lost person. Only the spirit filled believer desires, or even understands the fruit of the Spirit. There are church members who are not filled with the Spirit of Christ and there are some who have never been born again.

**10:2 - I ASK.** *“I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.”* I beseech, or I beg. This is a difficult verse to follow in the KJV and the NASV, but the NIV clear: “I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expected to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of the world.” So, here Paul states another charge which had been made against him - that he lived by the standard of the world. These carnal apostles accused him of worldliness and questioned his spirituality. Their sneering charge was that he walked "according to the flesh."

**10:3 - WE WALK IN THE FLESH.** *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh...”* They had apparently charged that he walked according to the flesh. He answers that he walked “in the flesh,” but not according to the flesh. “As a Christian his circumstances were those common to human experience. He was not exempt from conflict, difficulty, suffering, and temptation” [1 - 148].

**WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.** There is a significant difference which the Christian should understand. Paul had to live in the world, but he did not wage war as the world does. He understood the Roman army, and in a few short years would know a lot more about it. But at this time he understood the weapons of war and knew that he could not wage a spiritual war according to the flesh. Paul uses the military metaphor effectively.

**10:4 - THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE.** “For the weapons of our warfare are not of

the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” What are the weapons of our warfare? Paul describes them in Ephesians 6:11-17. His warfare is spiritual, so the weapons with which he fights must be bestowed by the Spirit. Tasker rightly notes that:

Carnal weapons, such as human cleverness or ingenuity, organizing ability, eloquent diatribe, powerful propaganda, or reliance on charm or forcefulness of personality, are all in themselves quite unavailing in the ceaseless task of pulling down the strongholds, in which evil is entrenched [14 - 134].

Carnal weapons may win superficial, or temporary victories, but those weapons do not win real, eternal victories. Such weapons cannot drive evil from its fortress. Jesus asked, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" (Mark 3:23). He continues the military metaphor.

**BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL.** That is, divinely powerful weapons are essential for the destruction of the fortress of evil. Our enemy is not just evil, he is also powerful, and it takes a mighty act of God to defeat him. The false teachers had apparently accused Paul of using the weapons of the flesh, a charge which he refutes.

**10:5 - WE ARE DESTROYING SPECULATION.** *“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...”* He continues the military figure. Paul did not wage spiritual warfare in his own strength. One does not storm the citadel of Satan in the power of the flesh. And that was exactly what Paul and his fellow missionaries were doing. They were destroying philosophies, ideal and superstitions of paganism. There were strong ties between Greek philosophies and Greek religion. Paul was seeing all these things fall before the power of the Gospel. When Paul entered a region filled with pagan worship and philosophy, he didn't know but one thing to do. He went on the offensive. To an observer, it must have seemed absurd that one little sickly Jew would take on the philosophers on Mars Hill.

Some historians claim that the greatest military genius coming out of the Civil War was Nathan Bedford Forrest. It was said that any time he was surrounded by Union troops that outnumbered his troops two or three to one, the only thing he knew to do was attack. On one occasion, he was following a much superior force which was trying to escape from him. He was some distance ahead with only a small escort when the enemy decided to make a stand. Off to the right he saw a small detachment of Confederate soldiers and rode over to meet them. He asked the officer in charge where the main body was. The officer said, “They are right in front of us and they are about to charge. What do we do?” Forrest said, “We charge!” He turned and led the charge, standing in the stirrups with his sword raised, screaming, “Charge! Charge! Charge!” The union soldiers fled before him in total confusion, even though they had several times as many men as Forrest.

The Apostle to the Gentiles had to face far more powerful enemies and when he did, he charged the citadels of hell without hesitation. One does not do that in the power of the body and mind. It is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that he had any hope of victory.

**TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE** and laying them at the feet of Jesus. God will give us the same confidence in victory over pagan thoughts and speculations today. In the power of the Holy Spirit the Christian can take captive the pagan philosophies of the New Age movement, Mormonism, and other cults today; but only in the power of God (not human strength).

**10:6 - READY TO PUNISH ALL DISOBEDIENCE.** *“And we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”* The false teachers attacked his apostolic authority and his courage, but he stands ready to punish those who are disobedient. In other words, he will exercise his apostolic authority. Anyone familiar with the story of Ananias and Sapphira would understand that Paul, like Peter, could only announce God's punishment, but that would be enough. He does not sound weak now, does he?

**WHEN YOUR OBEDIENCE IS COMPLETE.** Does he mean that he will punish the disobedient to make them obedient, or when the faithful obey God completely he will punish the disobedient? It seems that he expects the whole church to become obedient to the Lord [12 - 253].

**10:7 - LOOKING AT THINGS...OUTWARDLY.** *“You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.”* His critics charged that Paul lacked spiritual credentials, that he was a coward; and now they questioned whether he was a Christian at all [1 - 149].

**IF ANYONE IS CONFIDENT** in himself that he belongs to Christ, let him think again. If he has a prideful confidence that he is in Christ, and claims that Paul is not, then he needs to look beneath the surface. “A prideful Christian thinks that Christ belongs to him rather than that he belongs to Christ” [1 - 149].

Christians often make two mistakes. They either believe that they are saved and those who may do or think differently are lost. Or they may feel that everyone around them is already a Christian and never witness to them. A lady made a statement at a Christian gathering that until she visited some mission field she had never seen a lost person. She said, “Everyone I know is a Christian.” It is hard to believe that anyone would make that statement, but it is incredible that anyone could say it and believe it!

**10:8 - EVEN IF I SHOULD BOAST.** *“For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame...”* He does not like to boast but the false apostles had so demeaned him that he felt compelled to boast. His boasting is not for personal glory, not is it aggressive. He is simply forced to defend his appointment.

**OUR AUTHORITY.** Paul is not boasting of his accomplishments, only of his apostolic authority. His apostolic authority was given him to build up, or edify the church at Corinth; never to destroy.

But these false teachers were using their so-called authority and influence to tear down and destroy.

Pastors need to give careful attention to this today. Pastoral authority is demanded by Scripture, but pastoral abuse is not. The wise pastor will be sure he understands just how far his pastoral authority extends. Theologically speaking, the pastor has certain authority, and when he is delivering the “Thus saith the Lord” his authority is the Word of God with the power of the Holy Spirit behind it. Practically speaking, the pastor has exactly what authority the church assigns him. If he assumes more he may face forced termination.

That which cannot be justified scripturally is authoritarianism. When the pastor assumes dictatorial authority he is asking for trouble. On some occasions pastors have moved in and taken complete control of a church before the people know what is happening. This often precipitates a serious division if not an open split in the membership. We must remember that there is a difference between pastoral authority and apostolic authority.

**10:9 - AS IF I WOULD TERRIFY YOU.** *“For I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.”* Remember that his enemies have charged that he is weak and cowardly when present with them, but when absent he waxes bold in his letters. So, now he is writing another letter and he says that he does not want to terrify them by his letter. If he thought they really would be terrified, he was obviously sincere. But considering the ludicrous nature of the charge, he was probably resorting to sarcasm to rebuke them. It was not unlike Paul to use such sarcasm.

**10:10 - THEY SAY.** *“For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.’”* The false apostles brought numerous charges against Paul. They wanted to take control of the church and in order to do it they needed to destroy his credibility with the Christian in Corinth.

**HIS LETTERS ARE WEIGHTY AND STRONG.** The Apostle quotes them directly. “The adjectives can be uncomplimentary and mean 'severe and violent' instead of 'impressive and vigorous” [12 - 254]. There is no question as to their meaning.

**HIS PERSONAL PRESENCE IS UNIMPRESSIVE.** They had actually stooped to taunting him about his personal appearance. This attack was more than uncomplimentary; it was cruel. How often some people attack another person's appearance in order to negate his position or influence! Sometimes we hear comments about how cruel children can be to each other. Unfortunately, some of those cruel children grow up to be cruel adults. The attack may be more subtle, but it is no less cruel.

An early description pictured him as small, short, bowlegged, with eye-brows knit together, and an aquiline nose. Another report describes him as the "bald-headed, hook-nosed Galilean." These may not have been accurate descriptions, but these enemies sneered at his personal appearance, calling him weak.

Barclay tells an interesting story about William Wilberforce who was responsible for freeing



the slaves in the British Empire. He was so small and frail that it seemed a strong wind would blow him down. But a well-known man went to hear him speak and commented afterward, "I saw what seemed to me a shrimp mount upon the table, but, as I listened, he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale" [2 - 271]. But Paul's critics did not stop with the attack on his appearance. They attacked his speech as well.

**HIS SPEECH CONTEMPTIBLE.** The word translated contemptible means of no account. He was not trained in Greek oratory, but these critics were not Greeks. They were simply looking for anything they could use against Paul. While he may not have been an orator on par with Appolos, the charge that his speech was contemptible was, without a doubt, a gross exaggeration.

Paul was not eloquent like Apollos (Acts 18:24), but when he spoke, he had something to say. Some of the most charismatic speakers may not really say very much when they speak. Professor E. L. Douglas illustrated this in a Bible class at Mississippi College. He told about a dynamic chapel speaker who had spoken there a few years earlier students applauded him and some faculty members praised him. He said, "I was impressed until I walked back to the office with Dr. Bracey Campbell." Dr. Campbell, he said, didn't say a word until they were in the office. He closed the door and turned and said, "Yes, it was wonderful, all right. But what did he say?" Brother Douglas added, "I stopped to think about it and could not think of anything significant he said.

My Brother Mike spent some time in Germany while in the army. After military service he went back to school where he took classes in German under a lady who was from the town where he was stationed. She was excited to get recent news about her home town. She also shared some interesting stories. She loved music as a child (she lived near the home of Wagner) and sang in a choir for Adolph Hitler, who gave her gave her a pat on the head.

This teacher told her class that teachers in the area required students to listen to Hitler's speeches on the radio and write down what he said. When the students had difficulty with the assignment, the teachers tried to write down the main points of his speeches. They canceled the assignments! They discovered that in those speeches that so inflamed most of the German people, he was not saying anything significant. Speakers can excite people without saying very much. Paul may not have been the most exciting preacher, but he had something to say.

**10:11 - CONSIDER THIS.** *"Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present."* Paul, in writing this letters, is exactly the same as he is when he is with them in person. Consistency in the minister is important. The charge that he is one person at home and a different person when he is away can be damaging. The minister must be the same, whether he is at home or at the convention, or on vacation. His primary concern must not be the presence of the people, but the presence of Almighty God.

**10:12 - TO CLASS OR COMPARE OURSELVES.** *"For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding."* Or, to number or compare. Paul uses a play on words which means "to judge one as worthy to be numbered

among as here” [12 - 255]. Other preachers had come to Corinth and “laid down the law dogmatically in the church” [4 - 232]. Paul will not class or compare himself with them as though his ministry could be judged by theirs. He is Christ's Apostle to the Gentiles. They are interlopers who would destroy Paul in order to establish their control over the church. “Yet, strangely enough, some of the Corinthian Christians are readier to submit to the dictates of these interlopers, who come with no commendation but their own, than to their own apostle and father in God” [4 - 232]. Some church members are just as easily duped today.

