

2 CORINTHIANS

Authorship: J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible p. 924, wrote, "That the Second Epistle is a genuine work of the apostle Paul and has seldom been seriously disputed."

Date: Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. xv, gave the date of 2 Corinthians as the autumn of 57 A.D. James Macknight, Apostolic Epistles with Commentary, Vol. II, p. 308, favored "the summer of 57 A.D." David Lipscomb, Second Corinthians, p. 13, set it in "the latter part of 57 A.D."

The discovery of the fragment of a limestone tablet at Delphi in 1905, fixing the date of Gallio's coming to Corinth as proconsul in the year of 51 A.D., has led to an adjustment of the usually accepted date for 2 Corinthians.

R. V. G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians p. 15, said, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians was almost certainly written in the late autumn of A.D. 56."

Unity of 2 Corinthians:

Phillip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. xxi, pointed out, that there was a time when to question the unity of 2 Corinthians, "Was to be very much in the fashion, but now a swing back to the traditional view of the letter's integrity is noticeable. Hughes went on to name a number of the outstanding scholars of today who declared that "2 Corinthians is beyond doubt a unity." There has never existed even the slightest evidence to the contrary.

Occasion of writing:

2 Corinthians was written about a year after 1 Corinthians. After the riot at Ephesus, Paul found it necessary to leave there for Macedonia; but, in spite of the fact that wonderful opportunity opened to him at Troas, where he had stopped en route, his anxieties regarding the situation at Corinth began to press upon him very heavily.

Titus might have been working with the situation at Corinth for some time; but, as preachers often do, Titus had neglected to write Paul any real

news of what had taken place. Paul, therefore, could not settle down to a preaching tour in Troas; but, instead, he decided to strike out though Macedonia in search of his brother Titus. He met him, supposedly at Philippi, learned the glad news of the obedience of the Corinthians, and promptly wrote 2 Corinthians.

Criticisms of Paul:

It is clear that 2 Corinthians was Paul's response to vicious and untruthful slanders alleged against him by false teachers and savage partisans at Corinth

- (1) Some questioned his credentials as a true apostle.
- (2) They alleged vacillations and cowardice on his part, due to his change of plans.
- (3) They hinted charges of irregularity in his handling the collection for the poor in Jerusalem.
- (4) They charged him with conscious inferiority, citing the fact that he did not preach for pay.
- (5) They demeaned his personal appearance and made fun of his sermons.

It is not hard to see in such evil slurs the hand of the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem. They never missed an opportunity of pursuit and harassment of their former sheriff who became the most gifted of apostles.

Nature of the Epistle:

There is no doubt that this letter creates and sustains an emotional impact nowhere exceeded in the New Testament. Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. xxxv, wrote, "It is a letter of "profound spiritual riches."

F. W. Farrar, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Vol . 19, 2 Corinthians, p. ii, wrote, "As hope is the keynote of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, joy of that to the Philippians, faith of that to the Romans,

heavenly things to that of the Ephesians, affliction is the predominant word and thought in the Second Epistle to Corinthians.”

Paul was a man of absolute integrity; and as an apostle of Christ, one of the most gifted who ever lived. When such a man was subjected to the attack of vicious and unprincipled enemies, his very soul was outraged. The pouring out of his impassioned defense in this letter is an eloquent and moving a dissertation as was ever penned upon earth.

Outline: The epistle falls naturally into three divisions.

Chapters 1-7 stress the joy and relaxation that Paul felt upon receiving the good news of the success of his corrective efforts in Corinth.

Chapters 8-9 are principally concerned with the promotion of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Chapters 10-13 contain Paul’s impassioned and vehement defense of his apostleship. The logical unity of these three sections will become starkly evident as they are studied.

CHAPTER 1

After the salutation (verses 1-2, this chapter is wholly given to Paul’s affirmation of his absolute sincerity and integrity. Philip E. Hughes, Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 9, said, “The import of verses 3-11 seems to have been missed by many commentators.”

Verses 12-14 have the dogmatic answer that in the case of the apostle Paul, “There were no hidden actions in his life . . . there were no hidden motives in his life . . . and there were no hidden meanings in any of his words.”

Verse 1

“Paul, an apostle . . .” the affirmation of his apostleship stands in the salutation. It was most appropriate that in this epistle, wherein a major section concerns the vindication of his rights as an apostle, and to a community where

his authority was being challenged, his bold declaration of his apostolic authority should stand at the very beginning.

“Timothy our brother . . .” It may be assumed that Sosthenes was not present when this letter was sent. Timothy had aided in the evangelization of Corinth when the church was founded there; but he did not share any apostolic authority with Paul in this letter.

“The church of God which is at Corinth . . .” In view of all the disorders and sins which beset the Christians who received this letter, it may be asked, “How, in conscience, could Paul refer to them as the “church of God”?

John Calvin, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, Comment on 1 Corinthians 1:2 said, “Paul discerned among them their doctrine of the gospel, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. They retained the fundamental doctrine, adored the one God, and invoked the name of Christ; and since they placed the confidence of their salvation in Christ, and had a ministry that was not altogether corrupted, the church still continued to exist there.”

It is apparent everywhere in the New Testament that the legitimacy of congregations and Christians alike depended more upon the ideals and intentions of their heart than upon any perfection in the realization of them. Christians should take courage from this.

“With all the saints . . .” This is a common designation for Christians in the New Testament; but it should be understood more as a description of what they should have been than as a description of what they were.

Frank G. Carver, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 500, wrote, “Paul does not address his readers as saints because they have realized in life the full implications of the name, but simply because they authentically belong to Christ as a body of believers.”

However, there is also in this word a prospect of the ultimate destiny of every Christian. Whatever the shortcomings now, there is certain to come the hour when every child of God shall be presented “without blemish” and “perfect in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28) It is in that manifest destiny of ultimate

perfection that a true Christian, regardless of mistakes, is authentically a “saint.”

“Who are throughout Achaia . . .” F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 19, 2 Corinthians, p. 1, said the geographical area of Achaia had two meanings. In the classical sense, “It meant only the northern strip of the Peloponnesus; as a Roman province the name included both Hellas and the Peloponnesus.” Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 5 said: “In fact, it included “the whole area south of the province of Macedonia.”

Verse 2

“Grace to you and peace . . .” Wick Broomall, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 651, has an excellent comment on this, “In the protocol of salvation, recognized even in a salutation, grace always precedes peace. The former is the basis and the foundation of the latter. Therefore, the order cannot be changed. No man can have peace who has not previously experienced Divine grace.”

“God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” Note that Christ is linked equally with God, as the source of grace and peace. Furthermore Jesus Christ is distinguished by the title “Lord.”

Verse 3

“Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” This is not a denial of the deity of Christ implied in the previous verse; but it brings to view the incarnation, during which the sonship of our Lord was predominant.

“Father of mercies . . .” It is the mercy of God, more than any other attribute, which has captured the imagination of mankind.

“God of all comfort . . .” As a matter of truth, God is the God of everything beautiful and desirable. He is the God of patience and of comfort (Romans 15:5), the God of glory (Acts 7:2) and the God of hope (Romans 15:33), the God of peace (Romans 15:33), and the God of love and peace (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Verse 4

“Our affliction . . .” Here is introduced the word which flies like a hammer over the entire epistle. The word with its synonym “suffering” occurs eight times in this paragraph.

“That we may be able to comfort . . .” Only those who have suffered are able to comfort others. It is God who is the source of all comfort, except that which is merely superficial; and even those purely human sources of comfort are themselves related to the nature of God.

“Who comforts us . . .” One of the great comforts Paul had received and which he acknowledged here, John William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament, p. 439, said it, “Seems to have resulted from the good reports brought from Corinth by Titus.”

Paul’s 1 Corinthians letter had accomplished its purpose; the Corinthians had repented; and Paul was comforted in the knowledge that the crisis in Corinth had passed.

Verse 5

“The sufferings of Christ . . .” These may not be understood as the usual hardships and tribulations of life, but as sufferings, oppositions, threats and dangers resulting directly from the sufferer’s engagement in the service of the Lord.

Verse 6

“For your comfort and salvation . . .” All of the hardships endured by the apostle were for the sake of the eternal salvation of his converts. Whatever earthly hardships and persecutions attend the work, either ministers or others, the goal of saving souls from eternal death is paramount.

“The same sufferings . . .” In this Paul acknowledged that the Corinthians were under the same hatred and opposition of Satan that he himself endured.

“Patient enduring. . .” The Christian answer to the devil’s opposition is patient endurance. Steadfastness is the prime requirement of all Christian living.

Verse 7

This says that all sufferings received in the service of Christ are also certain to receive the comfort of Christ, the sufferings and the comfort being inseparably linked together. “We suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:17) “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.” (2 Timothy 2:12)

Verse 8

“Which came to us in Asia . . .” It is impossible for us to know exactly what it was that befell Paul in Asia.

THE AFFLICTION IN ASIA

McGarvey followed the reasoning of such commentators as Calvin, Paley, Olshausen and others in identifying this affliction as the riot at Ephesus, described by Luke. (Acts 19:23—20:1)

Tertullian, Ante-Nicene Fathers, on the Resurrection of the Flesh, xlviii, Vol. III, p. 582, authored the earlier comment that has come down through history; and he stated that, “Paul in this passage referred to his fighting wild beasts at Ephesus, stating that Paul enumerated it to induce an unfaltering belief in the resurrection of the flesh.”

Charles Hodge thought Paul might have referred in general terms to “plots and attempts against Paul’s life.” Many commentators explain it as some terrible illness from which Paul recovered.