**THEY MEASURE THEMSELVES BY THEMSELVES.** To compare themselves with themselves is to have no standard at all. They can measure themselves and get the result they desire every time. If they set their own standard, they will measure up every time. They do not intend to measure themselves by Paul's standards, let alone the standards of Christ. He is our real standard.

**THEY ARE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING.** It may be flattering to “measure our motives, our goodness, and our ministry by ourselves, but it is blind and false” [1 - 151]. Jesus Christ is our true and immutable standard. No one who measures himself by his own standards will ever have a true assessment of himself. He is deluding himself. The Bible warns, "let no man deceive you." Is it possible that the greatest deceit of all is self deceit?

**10:13 - BUT WE WILL NOT BOAST.** *“But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.”* He finds boasting distasteful, but if he is forced to boast, he will not boast of his accomplishments, but of what God has done through Him. God had chosen his field of ministry. He will boast of his work in the field assigned him, but not in areas assigned to other ministers. Paul was the first to go to Corinth with the Gospel. He had gone there and preached to pagan people, until then untouched by the Gospel. He laid the foundation and was pleased to see others like Apollos build on it. But these false teachers from Jerusalem were not building on that foundation. If they had their way they would destroy the work he and others had done.

**THE SPHERE WHICH GOD APPORTIONED TO US.** Paul's sphere of ministry was determined by the Lord, as a study of the three missionary journey's will verify. There are at least two things that every minister should bear in mind at this point. First, God is the one Who determines the sphere of his ministry and it is very important for him to be where the Lord wants him. Second, he should also be aware of the field of ministry the Lord has assigned another minister. It may be as important to respect the sphere of ministry God has assigned another pastor or missionary as it is to minister in his own sphere of ministry.

A long time friend who teaches in a well known seminary told me that while he was interim pastor of a large church in a university town, or city, the chairman of the Pastor Search Committee laid seven letters on the desk in front of him. Each was written by a pastor telling how he knew that God was leading him to be their next pastor. The man asked if he thought God had blundered. It was obvious what he really thought.

The chairman of a Pastor Search Committee in a small church in an economically depressed town told me at one point that they had received two hundred, fifty resumes. I asked him about it later and he told me they had received fifty more. Is it possible that some among us are simply casting into every new pond they find to see what they might catch? Someone has suggested that every pastor tries to serve three churches - "this one, the last one, and the next one."

The turn-over in pastors in many churches is disturbing. A church needs a pastor who will stay with the church long enough to be an effective pastor. A pastor needs to serve a church that will permit him to be an effective pastor. The church should pray for him, support his ministry, and provide for him and his family. It is important for both the pastor and the church to know that God has put the right man in that sphere of ministry and work together with that assurance.

**10:14 - WE ARE NOT OVEREXTENDING OURSELVES.** *"For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ."* Paul did not stretch himself out beyond the sphere of ministry the Lord had assigned him. That is exactly what he would be doing if he encroached on another field of ministry, as these false apostles were doing.

**WE WERE THE FIRST TO COME.** It was a virgin field, a field untouched by the Gospel. He had not encroached on a field God had assigned others. These false teachers from Jerusalem were late comers who were trying to take over the church. They had not planted, nor watered, but they wanted to harvest the increase. Paul had written earlier, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7, KJV). The trouble-makers had no regard for this principle. They neither planted nor watered, and were not concerned with the kind of increase God gives. They were concerned only with themselves.

**10:15 - NOT BOASTING.** *"Not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you."* He had begun the work at Corinth and if he boasted of the work, he would not be boasting in other men's labors. That was exactly what the Judean pseudo-apostles were doing. Paul boasts of what the Lord is doing through him, not in his accomplishments so as to magnify himself.

**AS YOUR FAITH GROWS.** Corinth fell within his field of service and he hoped that as their faith grew the church at Corinth would become a sort of base for the spread of the Gospel to other places. It is God's purpose that the faith of the individual and the church will grow. He is the source of the faith He demands of us. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to nurture and develop us, and the goal of the minister.

**10:16 - SO AS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.** *"So as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another."* The Gospel of Jesus is the power of God unto salvation. Paul lived to preach the Gospel. He expressed his feelings about the Gospel in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

**TO THE REGIONS BEYOND YOU.** That is, beyond Achaia. He is probably thinking of other parts of the Balkan Peninsula [4 - 233]. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles and as we study the missionary journeys of Paul, a pattern surfaces. He follows the major Roman roads to the major population centers. He meets with the Jews in the synagogue preaching and teaching until they force him out. Then he turns to the Gentiles. Visitors to the large cities who are converted return to plant churches in the smaller towns and villages.

At no time do we find Paul moving into a field of service the Lord has assigned to others. He is a pioneer missionary, winning the first converts and laying the foundation for the church wherever he goes. This was not Paul's decision, but God's, as we see in Acts 16:6: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." Wherever he went beyond Corinth, it would be God's choice and it would be a new field, not someone else's sphere of ministry.

**10:17 - HE WHO BOASTS.** *"But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD."* Paul quotes Proverbs 27:2. Anyone who has heard some minister boast of his membership, staff, baptisms or salary gains a fresh appreciation for this verse. Maybe you cannot stop others from boasting in their own accomplishments, but you don't have to encourage them or join them.

**10:18 - WHOM THE LORD COMMENDS.** *"For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends."* It is not the one who commends himself who is approved by the Lord. So Paul's opponents who were commending themselves would not receive God's approval. The one who meets God's approval is the one whom God commends. It is interesting that some ministers can spend years studying the Word of God and still miss this verse. The super-apostles of Paul's day missed this point, just as the super-saints of this day miss it.

## **B. He Resorts to the "Foolishness" of Boasting, 11:1-12:18.**

1. He boasts of his jealousy for them [fears they will be led astray], 11:1-6.

**11:1 - BEAR WITH ME.** "I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me."

Paul has been forced to defend himself and his ministry. Because of the nature of the charges, he will have to resort to boasting, as much as he loathed it, to refute the false apostles. He finds this approach very distasteful. The Paul they will hear, or read, now is not the Paul they are familiar with. Understandably, he asks them to bear with him.

**IN A LITTLE FOOLISHNESS.** Boasting about himself and his work seemed foolish to Paul. However, the Jewish agitators from Jerusalem did not seem to think it was foolish of them to boast about their credentials. They apparently carried letters of commendation with them.

**11:2 - I AM JEALOUS FOR YOU.** *“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”* The apostle interrupts his boasting to express his deep concern for the church. He was jealousy for them. This is a metaphor of marriage. After all the church is the bride of Christ.

**WITH A GODLY JEALOUSY.** The word 'jealousy' appears thirty four times in thirty one verses in the Bible. Most references are to the jealousy of God for His people. A distinction should be made between godly jealousy and ungodly jealousy. An example of godly jealousy is found in Zechariah 1:14: "So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy."

Paul's jealousy is a holy jealousy. There is no selfishness in it. "What he feared was not that the Corinthians would transfer their loyalty from him to his enemies but that they would be led away from the Christian faith that he had taught them" [1 - 153].

**I BETROTHED YOU TO ONE HUSBAND.** Jesus Christ is the Husband or Bridegroom to Whom they had been introduced. He had been the one the Lord had sent to lead them to place their faith in Him. He was deeply concerned that they remain faithful to Him.

**THAT I MIGHT PRESENT YOU A PURE VIRGIN.** He was jealous for their purity of doctrine and the purity of their life. Every minister of the Gospel should be deeply concerned for the doctrinal purity of the church, just as he is concerned about their moral purity. But he often finds a serious problem here. Most Christians are doctrinally illiterate. What pastor has not had someone to ask him, "Now what do we believe about that?;" or, "Just what is our position on this issue?".

The minister and lay persons who are given the responsibility for teaching the Lord's people must teach Scriptural doctrines to the members of the church. The doctrinal integrity of the minister and teacher is of utmost importance. Christians should search the Scripture to be sure they are faithful in discharging this responsibility, as were the new converts in Berea.

This is not always easy for the pastor. Sometimes he receives a lot of criticism. The writer recalls a number of times when he cautioned members about some of the television preachers. He always pointed to some who had established a reputation for moral, doctrinal and financial responsibility (Billy Graham, Charles Stanley, James Kennedy and others). But when he cautioned them about a few others he could tell they were offended. Sometimes people think the local pastor is jealous of this famous TV personality with his great resources. That is always possible. But in this case, the ones he had expressed concern about were among those who caused great embarrassment and shame to the church in the 1980's.

**11:3 - AS THE SERPENT DECEIVED EVE BY CRAFTINESS.** *“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”* Satan is the great deceiver. He is the father of liars. Just as he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden he will deceive any person he can today. He has no fear of the Christian who is not in daily fellowship with the Lord. He cannot destroy the soul of the Christian, but he can destroy his life and his testimony if given an opportunity. Then what is the believer to do? We find the answer in James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

What we find here is an attempt on the part of these interlopers to win the church away from Christ through their craftiness. By their methods they reveal themselves to be servants of Satan. He warned them lest they be led astray.

**SIMPLICITY AND PURITY OF DEVOTION TO CHRIST.** Some translations read, “from the simplicity and purity which is in Christ” [21 - Footnotes]. Two of the most beautiful things about the Christ-life are mentioned here: the 'simplicity and the purity' of it.

**11:4 - IF ONE COMES.** *“For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.”* They had already come. These were false apostles parading as true apostles. They were coming in the name of Jesus, but they were trying to steal the church away from Him and they were doing it by trying to destroy Paul and the Gospel he had preached.

**ANOTHER JESUS.** The false teachers were using the name of Jesus, but the Jesus they were proclaiming was not the Jesus Paul had preached. They were using the right name but they were not representing the true Jesus.

There had been other times when false Messiahs had been proclaimed and there would be other times. When Titus laid siege to Jerusalem [A.D. 70], according to some reports, there were three men within the walls of Jerusalem who proclaimed themselves to be the Messiah. These men were false Messiahs. In Corinth these foes of the Cross were not representing another individual as the true Jesus. They were falsely representing Jesus to the people, and in so doing they were preaching a Jesus who did not exist.

Today there are many pseudo-prophets who are preaching another Jesus. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints preaches a Jesus totally unlike the Jesus of the Scriptures. The Jehovah's Witnesses declare a another Jesus from the one Paul preached. New Agers proclaim a Christ who is totally different from the Jesus of the Bible. Millions are being deceived by these false Christs. The Scripture is very clear about the danger of proclaiming another Jesus: “If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9). "The danger of the false apostles lay in their false estimate of Jesus, and in their desire to improve upon, by

making their own additions and subtractions, the simplicity of the gospel” [14 - 146].