That such an awful danger did in fact exist is proved by Paul crediting Priscilla and Aquila with having saved his life, placing the Gentile churches of the whole Roman empire in debt to them for “laying down their own necks” on Paul’s behalf. (Romans 16:4) This event of their saving Paul’s life was extensively known among the Gentile churches everywhere; and when Paul later arrived at Corinth, he surely gave them all the details of it.

Verse 9

Paul treasured the awful experience through which he had passed for the great lesson which it reinforced, namely, that one's trust should never be in himself but in the Lord, even God who raises the dead.

Verse 10

"From so great a peril of death . . ." How could anyone refer to any ordinary fatal illness in terms like these?

"Will yet deliver us . . ." Paul could not have meant that he still had remnants of the "fatal infection;" but that whatever danger might beset him in the future, he would still confidently rely upon God to deliver him.

Verse 11

"You also joining in . . ." This is not a declaration that the Corinthians had helped (by their prayers) Paul's deliverance from the affliction in Asia, just mentioned; although, in a general sense, their constant prayers on Paul's behalf certainly had a part in it. Paul expected their participation in the thanksgiving for his deliverance.

"By many persons . . ." The gift of Paul's deliverance had resulted from the participation of many people, among who, no doubt, were Priscilla and Aquila; and it was appropriate that many people, including the Christians in Corinth, should participate in the thanksgiving.

Verse 12

This verse is Paul's affirmation of total sincerity and godliness in all dealings with the Corinthians. He gloried in the fact of the absolute integrity and uprightness of his behavior among them. He had not indulged in the tricks and devices of "fleshly wisdom." His actions were open before God and themselves; there were no hidden deeds of darkness and dishonesty on his part.

Verse 13

There were no hidden things in his writings. If his enemies had perpetrated the slander that his writings were deceptive, or that he wrote one thing and meant another, this verse nailed their accusations as falsehoods.

“Until the end . . .” The widespread error to the effect that Paul thought the end of the world was just around the corner probably lay at the base of the mistranslation. E. B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Seconde Epitre Aux Corinthiens*, in loco, said, “Those who wish to understand this in a eschatological sense are not only misled by the mistaken idea that Paul and the Corinthians were expecting the end of the world as near at hand. They also commit a serious error of literary judgment in failing to notice the intentional antithesis between know and know fully, as here and as in 1 Corinthians 13:12.”

Verse 14

“You also partially did understand . . .” the significance of this is that “a portion of the church believed him to be sincere and consistent, though there was a faction that denied it.” (David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 30)

“In the day of our Lord Jesus . . .” This is a glance at the final day of Judgment, at the Second Coming of our Lord. All of the affairs of the Christian’s daily life must be evaluated in the light of that final reckoning.

Verses 15-16

Paul’s first purpose was to go via Corinth to Macedonia, and thence via Corinth again to Judaea; but in 1 Corinthians 16:5, he wrote that this plan had given way to another, and that he proposed to go to Macedonia first. This was apparently the basis of the slander that Paul could not make up his mind, or that he was deceitful.

“Helped on my journey . . .” This is a reference to the early custom of members of the congregation accompanying the apostle part of the way upon occasions of his departure.

Verse 17

Paul's argument is simply that: Surely I cannot be accused of fickleness merely upon the basis of changes in my plans! He further declared that he had made his plans in good faith, changing them only when there appeared good and sufficient reason for doing so.

"According to the flesh . . ." is a reference to plans made without sincerity, or for the purpose of deception.

"Yes, yes and no, no . . ." This is an idiom for double talk, insincerity, and deception.

Verse 18

Paul's promises were sincerely made; and there was no deception whatever.

Verse 19

"By me and Sylvanus and Timothy . . ." These were with Paul in the founding of the church at Corinth; and the very fact of their having preached the truth that is in Christ made it morally impossible for them to have engaged in the kind of petty deceptions alleged against him by his foes.

"But is yes in him . . ." "Yes and no" continues to be used here as an idiom of fraud and deception. In Christ there is neither fraud nor deception; but in Him is yes; and in this context "yes" is an idiom for utmost truth, sincerity and integrity. This verse means that integrity is the hallmark of every Christian. Being "in Christ" is one and the same thing as being absolutely honest, truthful and straight forward in all communications of every kind.

"Sylvanus . . ." This is the same person identified as Silas in Acts 15:32, 40, who was one of the prophets of the early church, and also a companion of Paul on the second missionary tour.

Verse 20

"In Him they are yes . . . and the Amen . . ." There is a profound inference in this verse to the effect that disbelieving God's chosen apostle Paul

is a denial of the truth and righteousness of the Father Himself. “The Amen . . .” God will not only honor His promises, which are invariably true; but He will sum them up with a heavenly Amen. God’s word is the last word. God is the Amen; but so also is Christ.

“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God, says this.” (Revelation 3:14)

Verses 21-22

Three things in these verses:

- (1) the anointing,
- (2) the sealing, and
- (3) the giving of the earnest are all references to one action, that of conversion, by which the believer is united with Christ “in Christ.”

This action, as evident on Pentecost, was a compound act of obedience: believing, repenting, being baptized, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit

“Establishes us with you in Christ . . .” Paul affirmed in this the essential unity of all Christians, himself as well as the Corinthians “in Christ.” By virtue of unity with Christ and “in Christ,” there is no fraud, insincerity or deception in any Christian.

“Sealed us . . . gave us the Spirit . . .” The earnest of the Holy Spirit is identified with “the Holy Spirit of promise: (Ephesians 1: 13) and is the invariable inheritance of all who obey the gospel of Christ.

Verses 23-24

“I call God as witness . . .” Some call this an oath; but others deny it. Even God Himself, for a righteous purpose, “interceded with an oath.” (Hebrews 6:17)

“To spare you I came no more to Corinth . . .” Here Paul finally got around to the dogmatic reason why he changed some of his plans of going to Corinth. The situation was so bad there that he considered it profitable and righteous to wait a while until they had more time to repent of their sins.

“Not that we lord it over your faith . . .” Paul’s statement that he would spare the Corinthians by delaying another visit could have implications of apostolic authority not intended by Paul; therefore he at once entered a disclaimer of any “lording it over” God’s heritage. Not even an apostle might do such a thing as that. (1 Peter 5:3)

Not even the apostle Peter, upon whom such an overwhelming burden of over lordship has been imposed during the historical progression of Christianity, did not consider himself as an ecclesiastical overlord any more, than did Paul. (1 Peter 5:2)

“In your faith you are standing firm . . .” The meaning is clearly that the Corinthians are continuing in the Christian religion; and there is no statement in the passage about salvation being “by faith.”

NOTE: The chapter break here is right in the middle of Paul’s line of thought. Chapter 1 should have ended at verse 14, or have been extended through verse 4 of chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

The apostle Paul wrote much like some people talk; one thing led to another; and he often digressed from a line of thought, coming back to it after a parenthetical discussion of something else.

Paul concluded his explanation of the change of his plans (verses 1-4), recommended leniency to the Corinthians in a disciplinary problem (5-11), touched on his waiting for Titus at Troas (12-13), and penned a masterpiece regarding the nature of gospel influence, drawing a rather rough analogy from the spectacle of a Roman triumph.

Verse 1

Regardless of how little we know of any sorrowful visit Paul paid the Corinthians, the plain meaning of several passages in his letter demands the conclusion that it was made and that it cannot be identified with the original visit which led to the founding of the church.

Paul wrote, "This is the third time I am ready to come to you (12:14); and he repeated it. "This is the third time I am coming to you." (13:1)

Even the verse before us contributes to the certainty that Paul had already made two visits to Corinth when 2 Corinthians was written; because it is very difficult to imagine Paul here referred to his original visit to Corinth, which had resulted in one of the most successful preaching experiences of his whole life and the gathering of a mighty congregation of believers.

"Come to you in sorrow again . . ." But, cannot this have the meaning of, "My second visit to you should not be a sad one," rather than "I would not pay you a second visit?"

Verse 2

F. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 36, wrote, "Paul was unwilling to pain those who gladdened him, and therefore would not pay them a visit which could only be painful on both sides."

Verse 3

"The very thing I wrote you . . ." This is understood as a direct reference to 1 Corinthians 16:5ff where he told the Corinthians of his revised itinerary.

Verse 4

This continues to be a reference to 1 Corinthians. The conditions at Corinth, described in 1 Corinthians were exceedingly deplorable. Incest, heartless lawsuits by the members before pagan judges, drunkenness at the Lord's table, arrogant self-seeking among members, denials of the resurrection, warring, loveless factions, etc. Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 56, wrote, "Any one of these things was sufficient to cause Paul real distress and the severest grief."

Verse 5

The traditional interpretation of this makes it a reference to the incestuous person of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.

J. W, McGarvey, Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 177, wrote, “By referring to 1 Corinthians 4:21, 5:1 it will be seen that the threat of correction at his coming and the case of the incestuous person were twin thoughts in his mind.”

For nineteen centuries, the unanimous position of scholars was that of accepting the two offenders as the same person; and no hard evidence of any kind has been discovered that could refute it. Some made the deduction that “deliverance to Satan” in 1 Corinthians likely caused the death of the incestuous person, but such a deduction cannot be proved.

“Has caused sorrow not to me . . . but in part . . . to all of you . . .” The scandalous conduct of the incestuous person was a public disgrace to the whole church.

“In part . . .” indicates that not all the congregation grieved; some “puffed up” libertarians did not have enough sense of Christian morality to cause them any grief whatever.

Verse 6

The fact and consideration of Paul are evident in his unwillingness even to mention either the name of the offender or to identify the shameful sin of which he was guilty.