Jeremiah warned of two serious sins of his day. The first sin was worship of false gods. The second sin was the false worship of the true God. Both sins are common today. “Jesus Christ, stripped of His saving grace and viewed merely as a great teacher and miracle-worker, is not the Christ in whom God reconciled the world unto Himself” [1 - 154]. Acceptance of false Christs, false gospels and false spirits go hand in hand.

The result of a 'different gospel' is a false Christ and a 'different spirit.' The spirit by which the 'other Jesus' was preached was a 'different spirit.'" The 'different gospel' is any gospel other than the one Paul preached. According to the agreement reached at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15 and Gal. 2) the Gospel Paul and Barnabas preached to the Gentiles and the Gospel James, Peter and John would preach to the Jews would be identical.xxxxx

**YOU BEAR THIS BEAUTIFULLY.** Some believe Paul is speaking sarcastically here in verse 5.

At the very least, we see a note of irony. Bruce translates these words, "you submitted to it readily enough." He says, "You put up readily enough with someone who comes with a different message from that which brought you salvation: Why not put up with the apostle who came with the message which did bring you salvation" [4 - 236].

**11:5 - I CONSIDER MYSELF.** “*For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.*” He prefers to preach to them Jesus and avoid talking about himself, But since they force it on him, he boldly, if sarcastically, rejects any idea of his being inferior to his critics.

**THE MOST EMINENT APOSTLES.** Since he does not recognize them as true apostles, he really is being sarcastic when he calls them 'the most eminent apostles,' or 'the super apostles.'" These false apostles from Jerusalem, whether Judaizers or not, set themselves up as 'super apostles.' During the 1980's some of the religious talk shows featured what the writer calls "super saints," who proclaimed a health and wealth gospel to millions by television.

WE are not told exactly what these false teachers taught. Some call them Judaizers. They certainly opposed Paul as vigorously as the Judaizers, but we are not told that their teachings were identical to the Judaizers. The Judaizers specifically taught that salvation was of the Jews and that before the Gentile could be saved he had to embrace Judaism. They added works to grace as necessary for salvation [see Galatians for Paul's answer to this heresy]. These false apostles may have believed that, but the main problem we see is that they wanted to take control of the church and decided that the best way to achieve their goal was to destroy Paul, so they attacked his appearance, his apostleship and his message.

**11:6 - BUT EVEN IF I AM UNSKILLED IN SPEECH.** “But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all

things.” The word for unskilled is *idiotes*. This does not mean that he was an especially poor speaker, but that he was not a skilled orator. He has no real problem with this charge. In fact, he admitted that he was not an orator (10:10) in the mold of some of the famous Greek orators. Possibly some of these Jewish critics were more skilled than he. But apparently, they also claimed to have been superior to Paul in knowledge. This he flatly denied. This fact should have been evident to the Corinthians in all things.

2. He boasts that he had preached the Gospel to them without charge, 11:7-12.

**11:7 - DID I COMMIT A SIN.** “*Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?*” He is answering another charge that he had sinned. This time is even more absurd than some of the other charges. It is not uncommon today for someone to bring absurd charges against the Lord's anointed. They brought some rather ridiculous charges against Jesus.

**I PREACHED ...WITHOUT CHARGE.** A lot of preachers have been condemned because of what they were paid. Paul is condemned because he worked to support himself while he in Corinth, so that he would not have to receive any pay from them. However all, he accepted support from other churches and had instructed this very church to support their minister: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. 9:14).

Apparently the false apostles demanded and received support from the church (11:20). One would think the people would have been criticizing these self-proclaimed apostles and praising Paul. Satan is cunning and crafty, and so are his disciples. They convinced many of the people that he had sinned against them by not asking for support.

Corinth was an unusual place and Paul obviously had reasons for not accepting support from the church. Since he had received help from other churches, particularly Philippi, they claimed he discriminated against them. He was forced to defend himself against another charge.

**11:8 - I ROBBED OTHER CHURCHES.** “I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.” Paul must have been deeply hurt by the ingratitude and misunderstanding of the Christians in Corinth. He had worked at making tents and received assistance from other churches so that he would not be a burden to them. He had sacrificed and so had others so that a church might be planted in the city of Corinth.

He used a strong word (robbed) for the support he received from other churches. He had not literally robbed them, nor did he distort money from them. But he had allowed them to give sacrificially to support his ministry in Corinth. He had been a burden to them. The best way to answer these ridiculous charges was to “boast” about ministering to them without charge.



**11:9 - I WAS NOT A BURDEN TO YOU.** *“And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.”* The reason he did not accept support from them was not that he did not love them. He did not want to be a burden to them.

**WHEN THE BRETHERN CAME.** When the “brethren” came from Macedonia, they brought gifts to help with his ministry so that he would not have to be a burden to them. That was his decision then and he would continue to do so. It is interesting that they did not resent those false workers who took their money and praise Paul because he refused their money so that he would not be a burden to them.

**11:10 - THIS BOASTING.** *“As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.”* At this point, he is boasting about never having received aid from them. He tells us in I Corinthians 9 that there would have been nothing wrong with his receiving support from them, but he had made a commitment to "suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:12).

**WILL NOT BE STOPPED.** He will continue to boast throughout Achaia. He had not wanted to boast, but now that he has been forced to do so, he is determined that he will not let the enemy silence him or restrain him.

**11:11 - BECAUSE I DO NOT LOVE YOU.** *“Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!”* It is difficult to see how any of them might question his love for them, and probably most of them had not doubted his love for them. Whether they knew it or not, God knew his love for them. That is what really matters.

**11:12 - I WILL CONTINUE.** *“But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.”* There are times when the minister of the Gospel finds God's direction in something and after he begins, someone will suggest that he change in mid-stream. If it God's will, he must continue what he is doing. At the same time, he should not continue out of stubbornness or indifference.

**THAT I MAY CUT OFF OPPORTUNITY.** Paul had a very good reason for continuing as he had been for some time. First, if he continued, they would have no further excuse for attacking him. If he stopped, they would at least win a moral victory. There are always people who are looking for an opportunity to attack a minister of the Gospel. Unfortunately, some give them numerous opportunities. The faithful servant of the Lord, whether the person in the pew or the person in the pulpit, will earnestly avoid giving enemies of the Cross an opportunity to criticize him or the Lord's work.

### 3. He warns them about false apostles, 11:13-15.

**11:13 - FALSE APOSTLES.** *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”* Paul put two words together and came up with one (*pseudapostoloi*). In verse 26 he uses pseudadelphos, false brethren. We also find references to false Christs and false prophets in the NT: "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if [it were] possible, even the elect" [Mark 13:22].

**DECEITFUL WORKERS.** They had practiced deceit from the moment they arrived in Corinth. There are some who are misguided and if they mislead others they do it through ignorance. They are totally committed to a false doctrine and though they mislead others, they are sincere. But these charlatans from Judea practiced deceit from the beginning. They were determined to establish themselves as leaders of the church, apparently for what they could profit from it.

Churches can be split or destroyed by sincere people with good intentions who think they are serving God. Revival movements may be stymied by sincere people who sincerely impose their false doctrines on other believers. It has been suggested that the Welch revivals never accomplished all they might have because of an ecstatic undercurrent.

**DISGUIISING THEMSELVES.** They were false apostles masquerading as apostles of Christ. They may have carried false credentials and dressed and spoken in such a way as to imply that they were apostles. Since they were so effective in deceiving a large number of people, they must have been very subtle and cunning. Baptists do not relate as well to the term, “gentlemen of the cloth,” as some denominations whose ministers wear clerical clothing. But it is almost as though he is saying that they were masquerading as "Gentlemen of the Cloth,” but the only thing about them that was genuine was the cloth.

**11:14 - NO WONDER.** “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” We should never be too surprised at what fallen man might do. He is under the power of the god of this world. Nor, should we be surprised when pseudo- prophets masquerade as true prophets, for they are simply following the example of the god of this world whom they serve.

**SATAN DISGUISES HIMSELF AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.** Jesus is the light of the world, and when Satan disguises himself in order to deceive human beings, it is not surprising that he disguises himself as an angel of light. Satan is a powerful personality, the father of liars and murderers, the master of disguise and deception. When false apostles masquerade as true apostles they are simply following the lead of their master.

There has been an increase in satanic activity in recent years. Anton LeVay has written the Satanic Bible. Churches of Satan are springing up all over the country. UP DATE

There is something frightening about reports of satanic activity. In 1988 there were many reports of sacrifices to Satan, especially before Halloween. Many reports had satanists planning to sacrifice a blonde haired, blue eyed virgin to Satan on Halloween of that year. As reports were repeated, it was narrowed down to girls of a certain age, in a certain school, and according to one report, the church which I serve. The human sacrifice never took place, but reports were disturbing to a lot of people.

Satan may be "Alive and Well on Planet Earth" [title of a book by Hal Lindsey] but it is possible that the greatest danger from Satan comes from much more subtle sources. When my older son, John, was a student at Mississippi College someone asked him about a report that some symbol on a whiskey bottle was a symbol of Satan. He replied, "I don't know about that, but I believe the greatest danger is found in what comes inside the liquor bottle."

Beer and wine commercials illustrate how subtle Satan is in trying to seduce men. Donald E. Wildmon sheds a little light on this:

In his book, Dying for a Drink, Anderson Spickard, M.D., says that one prominent, unnamed alcoholism researcher said: 'If you can manage to get some of the powers of the liquor industry talking off the record they will tell you that they never sell alcohol, they really sell sex and sophistication. The alcohol is merely a subliminal partner...Children pick up on these signals. That's education (Wildmon, Donald E., "It Is Time to Ban Advertisement of Alcohol from Broadcasting") [15 - 12].

Paul tells us that the prince of darkness puts on the garb of light to deceive mankind. Perhaps this best seen today in the New Age movement. "New Age" is an umbrella term for a number of groups or movements which find some points of agreement in their agenda. Some have suggested that because Secular Humanism is naturalistic and denies the spiritual aspect of the human nature, it has not met the needs of a lot of people. The New Age movement adds that spiritual quality. To some, it means in exploring the powers of the mind to heal oneself, score higher on tests, or to be successful in business. Others, like Shirley McClaine, are into reincarnation, or yoga.

Texe Marrs, who has done a lot of research on the New Age movement, has documented the plans, goals and activities of many occult leaders. He is convinced that New Agers are deceiving people by using Christian terminology to seduce Christians. A lot of emphasis is placed on Christ, in particular, the Second Coming of Christ. He says, "The Plan of Satan, now being meticulously executed by his New Age followers, is to mimic the prophesied return of Jesus Christ" [8 - 57]. He adds, "The New Age 'Christ' is a blasphemous imitation of the true Christ of the Bible. But Satan's use of a fake Messiah does not surprise those of us who know God's Word. Isaiah revealed the evil one's traitorous goal: 'I will be like the Most High'" [8 - 57].