“Inflicted by the majority . . .” This indicates that, according to his instructions (1 Corinthians 5:4), the whole congregation had dealt with the offender in a public gathering. There was no way to ease sin like that out of the church privately.

“Sufficient . . .” This requires the understanding that the guilty man had put away his father’s wife, acknowledging his sin, and returning to the congregation with a plea for forgiveness.

Verses 7-8

“Forgive and comfort him . . .” The notion of some, that the man’s sin was in any sense unforgiveable is founded on a lack of perceiving the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ is more than sufficient to the cleansing of “all sin”,

even of Christians. (1 John 1:7) As a matter of truth, the incestuous person was hardly any greater sinner than many of the other Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 6:8-11)

"I urge you to reaffirm your love for him . . ." Nothing could be more unbecoming to a church, or to Christians, than to withhold forgiveness from a penitent Christian needing it and asking it.

Verse 9

The "painful visit" and "severe letter" theorists have misread this verse.

"To this end I also wrote . . ." refers to the clauses following and not to the request of forgiveness, that is, the proof of obedience, which should be referred to his order of discipline for the incestuous man.

NOTE: The intervening "severe letter" is nothing but an improper reading of this verse.

Verses 10-11

Titus had informed Paul of the successful issue of the order of discipline enforced upon the incestuous man, only with the exception that some of the church seemed unwilling to forgive and reinstate him. Paul added the record of his own forgiveness of the man's sin" in the presence of Christ" and an added inducement to making his forgiveness and reinstatement complete.

"His schemes . . ." The scheme of Satan which surfaces in this paragraph is that of a super-piety that will not forgive offenders even when they have put away their sin, repented, and asked forgiveness. This device is still being used by the devil.

Verses 12-13

"I had no rest . . ." Paul had gone to Troas after the riot at Ephesus (on his way to Macedonia) as recorded in Acts 20:1; and from what is said here, it is clear that great opportunities for the gospel strongly inclined Paul to take advantage of those opportunities; but the anxious uncertainty that he felt because of the still unresolved situation in Corinth made it impossible for him to remain.

Titus' meeting with him there, as evidently planned, did not occur and as almost a year had passed since this epic letter had been sent (1 Corinthians), he decided to press on into Macedonia in the hope of meeting Titus on the way. That reassuring meeting with Titus came to Paul's mind as these words were written; and the news was so encouraging that he burst into an extended expression of praise and thanksgiving to God, forming a rather lengthy parenthesis between this mention of Titus and the resumption of his line of thought again in 7:5.

Verse 14

TRIUMPH METAPHOR

Suddenly, in the light of the good news brought by Titus, Paul sees the glorious triumph of the gospel through him; and he compared it to a glorious triumph, like those for Roman emperors, with Christ as the great Conqueror and himself as a captive participating in it and sharing in the glory of it.

Verses 15-16

Vast quantities of incense were burned along the route of a Roman triumph; and those who were in the heroic procession found that meaning of that odor an assurance of their death on the one hand, or of their life, if they were spared, on the other hand. The overwhelmingly delicious odor that marked the triumph meant death for some, life for others. Paul here affirmed that it is like this with the gospel. It saves some, destroys others.

J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 181, pointed out the extremely significant phrases "from death" and "from life" as used in this passage. "To the unbelieving, the news of the gospel; is from one who was crucified and is dead, so, for them, it is an odor from death unto death, even eternal death; but to Christians, the news (odor) is "from life," that is from One who is alive forever more. Hence, the news of the gospel, is "from life unto life," in them that are saved.

"Who is adequate for these things . . . ?" Frank G. Carver, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, p. 519, said the meaning of this is, "What kind of ministry could

be adequate for such a task?” Paul’s unhesitating reply is, “Ours is!” Why is the ministry of Paul the apostle sufficient for such heavenly usage?

The answer is thundered in the next verse, being this, that he was preaching the pure gospel of God without adulteration like that practiced by the false apostles and teachers who were hindering the Corinthians.

Verse 17

“Peddling the word of God . . .” Frank G. Carver, *Ibid*, said, “The figure here is originally that of a tavern keeper who mixes poor wine with the good to increase his profits.”

In such a comparison as this, two things appear:

- (1) There is the disclosure of the true motive of false teachers who are in the gospel business for the profit they can make for themselves, and
- (2) There is the usual method of such teachers, that of adding to the gospel substances that are not part of the true gospel with the intention of making it more acceptable to sinners who rebel at the true gospel.

As Frank Carver, *Ibid*, said of this, “The first leads to the second. To approach the ministry with motives of personal profit, ambition, or vanity, is already to adulterate it. He who makes the word serve his advantage rather than being a servant of the word changes the very character of the gospel.”

Paul’s quadruple affirmation of the integrity of his own ministry is the profound declaration that it was conducted:

- (1) in sincerity,
- (2) of God, that is, by His direct authority and order,
- (3) in the sight of God, that is, openly and in view of men as well as in the sight of God, and

- (4) in Christ, which, as a pure and faithful member of the spiritual body of Christ (the church), and in full compliance with all Christian duties.

CHAPTER 3

Paul spoke of letters of commendation (verses 1-3); his sufficiency as of God (verses 4-6); the new covenant is more glorious than the one given to Moses (verses 7-11); Paul's ministry needs no veil on the face (verses 12-13); the veil still darkens Israel (verses 14-15); and the veil is done away in Christ (verses 16-18).

Verse 1

R. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 59 said, "It is not necessary to deduce from this verse, as many do, that the charge of self-praise had already been leveled against Paul."

E. H. Plumptre, *Ellicott's Commentary*, Vol. VII, p. 370, said, the type of deduction usually made from this verse is that, "They had sneered at him for always commending himself." Those who would use this passage as a prohibition of such recommendations as church letters are misapplying it.

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 101, wrote, "We are not dealing simply with letters attesting that the bearers church members in good standing."

Paul needed no letters from any person or church to commend him. He had wrought mighty miracles among the Corinthians and elsewhere; and the very existence of their congregation proved the genuineness of his apostleship.

"As some . . ." Paul's reference to false teachers at Corinth, is in irony, Philip E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 85 said: "Which is pointed out by the effective, almost sarcastic, use of anonymous 'some.'"

Verse 2

“You are our letter . . .” The Corinthian church, in a figurative sense, was Paul’s letter of recommendation.

“Written in our hearts . . .” In context, the Corinthians are the letter; and since all men can read it, it would have been written in their heart rather than Paul’s for this to be possible. Had it been written in Paul’s heart only, who could have read it? The heart of the formerly reprobate Corinthians, now converted, however, was where the writing had taken place. Such changes as had taken place in them (due to a change in heart) upon their conversion were indeed visible to the whole world of that period. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., p.437, said, “The metaphor is that the Christian church was itself the epistle of Christ,” and Paul’s laying claim to the epistle as his is a reference of his having established their congregation through the preaching of the gospel. In verse 5, Paul made it clear that in the higher sense he considered God to be the true author of the epistle, that is, of the conversions at Corinth.

Verse 3

“You are a letter of Christ, cared for by us . . .” is a clarification of “you are our epistle” in the preceding verse. Paul’s position was the same in this as that of the apostles who passed out the bread when Jesus fed the five thousand, the apostles being not the chef on that occasion but the waiters. So here, Paul wrote the epistle in the sense of preaching the gospel; but the true author was Christ who gave the gospel.

“Written not with ink . . .” Paul was using “epistle” in a figurative sense. He was not speaking of any ordinary letter written with ink upon a parchment.

“Spirit . . . tablets . . . hearts . . .” God had written the Ten commandments with His finger upon tablets of stone; but in the new covenant of which Paul now began to speak, not God’s finger, but God’s Spirit did the writing.

Paul’s letter was written upon their hearts, not upon his own.

Verse 4

Norman Hillyer, *The New Bible Commentary, Revised*, p. 1078, wrote, “The changed lives at Corinth confirm Paul’s confidence of his Divine appointment.”

Paul himself also could read the proof of his apostolic commission in the great harvest of souls won for the Lord in Corinth.

Verse 5

Although claiming the Corinthians as his epistle, he wished to make it clear that the true author is God, and that to Him all glory belongs.

Paul’s implied answer to the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” was to the effect that he and the other apostles were sufficient because they preached the true word of God and did not adulterate it.

In that sense, of course, they were sufficient; but Paul registered the great truth that only God is truly sufficient.

Verse 6

Having acknowledged God as the all sufficient, Paul at once reemphasizes his own apostolic sufficiency for the preaching of God’s new covenant.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

“Not of the letter, but of the spirit . . .” While it is true, of course, that the blessings of the new covenant may be enjoyed only by those who have received the blessed Holy Spirit, there is no reference to that here. As Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 101, said, “It is likely that a direct reference to the Spirit is intended.”

J. W. McGarvey, *Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 184, wrote, “The contrast in verse 6 is not between the outward and the inward sense of Scripture, but between the outward and inward power of the Jewish and Christian dispensations.”

R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 62, wrote, “Paul is distinguishing the new covenant from the old by using the contrasted categories of spirit and letter, life and death.”

Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 99, wrote, “This verse is not concerned with any supposed distinction between two different senses of Scripture, the literal and the spiritual.”

It is precisely in such a supposed distinction that much error flourishes, and has flourished for centuries. William Tyndale, *Ibid.*, mentioned it in his day saying, “Some preach Christ, and prove whatever point of faith thou wilt, as well out of a fable of Ovid or any other poet, as out of John’s gospel or Paul’s epistles. Yea, they are come to such blindness, that they not only say that the literal sense profiteth not, but also that it is hurtful and noisome, and killeth the soul.”