The writer has studied a number of works of the New Age movement and consulted with his brother-in-law, Rev. Jimmy Furr, who serves with the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. It is the conviction of the writer that while Marrs

might present a somewhat sensationalized account, he has documented plans and activities that should concern us. Walter Martin, who has written several volumes on cults, points out ten key doctrines of the New Age movement, the first eight of which focus on words right from the Scripture (God, Jesus, Trinity, salvation, etc.) [10 - 25ff].

**11:15 - HIS SERVANTS DISGUISE.** *“Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”* Paul continues the parallel between Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light, and these false apostles who disguise themselves as preachers of righteousness. He says that we should not be surprised by their method. They are simply following the battle plan of their master. Christians must be alert to the battle plan of Satan in the world today. He is as crafty and cunning as ever in his efforts to seduce and destroy the creature created in God's image.

**WHOSE END.** They may deceive many, but in the end they will stand before the one they cannot deceive. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever...And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" [Rev. 20: 10,15].

4. He boasts that he had suffered for Christ, 11:16-33.

**11:16 - AGAIN I SAY.** *“Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little.”* He has not said these exact words, but he is repeating the thought of verse 1. Paul is asking for the privilege of boasting a little. The Corinthians had plenty of time to hear the boasting of the false shepherds, surely they would hear a little foolishness from him.

**LET NO ONE THINK ME FOOLISH.** He has a problem with any boasting, but since he has been put into the position of having to defend his apostleship, he will resort to a little boasting. To Paul all boasting is foolish and it goes against the grain to be forced into this kind of situation.

**RECEIVE ME EVEN AS FOOLISH.** He asks that no one think of him as a fool. However, if some think of him as a fool, then he hopes they will receive him, even if as foolish. They had certainly been ready to receive the false teachers with their faked credentials. Now Paul feels compelled to boast, but he feels foolish in doing it.

**11:17 - NOT SPEAKING AS THE LORD.** *“What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.”* He is not speaking after the example of the Lord. "He had appealed to the example of Christ in 10:1 (the meekness and gentleness of Christ). Paul's conduct here, he admits, is not in keeping with that. But circumstances force him on" [12 - 260].

Boasting is foolish, but he will engage in it in order to get some points across. If it had been a matter of personal loss, he surely would have abstained from boasting. But there was too much at stake. He is fighting for the very existence of the church in Corinth.

**11:18 - MANY BOAST.** *“Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.”* These false teachers were Jewish teachers who boasted an authority far superior to Paul's and a Gospel which was doctrinally superior to the Gospel he had declared unto them. Many were boasting as the world boasts. They proudly boasted of their abilities, position and achievements, but not in the Lord - “not in what God had graciously done through Jesus Christ to reconcile the world unto Himself” [1 - 157]. They glorified themselves, but not Jesus Christ. Sometimes when you listen to people talk about their church, you sense this same thing, as people boast of their achievements rather than what the Lord had done for them.

**I WILL BOAST ALSO.** Even though he knew it was foolish and unlike Christ, he will now boast.

**11:19 - YOU BEING SO WISE.** *“For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.”* Paul is resorting to sarcasm again. The Corinthians are so wise that they bear the foolish boasting of the false prophets who wanted to establish their credentials and destroy his.

**11:20 - YOU BEAR WITH ANYONE.** *“For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.”* He asks them to bear with him while he boasts of what the Lord has done. It is ironic that they will bear with these boastful intruders until they are enslaved by them. There are five conditional clauses in this verse (enslaves, devours, takes captive, exalteth himself, smites in the face). Devour probably means to extort money from them. To smite in the face was the worst insult. It was inconceivable that they will listen to those who would enslave them.

**11:21 - TO MY SHAME.** *“To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold--I speak in foolishness--I am just as bold myself.”* The false apostles had bullied the church members and used every deceptive means at their disposal to gain control of the church. By contrast, Paul had not been pushy and dictatorial. “Therefore with irony he confessed, ‘To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!’ His presence in Corinth had been described as ‘weakness’ [1 - 157]. He seemed weak by comparison with the false teachers.

Paul is, at the least, using irony; at most, sarcasm. It is ironic that these Corinthians were more than tolerant of those who trampled them under their feet, but they criticized the one who had served them so sacrificially and with such integrity.

**I AM BOLD MYSELF.** Paul switches from irony to make a bold statement: "In whatever respect anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am just as bold myself." They made bold statements in which they glorified themselves. They also made bold statements against Paul. Since he has been forced to boast, he will boast just as boldly as anyone else, even if he feels foolish doing it. He has just as much courage as they do.

Some have claimed that Paul had an inflated ego which led him to brag about his gifts, his ministry, and his suffering. But to make such a claim is to miss his attitude toward boasting - his or that of the pseudo-prophets. The writer listened to a visiting preacher charge that the main problem

with the church is spineless preachers who will not take a stand on sin because they have comfortable positions and high salaries they don't want to risk losing.

His conversation was laced with, "You know what I tell them? I tell them..." Someone like this may come to a church for a revival and in loud, and often dramatic or sensational statements, condemn the sins of people who are not there and say little or nothing about the sins of the ones sitting in front of him. It may take courage to take your best shot at the drunks and homosexuals and then take the next flight out of town. It may take more courage to confront people with their attitude toward other people in the community, or even in the church, and then stay there and face the members week after week.

**11:22 - ARE THEY HEBREWS?** *"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I."* During the first century 'Hebrew' was a more specialized term than 'Israelite.' An Israelite was one who could trace his roots back to Jacob (Israel), whether he lived in Palestine or not. Jews in Palestine might use this term to denote Hellenistic Jews who lived outside Palestine and accepted Greek language and culture.

The term 'Hebrew' denoted Palestinian Jews and those from other places who rejected Greek language and culture and maintained strong ties with Palestinian Jews. Paul claimed that he was "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;" (Phil. 3:5). He had grown up in Tarsus but he had maintained the Hebrew Language and faithfully followed the rigid demands of Judaism. He could out do these proud Jews in Jewishness.

**ARE THEY ISRAELITES? SO AM I.** He was descended from Jacob, the younger of the twin sons of Isaac. He was descended from the right son of Isaac. He would not have boasted of being an Edomite (descendants of Esau).

**DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM? SO AM I.** From a physical standpoint, Paul was descended from Abraham. Furthermore, he had been circumcised the eighth day, which was one of his grounds for boasting to the Philippians: "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee..." [Phil. 3:5].

**11:23 - ARE THEY SERVANTS OF CHRIST?** *"Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death."* Bruce comments:

When he speaks of servants of Christ, he is dealing with achievement, not endowment, and comparisons in this sphere are particularly odious, so much so that he describes himself now not merely as a 'fool' (*aphron*) but as a madman (*paraphronon*), one who is out of his senses [4 - 241].

Paul boasts of his achievements, even though he knows that all his achievements were the work of the Lord, and not his own. This comparison was probably initiated by the enemy, but if he claims to be a greater servant of Christ than they, he is not boasting of the same things - superior credentials, superior doctrines and possibly better stats (nickels and noses). Paul's boasting will be of his weakness and God's strength.

**I MORE SO.** When Paul thought of what he had endured for the cause of Christ, he must have been nauseated by the boasting of false apostles. There is really no comparison to be made. But they force him to respond for the sake of the church. He is superior to the 'super apostles.'

**IN FAR MORE LABORS.** For a summary of his labors, see Romans 15:18ff. He might have boasted of the churches he had planted in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia. But, possibly because of his embarrassment over having to boast about himself and his work, he focuses on his suffering rather than his accomplishments.

There are a lot of preachers who could never pass up such an opportunity to boast about their work. I am a native of Sledge, Mississippi and when the Lord called me into His ministry, I never considered but one college. That was Mississippi College. I made a lot of friends at MC, especially among ministerial students. I attended New Orleans Seminary with many of the same students. I served one church in Mississippi after graduating from seminary and I loved conventions and evangelism conferences. After moving to a church in Louisiana, it was my privilege to attend a few conferences in Mississippi over the next several years. At one of the conferences I had stopped to look at a book display when an old friend walked up. After speaking, He asked, "What are you doing here? Are you trying to move back to Mississippi? How big is your church? How many staff members do you have?" The conversation left me feeling a little empty. I stood there wondering, "Doesn't anybody care if I love my people; or, if I am where the Lord wants me?"

**IMPRISONMENTS.** Clement of Rome said that Paul was imprisoned seven times. there may have been others. That would have looked good on a resume! Neither Luke, nor Paul tell about all of the imprisonments. We do know that he was in prison in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Philippi, Rome twice. It is possibly that he was in prison in Ephesus. One thing we do know is that his prison letters were among the first of a long line of important letters and books written from a prison or jail cell (John Bunyan, Bonnhoffer, et.al.).

**BEATEN TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER.** This might include the beatings at the hands of both Jews and Romans, as we see in verses 24-25. It is possible that other beatings are included because he adds, "often in danger of death."

**11:24 - FIVE TIMES...THIRTY-NINE.** *"Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes."* On five occasions Paul had received the prescribed forty stripes (Deut. 25:1-3) less one. Only thirty-nine stripes were given to avoid accidentally going beyond the law. The punishment was administered by a local court attached to the synagogue in Jewish communities of the dispersion.

**11:25 - THREE TIMES I WAS BEATEN WITH RODS.** *“Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.”* This was a Roman punishment. It was forbidden by Roman law to beat a Roman citizen with the rod, but that did not prevent Paul from being beaten three times up to this time. He was beaten in Philippi (Acts 16:23ff), but we do not know when the other beatings occurred. Since he was a Roman citizen, it is surprising that he was illegally beaten once, let alone three times.

**ONCE I WAS STONED.** This was at Lystra (Acts 14:5-19).

**THREE TIMES I WAS SHIPWRECKED.** We do know anything at all about these three shipwrecks. The one we do know about, the one in Acts 27, is much later than this. It would be interesting to have all of Paul's experiences chronicled for us.

**A NIGHT AND A DAY ... IN THE DEEP.** Earlier, the word translated 'in the deep' meant one the bottom, or submerged in the sea. But here it means to be adrift in the sea. He was possibly clinging to a piece broken off the ship. Later, on the voyage from Caesarea to Rome, he would be shipwrecked again and 'in the deep' again. Robertson says that this was one of the three shipwrecks already mentioned. However, he is writing this months before the offering for the saints is completed on the third missionary journey. When it is complete he will go to Jerusalem where he will be taken by a mob, rescued, imprisoned, slipped out of the city to escape a murder plot, and taken to Caesarea where he was a prisoner for two years before the voyage to Rome.

**11:26 - ON FREQUENT JOURNEYS.** *“I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.”* This phrase introduces the dangers that follows.

**DANGERS FROM RIVERS.** The rivers of Asia Minor are treacherous when flooding in the mountains causes the rivers to suddenly rise to flood stage.

**DANGERS FROM ROBBERS.** Jesus illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan dangers from thieves and robbers along the road. Rome had done a lot to rid the seas of pirates and the highways of bandits, but there were robbers who hid out in caves along roads and attacked travelers. One who traveled as much as Paul in that day was always in danger of being robbed or killed.

**DANGERS FROM MY COUNTRYMEN.** He was in danger from the Jews from the time of his conversion. The Judaizers, in particular, followed him and harassed him through out Galatia and Asia Minor. If these false apostles in Corinth were Judaizers, They were still a serious threat to him. Before long he would visit Corinth again and when the collection was completed, he would go Jerusalem, by way of Ephesus. Dangers from his own people would intensify and he would face an angry mob, be imprisoned in Jerusalem, escape a death plot, and then imprisoned in Caesarea. Jews from Jerusalem would appear before Felix, the Roman governor to accuse him.



**DANGERS FROM THE GENTILES.** He had been beaten in Philippi (Acts 16:20) and at least two other times by the Gentiles. He had been in grave danger in Ephesus. He would see other perils from Gentiles in the future.

**DANGERS IN THE CITY...WILDERNESS...SEA.** Both Luke and Paul record some of the dangers to which he was subjected. Here we have a repetition of some of the dangers already mentioned. But there may have been other dangers he has not mentioned.

**DANGERS AMONG FALSE BRETHERN.** Some of those false brethren were in Corinth at that very moment. But there had been other false brethren and there would be more. False brethren can create a lot of problems for the church today. Sometimes one might face an attack by the enemy with greater courage and understanding than betrayal by "false brethren."

**11:27 - IN LABOR.** "I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." This points to the hard, burdensome work of the ministry. It can be rewarding. It can also be exhausting. The word does not mean to simply hold down a job. It denotes genuine toil.

**SLEEPLESS NIGHTS.** There were probably many sleepless nights in his ministry. The activities and burdens involved in the ministry might have caused Paul to lose a lot of sleep. The dangers listed above would have caused him some sleepless nights. Sensitive Christians may spend sleepless nights in prayer for themselves and others.

**HUNGER AND THIRST.** He would have known hunger and thirst during some of his journeys, in prison, following a shipwreck, or while 'in the deep.' There may also have been times when he could not afford food.

**IN COLD AND EXPOSURE.** We can only imagine the times when he was exposed to the elements. A quick look at the above list of dangers and afflictions will suggest many possibilities here. We may recall the journeys, wilderness, shipwrecks, the time when he was adrift in the sea, and the time he spent in the Roman dungeon. These were all external problems or afflictions. Now he will turn to the pressures of the ministry.

**11:28 - DAILY PRESSURE FOR ALL THE CHURCHES.** "Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." He felt pressure for the churches, not from the churches. He was concerned for the welfare of the churches. He suffered from either depression and anxiety at times. He was deeply burdened for the churches, prayed with deep concern for his people.

Any pastor can understand this kind of pressure. He knows what it is like to take a vacation or go away for a revival and never get his mind off the last business meeting; the next committee meeting; the proposed budget; the family that is breaking up; the lady who had just lost her husband;

the man who has just learned that he had but three months to live; the people who may not live until he returns. Every time he hears a phone ring, he is sure someone is calling him to return. He has a burden for the lost and for the family that has suddenly dropped out. He lives with pressure.

**11:29 - WHO IS WEAK?** *“Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?”* When a brother or sister in Christ is burdened, Paul is burdened. If he is grieved, Paul grieves. If he is offended, Paul burns with grief for him. This is the sincere compassion Jesus has in mind in the Beatitudes.

**WHO IS LED INTO SIN?** Paul was deeply grieved when they were led into sin. This should be the attitude of every born-again Christian. Only lost people and calloused backsliders take pleasure in the sins of others. The spiritually minded Christian is intensely concerned about the temptation and sin of another believer. All believers are not overly disturbed about sin. What Christian cannot think of some time when he has expressed this concern, only to have some fellow church member say, “Everybody is doing that now.” A Christian complained about profanity on a television program. Another Christian expressed surprise that he was disturbed. He said, “They talk like that on all the shows now!” They may use it, but Christians should never “get use to it.”

Former Secretary of State, George Shultz, in an interview shown on a news program on January 12, 1990, suggested that there should be discussion to see if the government might consider giving drugs to addicts in order to take the criminals out of the business. One might wonder if he would suggest that we apply that kind of reasoning to burglary or rape. Is it possible that our society has been adversely effected by this kind of thinking?

Parents tell their children they should not leave the house, but when the child leaves the house, instead of discipline, they say, “Well, just don’t leave the yard.” He leaves the yard and they say, “Well, just stay out of the street.” He soon learns that ‘no’ never means ‘no,’ so he continues to search for the line. But he never finds it because they had rather change the rules than discipline the child. Many in our society have the same attitude toward criminals.

A deputy sheriff lamented the fact that they can pick up young people and call their parents and ask them to come get them. He said, “We do everything we can to avoid putting them in jail and bringing charges against them, but you wouldn’t believe how many times those parents come to the office and curse us for bringing their son or daughter in and embarrassing the family.”

Our schools are under attack by politicians and parents today. Experts demand to know why students do not score as high as they should. Is it possible that the teachers are not getting the same kind of child from the home they did a generation ago? Teachers are disturbed by the lack of discipline in the home, the aggressive attitude of many, the absence of basic manners and disregard for all rules. Parents today must assume some of the blame for problems at school as well as problems with the law enforcement officer and the court system.

It seems that many parents are more concerned with their children's popularity than their

morality. The Christian should be modest in dress, but if it is popular to dress immodestly, many Christian parents compromise. As they grow older, many become even less modest. The preachers used to talk about the strapless bathing suit; now it's the suit-less bathing strap. And now we hear of nude beaches and nude clubs! Jesus teaches us to avoid temptation and to ask God to deliver us from it. We should never deliberately expose ourselves to temptation, but millions choose entertainment that is filled with temptation to sin [movies, TV, music].

We show our hypocrisy when we take a stand against legalizing casino gambling and then promote raffles and bingo games. Parents give false signals to their children when they warn them against taking drugs, while they stock liquor, wine and beer in the home. Many church members permit actors to enter their home by means of television and use language they would never permit their neighbor to use. Parents and grandparents permit young children to sit and watch sex oriented soap operas for years and then wonder why they sometimes "end up in trouble."

Sin is ungodly, not just a misguided impulse. We must never lose sight of the wickedness of sin; ours or our neighbors. Paul shows us that we reach new depths in sin when we not only practice a sin but take pleasure in others who practice it. He wrote, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). David expressed the right attitude: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:12-13).

**11:30 - IF I HAVE TO BOAST.** *"If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness."* He apparently finds it no more tasteful at this point than when he began. But his opponents have forced him to boast in order to defend apostleship and prevent the Corinthians from rejecting the truth and accepting the lie the false apostles preached.

**WHAT PERTAINS TO MY WEAKNESS.** He is not boasting about the same things as the pseudo-prophets. This is another of the paradoxes we identify with the great missionary apostle. Tasker writes:

He had set out to counter the claims put forward by the arrogant false apostles, but he has, in fact, been laying stress upon the very things about which the naturally boastful person would say nothing - his humiliations and his sufferings! [14 - 167].

**11:31 - THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS.** *"The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying."* Paul's titles for the Father and Son will make a worthy subject for any student of the Word. Some members of the church may be hearing this record of his suffering for the first time. If they know little or nothing of Paul, his account might be hard to believe. So, he calls on the Lord as his witness. His point is clear: "I am not lying."

**11:32 - IN DAMASCUS.** *"In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the*

*city of the Damascenes in order to seize me...*” See Acts 9:1ff for an account of his conversion and call; his period of study; his ministry in Damascus and the plot by the Jews to kill him.

**THE ETHNARCH UNDER ARETAS THE KING.** The ethnarch was the governor. There is a question as to how Damascus was ruled at this time by Aretas, the fourth person by the same name who was king of the Nabatheans (II Macc. 5:8). "There is an absence of Roman coins in Damascus from A.D. 34 - 62. "It is suggested (Plummer) that Caligula, to mark his dislike for Antipas, gave Damascus to Aretas (enemy of Antipas)" [12 - 263].

**WAS GUARDING THE CITY.** He posted sentries at all the gates to arrest Paul. The Jews searched for him to kill him, but we can be sure that they didn't interfere with the guard set by Aretas to seize him.

**11:33 - LET DOWN IN A BASKET.** *“And I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.”* In Acts 9:24-25, we read, “But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.”

This is not the kind of thing one usually boasts about, but that is exactly what he does. If forced to boast, he will boast about things that were humiliating, not those which were self-exalting. This is totally unlike the delegation of false teachers from Jerusalem who promoted themselves with letters of commendation and by boasting of their greatness.

**AND SO ESCAPED HIS HANDS.** Paul has spent a lot of time 'boasting' of his afflictions. Now he goes back to the earliest experience with persecution, trials and tribulations. This must have been humiliating for him, but he shares it with the Corinthian believers. He returned to Jerusalem, not as the prized pupil of Gamaliel, and shining light of the Pharisees; but as a convert to 'the Way' he had formerly persecuted. In Jerusalem he met some of the church leaders “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9).

He had gone to Damascus to capture Christians to take them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. But now the once proud, fanatical young Pharisee leaves in humiliation. This time, instead of the Jews following him in the persecution of Christians, they are pursuing him to take his life. His boasting glorified Christ, but not the apostle himself.

5. He boasts of his visions and revelations, 2:1-10.

**12:1 - BOASTING IS NECESSARY.** *“Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.”* Paul is not saying that boasting is necessary for us, for normally it is unnecessary. For example, a minister, or lay person, may frequently make

statements which imply that he has a stronger faith in the Bible than his peers. The preacher may read a passage, comment on others who hold a different view, and say, "You know what I think about that? I believe the Bible. I preach the Word." Sound impressive? A lot of people think so.

There is a better way. If the same preacher simply proclaims the Word of God, he does two things simultaneously. First, he refutes those who teach a false doctrine. Second, he declares his belief in the Scripture through his preaching and every one knows what he believes. The beauty of this approach is that the people go out talking about what God has said, and not what my pastor thinks or says!

**VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD.** Apparently the false apostles had claimed to have received visions and revelations which would show the superiority of their apostleship over that of Paul. Paul will share his experience with visions and revelations. His attitude toward them stands in sharp contrast with theirs. Paul had both repeated visions and revelations (Acts 9:3; 16:9; 18:9; 22:17;) and revelations. See also, I Cor. 11:23; 15:3; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:30.