Any person denying a Christian duty or rejecting an ordinance of God, such as baptism, on the premise that “spiritual” baptism is meant, etc., are finding in Paul’s remark here something that was never in it.

Verses 7-8

MINISTRATION OF DEATH

The old covenant, deficient on account of man’s sins, was nevertheless attended at its inception by glorious manifestations of God’s power and majesty, including the radiance of Moses’ face mentioned here. (Exodus 34:29-35)

Paul’s argument is simply this, that if even the old covenant; called here the ministration of death, was attended by such glory, how much more glorious is the gospel of Christ, or the new covenant.

“Ministration of death . . .” The old covenant was thus titled because 3000 souls perished the day the law was given; it was called the “law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2) However, Paul here laid stress on the diminishing radiance of Moses’ face, interpreting the veil as being used to prevent Israel’s seeing the glory fade away. Thus the veil symbolized the blindness of Israel,

not only in the old covenant, but also in the rejection of Christ the head of the new covenant; and the disappearing glory of Moses' face symbolized the abrogation of the old covenant.

"Glory of his face, fading as it was . . ." Paul seized upon the fact of the vanishing radiance of Moses' face as an allegorical promise that the Old Testament would in time, be discontinued, or taken out of the way.

Verse 9

The whole relationship between the two covenants is stated here, it is incidental to the truth being stressed, that is, that the new covenant is more glorious.

Verses 10-11

"The glory that surpasses it . . ." refers to the old covenant.

"Has no glory . . ." that is, not as glorious as the new covenant.

"On account of the glory that surpasses it . . ." means because of the glory of the new covenant.

"That fades away . . ." which means it is being done away.

Paul's stress in these verses of the fading glory and ultimate abrogation of the Law of Moses was directly related to the problems at Corinth.

Verses 12-13

Paul's argument in these verses might be paraphrased rather bluntly as, "Well, anyway, we do not have to put a veil over our faces like Moses did. Our gospel is clear and plain."

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 931, paraphrased this, "Since our hopes for the future of the gospel are so great, we speak frankly and boldly. We do not seek to conceal anything as Moses concealed his face with a veil."

Note: That old covenant was not something that passed away with time; Almighty God consciously cancelled it, on the basis that Israel had broken it. (Hebrews 8:9)

Verses 14-15

These verses stand for the hardening of Israel; but the most significant thing is the fact of the veil's being done away in Christ!

Paul pointed out here that the Jews who did not believe in Jesus were blinded to many of the most significant things in the Old Testament. R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 67, wrote, "Few passages in the New Testament emphasize more strongly that the Old Testament Scriptures are fully intelligible only when Christ is seen to be their fulfillment."

Verse 16

"Whenever a man turns to the Lord . . . the veil is taken away." The "veil is taken away," seems to have reference to Israel.

Verse 17

Paul does not here fuse the persons of the Lord and the Holy Spirit; for it is Christ who sends the Spirit.

"There is liberty . . ." When a Christian is converted, receiving the Holy Spirit as an earnest of redemption, there is bestowed at the same time freedom:

- (1) from the law (Galatians 4:18),
- (2) from fear (Romans 8:13),
- (3) from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2),
- (4) from sin (Romans 6:18), and
- (5) from corruption (Romans 8:21).

Verse 18

"Unveiled face . . ." All Christians, not just one man, as in the case of Moses, behold the joy of the Lord; and no veil is required. This has a transforming effect on all who do it. It is in the looking of the Christian upon the Lord, as invariably entailed in the worship of Him, that a miracle of transformation is wrought in his life. Here Paul revealed the secret of how to "be . . . transformed." (Romans 12:2)

“Beholding as in a mirror . . .” The word “beholding” in classical Greek means: “looking at one’s self in a mirror;” David J. A. Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 423, said, “But that requires steady looking when mirrors are metal, and so the word came to mean simply, to gaze steadily.”

“From the Lord the Spirit . . .” J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 186, said, “Now Jesus is that Spirit, or new covenant, of which I have been speaking (verses 3, 6, 8); and where that new covenant is, there is liberty, especially the liberty of seeing (without a veil).”

R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 67, also favored this understanding of it. He said, “(What the Christian beholds) is the manifestation of Christ’s glory which is made in His word and by His Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Christ by revealing Him to us.”

“We all . . .” Philip Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 117, said, “It is evident that Paul is speaking of an experience that is common to all believers.” Under the old covenant, only the face of Moses shone; only the high priest went into the Holy of holies; only the priests might serve at the altar, etc. But in the glorious new covenant, “All who are Christ’s, whether great or small, whether known or unknown, have this blessed privilege of beholding and being transformed.”

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

“We . . .” in this chapter refers to Paul and to his fellow workers. However, it is especially the apostles who are in view here.