**12:2 - I KNOW A MAN IN CHRIST.** *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven."* In boasting about his visions, Paul mentions one incident in his own experience, but declines any discussion of it. He is speaking of a personal experience when he was caught up into the third heaven. It had happened fourteen years before. There is a lot of speculation as to the time of the vision. Some think he received it at Tarsus after he had escaped from Damascus, visited Jerusalem and then returned to Tarsus. It has been suggested that it may have occurred when he was stoned (Acts 14:19). Another view is that "God gave Paul this wonderful experience one or two years before he was to begin his missionary journeys. His purpose was probably to prepare Paul for the trying and strenuous ministry he was about to embark on" [22 - 128]. If the vision occurred while he was in Tarsus, it is about the only thing we know about that period; which came to a close when Barnabas came to Tarsus to ask him to assist him in the work at Antioch of Syria.

**WHETHER IN THE BODY I DO NOT KNOW.** "In this vision the apostle was translated out of this world of time and space, though, whether his soul was not the time being detached from his body, or whether both soul and body made the celestial journey, he cannot tell" [14 - 170]. This probably means that he does not remember, as in I Cor. 1:16.

**CAUGHT UP TO THE THIRD HEAVEN.** There is no indication that Paul has in mind the concept of seven heavens some Jews held, or the idea of three heavens some held. Some think he is saying that he was caught up into the highest heaven, but there is no proof for that view. Another possibility is that he was using language that would mean something to the Corinthians. According to verse 4, he was in Paradise.

Paul was 'caught up.' The same verb is used in Acts 8:39 where we read that "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip..." It is also used in I Thes. 4:7, "Then we which are alive [and] remain

shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

**12:3 - GOD KNOWS.** “And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows...” God, and only God, knew how Paul was transferred up to heaven. It was not important that Paul knew, or remembered. We might speculate, but it is probably best to leave this where Paul leaves it.

**12:4 - CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE.** “*Was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*” The term ‘Paradise’ is used here for ‘the third heaven’ (vs. 2). The word is of Persian origin. It was borrowed from the Persians by both the Hebrews and Greeks [4 - 247]. In Luke 23:43 it is used of the present abode of the righteous dead (the departed saints).

**HEARD INEXPRESSIBLE WORDS.** It is not that he does not recall the words; the words he heard were inexpressible. They were inexpressible, not because he did not understand them at the time, but because they were words no human was permitted to speak.

This is what Norman Geisler calls a “first class miracle” [6 - 176ff]. He, and others, use the term, “second class miracle,” to denote some unusual event within nature. For example, we may know how something happens, but there is no explanation for why it happens when it happens. Many farmers have called on the Lord for rain and received rain when there was no rain in the forecast. A ‘first class miracle’ is an exception to the natural process, something supernatural. Paul’s total experience was supernatural, and as such it was beyond any natural explanation.

J. I. Packer begins his book, *Knowing God*, with a lengthy quote from a sermon by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Following are excerpts from that sermon:

The proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead...There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of Divinity...While the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it...Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead...

Packer notes that Spurgeon was only twenty years old at the time he wrote this [11: 13-14]

Is it any wonder that Spurgeon went on to proclaim the Word of God so effectively? When we read this passage from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, maybe we should spend more time in contemplation of the wonders of our God than in an effort to explain that which Paul called inexpressible. At times one may benefit more from meditation than textual criticism.

**12:5 - ON BEHALF OF SUCH A MAN WILL I BOAST.** *“On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.”* Paul continues to speak as if there were two Pauls. He might have boasted of the Paul of this vision in such a way as to add to his reputation. This was his opportunity to "show up" the false apostles, but he is determined to stand by the principle he has adopted; "I will not boast, except in regard to my weakness."

**12:6 - IF I DO WISH TO BOAST.** *“For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.”* He has already decided that he will not boast in such a way as to glorify himself. But if he did boast, his boasting would not be foolish; it would be the truth. He refrained from boasting because he did not want the Corinthians to credit him with more than they had seen in his life and heard from his lips, or read from his letters. How many believers are there who would pass up an opportunity like this? After all, this is the age of self-esteem!

**12:7 - THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF THE REVELATIONS.** *“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!”* Some render this, “The abundance of the revelations.” Paul was the recipient of an abundance of revelations. They were also of 'surpassing greatness.' Either translation is acceptable. The false apostles might boast of some visions and revelations, but the source of Paul's revelations inspired him to write of the 'surpassing greatness' of those he had received.

**TO KEEP ME FROM EXALTING MYSELF.** Is he saying that there might have been a temptation to exalt himself? Is this something Saul the Pharisee might have done? God stresses the importance of humility and warns against the sin of pride. When we preach the gospel of self-esteem, and ignore humility we are not on Scriptural grounds: "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Pet. 5:5).

**A THORN IN THE FLESH.** The word was used for splinter, stake or thorn. What was Paul's thorn in the flesh? It was some chronic physical problem that persisted until the end of his life. There have been many suggestions as the nature of the problem: Epilepsy, insomnia, malaria, poor eye-sight. It might be a blessing to the rest of us that Paul was forced to live with this thorn in the flesh. because many of us, like Paul, have to live with some kind of thorn in the flesh. The thorn is not always removed, regardless of what the health and wealth evangelist say on television!

When someone tries to tell me that if you have faith you don't have to be sick, I am reminded of Paul. I am reminded of my own mother, who was among the most dedicated Christians I have ever known. I have often said that if someone had asked me for a definition of the Christian life, I would

have pointed to my mother. Yet, when she was terminally ill a charismatic man who told me, "if you have faith in God you don't have to get sick." And I remember my own thorn in the flesh which had been a constant companion for fifteen years. There are many common ailments which should not be interpreted as a thorn in the flesh, but I am convinced mine is.

**A MESSENGER OF SATAN.** Possibly from the time of Job, Jewish people thought of Satan as the agent, or messenger of physical disease or disability. In Job, God permitted Satan's attack of Job to prove, or to test the Patriarch. The messenger of Satan is affliction personified. "To buffet me" denotes the permanent nature of the physical malady, whatever it was. He repeats the reason for the thorn in the flesh - "to keep me from exalting myself!"

**12:8 - I IMploRED.** *"Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me."* Paul had asked the Lord on three occasions to remove this thorn in the flesh; the messenger of Satan. As Jesus prayed three times that the humiliation and suffering He was sent to bear would pass from Him, Paul prayed to the risen Lord that his thorn in the flesh would be taken from him. "His prayer was not answered in the way he had at first wished; nevertheless, the answer he received remained with him as the most powerful inspiration in his life" [14 - 178].

I asked God to remove my thorn in the flesh many, many times. He has never removed the thorn but He has given me His constant attention and care every day. His grace really is sufficient! I first observed this when, following a simple foot injury that was compounded by incorrect bars and supports for shoes, I ask the Lord to heal me. I prayed as fervently as I possible could, even quoting Scripture to the Lord. He did not heal me, but there were many times when I called on the Lord to give me both strength and relief from pain so that I could do what needed to be done that day. I recall the times that I was able to make the hospital call, or lead in the funeral service without a set-back. I would convince myself that I had just begun to make some progress. The next day I would try to walk the same distance, only to experience a set-back and that required two or three weeks to overcome. Because of my experience I have learned the difference between walking by sight and walking by faith.

**12:9 - MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU.** "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." The words "he said" is in the perfect tense, possibly meaning that the words, "my grace is sufficient for you," would remain with him as a source of comfort and assurance.

At one time while I was in seminary I had a roommate who was a blessing to me. He was married and had three children. They were expecting their fourth baby. I was shocked to learn that his wife had died in child birth. He told me later that the hardest thing he had ever done in his life was to go home and tell those three children that their mother would not be coming home. The baby was saved. He didn't know how he would tell them, but on the way home the Lord gave him this promise, "My grace is sufficient for you." God's grace has been more that sufficient for him and his children.



**POWER IS PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS.** Or, "My power is made perfect in weakness." This principle has been verified countless times. Names like Helen Keller, Joni Erickson and Chester Swor come to mind. I heard Dr. Swor the first time in 1954 at Ridgecrest, North he walked with the help of a walking stick to the pulpit, rested his left fore-arm on the pulpit and hanged his walking stick over his arm. As he began to speak I began to feel disappointment, but in a few minutes I was hanging onto every word he said. I discovered that every one was on the edge of his, or her, seat. Dr. Swor has said that he owed much of his success in preaching to adults and young people to the infirmity that had been his constant companion all his life. He had a lot of time on his hands, so he use that time to study the Word of God.

If you have a physical problem, it may be just that. Arthritis and other maladies associated with aging might feel like a thorn in the flesh, but that may not be the case. However, if you prayerfully conclude that God has given you a thorn in the flesh, He will bless you and bless others through you if you will yield your problem is to Him.

**I WILL RATHER BOAST OF MY WEAKNESS.** He has already stated this principle. Rather than boast of his visions and revelations, he will boast of his humiliation and weakness. He is consistent with his commitment.

**THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST.** As stated already, the power of God is made perfect in Paul's weakness. He has discovered how much better it is to be weak himself, but perfected by the power of Christ than to be strong in himself (as the world sees strength) and to be weak in the Lord. The power of Christ in his heart was more important to him than freedom from pain and suffering.

**12:10 - THEREFORE.** "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." The "therefores" of Paul are significant. On the basis of the previous argument, he will now draw a conclusion. That which follows is based on what has just been said.

**CONTENT WITH WEAKNESSES.** This is not the way the world reasons. But because his weakness is made perfect by the power of Christ, he is content with weakness. The same applies to: distresses, persecutions, and difficulties.

**FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.** He will face any affliction for Christ's sake. He will endure for His sake.

**FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.** Here we have another of the paradoxes of the Bible. He prefers to be weak, because his weakness is made perfect in Christ. God's power is manifested in weakness of His servants.

6. He boasts of his unselfishness service, 12:11-18.

**12:11 - I HAVE BECOME FOOLISH.** *“I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.”* Paul could not get away from the feeling that his boasting was foolish. He says it again, “In spite of what he said in verse 6 that he would not be foolish if he glorified in the other Paul. But he feels that he has dropped back to the mood of 11:1, 16” [12 - 266]. He did not like to boast but they compelled him to do it. In one sense the false apostles had forced him into boasting; but it was the Corinthian Christians who, by listening to the false teachers, had forced him to defend himself and his ministry.

**I SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMMENDED BY YOU.** Rather than compelling him to commend himself, they should have commended him. This was an understatement! He has served them both courageously and sacrificially. He loved them and they knew it. He had preached the Gospel of salvation to them and they had been saved. He had fed the flock and ministered to them for eighteen months. They knew him and should have been loyal to him, but disloyalty, first to their Savior and then to their apostle, led them to turn their backs on both. Of course, the trouble makers from Jerusalem had convinced them that by following their leadership and rejecting Paul, they were honoring Christ.

The church today can make an application of this. Let's take a hypothetical situation. Brother Faithful is the new pastor at Holy Memory Baptist Church, right beside the Holy Memory Cemetery where generations of ancestors of his members are buried. Practically every leader had praised his work time after time and pledged their support; “You can count on me, Preacher.” But then Brother Faithful expresses some reservations about the marriage of Joy Pious to twice divorced I. Ben Faithless. That’s when Mrs. Sweetly Pious began calling the church leaders and reminding of all the Pious family had done and was done for the church.

At first the deacons and most other leaders assured their minister of their support. They told him he was right and that they would stand beside him. But as one after another began to avoid him, rumors reached him that former supporters are meeting regularly with Mrs. Pious. But several members remained loyal to Brother Faithful, the man they all knew (a few weeks earlier) the Lord sent them. It became obvious that Mrs. Pious and her family would reject any effort toward a reconciliation.

Soon, only a few members called to tell him they were praying for him. In time only two men stop by to visit - every one in town knew about all of the minister's visitors. Finally, one of the men says, "Brother Faithful, I believe you are right and have been all along. Mrs. Pious has run off the last three preachers we have had and as far as I can tell, they were all innocent and she supported them until they disagreed with her. And, I suppose she will continue to do it. I would like to help, but, you see, I am going to have to live with these people when you are gone and I can't afford to say anything. You see, my wife's grandmother was a second cousin to Mrs. Pious' grandfather, by marriage that is. And besides, I owe Mr. Pious money and I hope when my son finishes college he can come back to our local school and teach. Five of the seven board members are related to the family. You understand how it is."

The writer remembers the time when a man began to criticize him over a doctrinal matter (he later admitted that he had been wrong). A few members mentioned that they had spoken with him, but they could not see his point. One young lady went to see the man and said, "I don't know who is right or wrong about this doctrine, but I do know this much. God called Brother Sanders to preach the Gospel and he led us to call him as our pastor. If he is wrong, I believe the Lord will straighten him out. But if he is right and you continue to attack him, I believe the Lord is going to deal with you." That ended the problem for the pastor, but the man continued to struggle with doctrinal issues, moving from church to church before getting involved with a popular para-church movement.

In either case, the pastor might have spoken up for himself. But it was far better in the second case when a faithful church member took a stand. A remarkable thing about this was the fact that from the time her new pastor had moved onto the field until a short time before the problem, she had been helping care for her grandmother and hardly knew the pastor, except through her husband and other members.

If some of the Corinthian Christians had stood up for Paul when the false apostles arrived on the scene, one wonders how much trouble could have been avoided. If you had been at Corinth, what would you have done? What would you do today? If at any time God wants you to defend his servant, you may say the right word at the right time and protect his ministry. But your silence may cause him to suffer in silence, or force him to defend himself, either of which could destroy his ministry in your area.

**IN NO RESPECT WAS I INFERIOR.** Paul repeats the boast made in 11:5f, that he is in no way inferior to these "most eminent apostles." He again resorts to sarcasm as he calls the false apostles "super-extra apostles" [12 - 267]. He has pointed out that they are, in fact, pseudo-apostles, but in accordance with their estimate of themselves, he calls them "uper apostles."

Many ministers were concerned with the fact that during a very popular period for religious talk shows on television, hosts often paraded "super-saints" out to share incredible tales of their faithfulness and God's blessings. They often gave testimonies about how God blessed them with health or wealth. Some featured famous entertainers or athletes, but it was a rare thing to see "an ordinary Christian" (whatever that means). That is not to say that these guests were not genuine Christians, nor that the hosts were insincere. But these programs did run the risk of focusing more attention on the individual than on the Lord, thus making them seem like super-saints. But that was not the case with these "super apostles" in Corinth. They were fakes who paraded themselves before the church as superior apostles.

**EVEN THOUGH I AM A NOBODY.** Or, I am nothing. Even the boasting he had done caused him to react by expressing his true feelings about himself. In I Cor. 15:9, he expressed the same feeling: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

**12:12 - THE SIGNS OF A TRUE APOSTLE.** *“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”* True signs affirming his apostleship had been performed among them. They had every opportunity to observe a true apostle and it is inconceivable that they would be so easily misled by false apostles. The same astonishment was expressed in writing to the Galatians who had been so easily persuaded to forsake the true Gospel by the Judaizers. He wrote, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:6).

**SIGNS AND WONDERS AND MIRACLES.** Paul is not listing three separate categories of miracles. All these supernatural deeds were miracles viewed from different perspectives. Signs, wonders and miracles, or mighty deeds marked the ministry of Jesus and they marked the ministry of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Signs and wonders are often mentioned together. They point to different qualities of the same miracle. The word for “mighty deeds” means power, especially inherent power [19 - Lexicon].

**12:13 - WERE YOU TREATED AS INFERIOR.** *“For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!”* Without a doubt, the super apostles had charged that Paul had discriminated against the church at Corinth by not accepting money for his ministry there. This is a very interesting charge. His enemies had to use some imagination to come up with that one! Had he made them inferior to other churches by not sponging off them? Regardless of how ludicrous the charge was; and regardless of how much patience was required to answer this charge, he is inspired by the Holy Spirit to deal with it.

**I DID NOT BECOME A BURDEN.** He had been accused of not treating the church at Corinth like other churches he served. He had received financial support from other churches, but he had not let them support him. How could they find fault with him for not wanting to be a burden to them? If they were offended by this, he asks for their forgiveness.

**12:14 - FOR THIS THIRD TIME I AM READY TO COME TO YOU.** *“Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.”* He had spent eighteen months in Corinth the first time he was there. He had apparently made a "painful visit" to Corinth following Timothy's return with disturbing news from the church. He had planned to visit Corinth before going to Macedonia, but changed his mind to avoid adding to their sorrow. But now he is planning a third visit, and while they had misunderstood his refusing to accept their support the first time he was there, he had made up his mind that he was not going to accept their financial contribution when he returned. This might have seemed strange in light of what he had written them before: “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14, KJV).

There are two reasons that he will not accept their financial support. First, He does not want their money, he wants them. Secondly, he wanted to maintain a privileged position with them. He wanted to be as a parent to them. A child in that day did not save for their parents; parents saved for

their children. Grown up children were responsible for their parents, but children were not. Their parents were responsible for them. Paul felt that they were his children and as such, he should provide for them.

**12:15 - EXPENDED FOR YOUR SOULS.** *“I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?”* This is an example for every God-called minister of the Gospel. Paul says that when he returned he would work as he had the first time. He would spend what resources he had; and be expended for their spiritual welfare. If his love for them increased, would their love for him decrease?

**12:16 - BE THAT AS IT MAY.** *“But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.”* He apparently feels that he has successfully refuted the charges that he had refused their financial contributions for some ulterior reason. Now there is another charge, possibly a more serious charge he must answer.

**CRAFTY FELLOW THAT I AM.** If we supply the words, *“They say”* after *“nevertheless,”* it will help us to understand it. *“To be sure, they said, he didn’t take any money while he was here, but what about that collection for the saints? Who knows in whose pockets that will go?”* [20 - Footnotes]. Paul had refuted their charges, so they invent new charges. They suggested that Paul was being crafty in refusing financial support while he was there, because he had something better in mind. And that was the offering.

They were accusing him of being a clever con-man, who refused their money to gain their confidence so that he could skim something off a much bigger collection after he left Corinth for Jerusalem. Those who have listened to people try to build a case against others are keenly aware of how subtly they can twist anything around to prove their charge. Any answer is immediately twisted to prove their point rather than disproving it.

**12:17 - I HAVE NOT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF YOU.** *“Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?”* He had not been a burden to them while he was there. He insists that he had not taken advantage of them through those he had sent to them (Timothy, Titus and others).

**12:18 - I URGED TITUS.** *“I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?”* Paul “urged” Titus to go and “sent” the brother with him. In 12:18 he “desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother.” Robertson suggests that the brother was probably the brother of Titus, but there is no real basis for this. Paul is sending Titus and the brother to complete the work Titus had begun earlier. The Corinthians knew Titus and probably knew the brother who would accompany him. Paul asked if Titus had taken advantage of them in any way while he was there. He knew what the answer would be.

### **C. Paul Appeals to the Christians at Corinth to Repent, 12:19-21.**

**12:19 - YOU HAVE BEEN THINKING.** *“All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.”* All the time they have been reading his defense, they had been thinking that he was simply defending himself to them. There was more to this letter than that.

**SPEAKING IN CHRIST.** There may have been some who read this, or heard it read, who thought they had Paul squirming as he sought to answer charges against him. No doubt, the super apostles were gloating over his efforts to defend himself. They were on the offensive and he was on the defensive. If anyone thought like that, he is about to disillusion them. The fact is, God is his only judge, not the people at Corinth; and it is to God he offers his defense.

**FOR YOUR UPBUILDING.** As he had worked for their edification when he was with them, he writes for their edification now. Ministers and lay-people alike should always seek to build up the church. Unfortunately, some seek to tear down rather than build up. They have their own agenda for the church and they had rather tear it down than yield to someone else. There may be some who will support the church as long as they can be he leader, but if you take that away from them, they will either tear down the work, or leave.

**BELOVED.** At this point they had spent a considerable amount of time reading this letter. If there had been any doubt he clears it up now. They are his 'beloved' but they are not his judge.

**12:20 - I AM AFRAID...WHEN I COME.** *“For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.”* He was planning another visit, and even though he had been greatly encouraged by the report Titus gave him in Macedonia, he still anticipates some problems. He would be anxious to see those who had repented, but not all of them had repented. He knows his enemies are still there and because they are false apostles, he anticipates opposition. He is prepared to face "strife, jealousy, anger tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances."

**12:21 - I AM AFRAID.** *“I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.”* He is apprehensive about his proposed visit. He has bragged about them to Titus and to the Macedonians and he expects to see a lot of progress. At the same time he is aware that he may be humbled by God before them if they are living carnal lives, as when they were in paganism, rather than living in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Instead of rejoicing over them in the Lord, he may have to mourn their failure to abandon pagan ways. Some of them, he fears, may be still unrepentant of the immorality which they have continued to practice even after their conversion” [14 - 185].

## CONCLUSION - 13:1-14

### A. Paul States His Plans, 13:1-10.

**13:1 - THE THIRD TIME I AM COMING.** *“This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.”*

He had gone to Corinth when he began the work, planting the church and laboring there for eighteen months (see acts 18). The second visit was probably the “painful visit” (see II Cor. 2:1f and the introduction to this study) after Timothy returned with news of serious trouble in the church. And now he is planning a third visit. This would have been the fourth visit if he had not changed his plans and gone to Macedonia directly from Ephesus or Troas.

**CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY.** Paul, who had been accused of being weak in their presence and bold when he was away from them, has some new for them. He warns them that, if necessary, trials were going to be held when he arrived. If these trials were necessary, they would be held by the law set forth in Deut. 19:15: “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

**13:2 - I HAVE PREVIOUSLY SAID.** *“I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone...”* When present the second time he had said in their presence the same thing he is going to say in this letter. It would be interesting to know where those super apostles got the idea that he had been weak when he was present with them. The reference to the second visit here should eliminate any speculation about whether or not he made three visits to Corinth.

**TO THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED.** Is he speaking to the false apostles from Jerusalem, or to those members of the church at Corinth who had been misled by them? He may have both in mind, but there is no doubt that he had in mind those members who had opposed him. He warns all those who have sinned “in the past and all the rest as well.” Former offenders and current ones alike will face apostolic discipline.

**IF I COME AGAIN.** This is a condition of the third class. At the time of his second visit, he had stated that if he had to return, the offenders would not be spared his apostolic authority. The writer sees no basis for Robertson's claim that this "suits the idea that Paul had not yet made the second visit" [12 - 270]. It seems that he had made that statement first when he was there for his second visit. It was conditional then, possibly pointing to the possibility of another painful visit for disciplinary reasons. At the time of the writing his plans are no longer conditional, but he repeats his

earlier warning. There is still a possibility that the discipline will be needed.

**I WILL NOT SPARE ANYONE.** His apostolic authority is broad enough in scope to include any member of the church, as well as the super apostles who were trying to take over the church and destroy Paul's influence with the people. It may seem to us today that this might have been a hollow threat. We should not think that he would be limited to a shouting match with the opponents. We are not told the limits of apostolic authority, but if Peter's experience is any indication, it was awesome. We find in Acts 5:3-10:

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

**13:3 - SEEKING FOR PROOF OF THE CHRIST.** *“Since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.”* They had expressed doubt that Paul was a Christian, and denied his apostleship. To deny that Christ was speaking through him was the same as denying his apostleship and even his salvation. It may have been because of his restraint in answering the false apostles (who knew no such restraint) that they doubted whether or not he was “a full apostle, vested with all the authority of Christ as the one who commissioned him (cf. 10.1, 8-11)” [4 - 253].

They desired proof that Christ was speaking through him. He is saying, in essence, "now you are going to get the proof you desired." He may be weak in dealing with them compared with his critics (as charged in 11:21), but Christ is not weak. When Paul comes, he will be the vehicle of His great power in dealing with the problem.

**13:4 - HE WAS CRUCIFIED.** *“For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”* The lost person does not understand that in weakness the power of God is revealed. The death of Christ on the cross had to appear to pagans as a weakness on the part of God. Jesus died for our sins, but the death He died appeared as weakness to the world.

**YET HE LIVES BECAUSE OF THE POWER OF GOD.** And what power that is! Jesus was raised from death by the power of God. That power comes to the individual believer when he places his trust in Jesus Christ. "Those who are united by faith to Christ share the 'weakness' of his



passion but also the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3.10f.) [4 - 253]. As Paul wrote in Rom. 6:10, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

In dealing with the Corinthians Paul will demonstrate the power of God which comes through his sharing in the resurrection life of Christ. That same power is available to every Christian today.

**13:5 - TEST YOURSELVES...EXAMINE YOURSELVES.** *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?"* Every believer needs to test himself daily to be sure that he is "in the faith." Every Christian should examine his heart to be sure that he is a child of God. Yourselves is emphatic. They, not Paul needed to examine themselves. The Scripture points to many tests or proofs. In I John 2:3 we read, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." In I John 3:14 we see that "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death." And in John 3:24 we find, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Every believer should also examine his heart to be sure that as a Christian he is walking by faith and not by sight. Not only is the individual saved by faith in Christ, but he must live in that faith daily. When church members revert to the ways of the flesh, problems develop within the body. Problems may develop when all the members are walking by faith, or in the Spirit. But they have the Holy Spirit in their hearts to lead them to His solution.

When the Christian refuses to live by faith the work of the Holy Spirit is quenched. When the believer continues in the flesh, refuses to walk in the Spirit and lapses into sin, he grieves the Holy Spirit. Most believers would say that they have no desire to grieve the Holy Spirit. At the same time, it would be interesting to know how many people in the average worship service would know it if the Holy Spirit withdrew from the service. It is possible that the service would go on with singing, praying, giving and preaching and the people would go home without knowing of His departure.

**DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES!** Paul could not have asked a more practical, or pertinent question. Every believer should recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in his, or her, life every day. Leonard Ravenhill said that he had stopped asking people, "Are you a Christian?" and started asking, "Does Jesus live in you?" A church member might say he is a Christian because he has joined a church, or because of baptism. But the test he needs to apply to himself is, do you recognize the presence of Christ in your life.

You may ask how he will recognize the presence of Christ in his life. The Christian life is a supernatural life. If everything that happens in your life has a naturalistic explanation, you need to spend a lot of time with the Lord in prayer and Bible study. If you are seeing mountains move when you pray, you are aware of the presence of Christ in your life.

**UNLESS YOU HAVE FAILED THE TEST.** There is little doubt that many church members

today would fail that test. It is possible that there were members of the church at Corinth would fail the test, too. Christ does not live in the life of the unsaved person. Their time would have been better spent testing themselves than in trying to prove that Paul was a heretic. They had been asking the wrong questions and examining the wrong person's life.

**13:6 - I TRUST THAT YOU WILL REALIZE.** *“But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”* They had been judging Paul rather severely. He trusts that after such careful scrutiny they had come up with some right answers concerning his relationship with God.

**WE OURSELVES DO NOT FAIL THE TEST.** Paul was willing to examine his life to see if Christ was in his life. They had spent a lot more time testing Paul's faith than their own. If they were spiritually discerning, they should know that Paul did not fail the test. His faith in Jesus Christ was genuine. His life and message should have confirmed that to them.

**13:7 - NOW WE PRAY TO GOD.** *“Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved.”* Paul prayed regularly for the Christians at Corinth. He also prayed for all the churches he had planted in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those Christians who were faithful to the Lord must have been pleased to know that Paul was praying for them. I visited with Dr. and Mrs. Luther Hall in West Monroe, Louisiana shortly before his death. Dr. Hall served the Lord both as a pastor and denominational worker for many years before retirement and continued to serve in a remarkable way until his home-going. This dear friend said something he had said before, *“Brother Johnny, I pray for you by name every morning.”* I loved him and I appreciated his praying for me.

**THAT YOU DO NO WRONG.** Paul was praying, not for himself, but for them to do that which was right. Bruce captures the idea here: *“My prayer to God is that you may not do wrong, that you may come rather to a proper frame of mind and acknowledge the Christ who speaks in me, not that the genuineness of my apostleship may be confirmed but that you may do what is right - even though my apostleship should be proved counterfeit after all!”* [4 - 254].

**13:8 - THE TRUTH.** *“For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.”* The truth here is the Gospel. He is not saying, *“the truth will out.”* The truth of every situation may never be known in this world, even though it is known to God and according to the Bible, each person will be judged according to the truth. Paul is looking at the long run. One may try to hold down the truth for a while, but in the end it will prove victorious. With the world situation as unstable as it is today, it help to be reminded of this. Even Satan, the *“father of liars,”* has come face to face with the Truth and received his eternal sentence (Rev. 20).

**13:9 - FOR WE REJOICE.** *“For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.”* He is not rejoicing in personal weakness, a weakness of his faith in God, or in his apostolic authority; but in the exercise of that authority. *“Paul had rather be weak in the sense of failing to exercise his apostolic power because they did the noble thing. He is no Jonah who lamented when Nineveh repented”* [12 - 271].

**THAT YOU BE MADE COMPLETE.** This is the prayer of every dedicated pastor for the people he serves. This word is translated "perfection" in the KJV, but the word means completion or maturity. Every church needs more mature members and fewer thirty, forty and fifty year old babies. There is no maturity in a church with all the bickering that was going on in Corinth.

**13:10 - FOR THIS REASON.** *"For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down."* Paul had been criticized for being weak in person but strong in his letters. He, once again, answers a charge. The reason he is writing this while absent is that he wanted to avoid a repetition of the pain and anxiety both he and they experienced on his "painful visit."

**THAT WHEN PRESENT.** He will be joining them shortly and he does not want to "use severity in accordance with the authority" which God had given him. He is conscious of his apostolic authority and would exercise it if they forced it on him. He preferred, however, to avoid using severe measures. One gets the feeling that if they persisted in rebellion at this point they would be better off facing Ghengis Khan than this little sickly Jew with the thorn in the flesh whom the Lord was sending to them again. But he is doing every thing he can, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to avoid being severe with them.

**FOR BUILDING UP AND NOT TEARING DOWN.** The Lord had given him apostolic power and authority for the purpose of building up churches and not for the purpose of tearing them down. If he is severe with them, it will be because they force it on him. He will not tear down or punish because his ego demands it, but to protect the witness of the church in this wicked city.

Every pastor and every lay person should determine in his heart that he will use all his ability and the gifts with which God has blessed him to build up God's church and never to tear it down. There have been times when churches have split and the Lord's Kingdom was blessed. There have been many times when churches have split and all that was left was two weak, struggling churches.

The writer was told something of the history of a very strong church. It seems that someone objected to the pastor's preaching on the Blood of Christ. When he asked a faithful member what he would recommend, the man said, "We are never going to change this situation here. The only thing we can do if you are going to continue preaching like that is to take the people who believe what you preach and start a new church." They did and the Lord blessed their work and it prospered. The other church was not weakened significantly by the move. Both churches bear a witness for Him today.

## **B. He Adds Greetings and a Benediction, 13:11-14.**

**13:11 - FINALLY BRETHREN.** *"Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."* He is bringing the

letter to a close with his customary greetings and benediction.

Note that the word perfect is used in the King James Version rather than complete [NASV]. The emphasis is on Christian maturity, not sinless perfection which Paul says is impossible. Only Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

**13:12 - GREET ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS.** In the Jewish synagogue the sexes were separated and the men greeted each other with a holy kiss, and the women greeted each other with the kiss. This seems to have carried over into the early church. It was later dropped by the church because of charges of immorality made by pagans.

**13:13 - ALL THE SAINTS GREET YOU.** Paul's fellow missionaries and the saints in Macedonia joined in this greeting. Paul had represented the church in the best light to the saints in Macedonia, rather than dwell on the problems. There were some godly people in Corinth and they were doing some good things. Paul held them up as an example to the Macedonians to motivate them to give to the collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. They were sincere in their greeting. We must love and support our sister churches. There is no place for jealousy in the Kingdom of God.

**13:14 - THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”* In this benediction the apostle will honor the Savior with one of his favorite titles: “Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Universalists should take notice. There is but one name by which anyone is saved.

**THE LOVE OF GOD.** He asks for them what they will always have. His love is expressed throughout the Scripture, but no where is it stated any more powerfully than in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Fellowship in the NT means a 'participation in' or partnership. This is an early and very clear witness to the ministry of the Trinity. We are privileged to participate in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He had been severe in dealing with the saints at Corinth, but he closes in the spirit of joy and praise. The very thought that Our Creator gives us the privilege of fellowship with Him should prompt us to praise our Lord every day.

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