“This ministry . . .” is a reference to the new covenant. (David Lipscomb, *Second Corinthians*, p. 57)

“As we received mercy . . .” This clause is very significant as showing that the new covenant was brought to mankind through the gospel of Christ. Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 122, said, “This is not an achievement of human ability but a consequence of Divine mercy.”

"We have renounced . . ." This does not refer to any recent renunciation on Paul's part, but to the fundamental renunciation of all the works of the devil at the time of his conversion to Christ. F. W. Farrar, *Pulpit Commentary* Vol. 19, 2 Corinthians, p. 89, said, "We renounced them once and forever at our baptism."

"Things hidden . . . craftiness . . . adulterating . . ." Raymond C. Kelcy, *Second Corinthians*, p. 28, did not see this as Paul's allusion, "To such underhanded methods of certain false teachers at Corinth."

This therefore, is not Paul's defense of himself, as widely supposed, but his charges against them! The fashionable explanation of much of the Corinthian letters as Paul's attempts to defend himself against slanders is lacking in both discernment and logic. Paul simply was not the kind of man who was always on the defensive. Before he has finished this letter, he will take the offensive in such a manner as to demonstrate the fundamentally offensive and aggressive nature of his life.

"Craftiness . . ." refers to tricky and deceitful devices which no faithful preacher of the word of God may use.

"Adulterating the word . . ." No greater sin exists than that of perverting and polluting the word of God, whether by toning down its requirements, or adulterating it with purely secular teachings. Such a corruption of the word of God, according to R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 955, is: "The most dastardly (cowardly or brutal) of all the dastardly deeds done in the world."

"Manifestation of the truth . . ." This does not mean merely that Paul spoke the truth, which of course he did; but reference is to that whole system of truth brought in Christianity. Norman Hillyer, *The New Bible Commentary*, Revised, p. 1079, said, "Truth is almost a technical term for Christ or gospel."

"To every man's conscience . . ." Paul did not mean by this that everybody believed him, but his life and teachings were of such a character that every man should have believed him.

R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 70, wrote, "It is the plain unadulterated gospel that alone strikes home to man's conscience. "Repent and believe the gospel" must ever be the burden of one who is preaching in the sight of God.

Verse 3

This verse replies to the objection that Paul's gospel was veiled to some. One of the great marvels of the glorious truth in Christ Jesus is that to many people it is absolutely hidden. However, not for a moment does Paul allow any man to be blameless in the ability to see the truth. If one does not see it, it is his fault. E. H. Plumptre, *Elliott's Commentary*, Vol III, p. 375, wrote, "The veil (that prevents their seeing) is woven by their own prejudices and corrupt affections." As Jesus said it, "Men love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil." (John 3:19)

"Those who are perishing . . ." Even hardened sinners who will not see the truth still have the option of changing if they will.

Verse 4

"In whom . . ." James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles and Commentary*, Vol. II, p. 350, translated this, "By whom" and referred it to intellectual sinners in high places whom the devil uses as instruments in blinding yet others."

SATAN, GOD OF THIS WORLD

"The god of this world . . ." James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 350, wrote, "Satan is not here called the god of the cosmos, but god of this age."

J. W. McGarvey, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 188, said, "Satan is not a god properly, but is merely one in reference to those who sinfully made him such."

Many believe, as did David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 59, that the sin of Adam, "Transferred the allegiance and rule of the world from God to the devil," but the conviction here is that all of Satan's authority is usurped, that only what God permits is he able to do; and as for the notion that Satan in any meaningful sense rules the world, Nebuchadnezzar had to eat grass for seven

years in order to learn that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” (Daniel 4:25)

This means that Satan’s promise to give Christ the rulership of the world in return for falling down and worshiping the devil (Matthew 4:4ff) was an unqualified falsehood.

“Blinded the minds . . .” This refers to “hardening” as it is called in other places in the New Testament. (Romans 1:21; 11:7, 25) Blinding, darkening, and hardening all refer to the same thing. The condition that results is sinful, and at the same time punishment for sin. Hardening occurs when the individual rebels against God, who then allows Satan to have his way, with a result of further hardening. In a sense God hardens men, as in the case of Pharaoh. (Romans 9:17-18)

Satan was never able to blind any person who had not already rebelled against God.

“See the light . . .” refers to the illumination of the minds of all who accept Christ.

“Of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . .” The gospel of Christ is the source of spiritual light. It is a gospel of glory, and that glory is of Christ.

“That they may not see the light . . .” The great purpose of Satan is to prohibit any true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Who is the image of God . . .” Christ is the image of God in two ways.

- (1) As a perfect man, He, like Adam, was “in the image of God.”
(Genesis 1:26)
- (2) As God is in human form, Jesus accurately mirrored the Father’s will for mankind.

Verse 5

“We do not preach ourselves . . .” The meaning is that Paul rejected all personal claims to any human authority on his part, preaching only what Christ commanded him to preach. Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 132, wrote, “All is of God, nothing is of self.”

“But Jesus as Lord . . .” The supreme Lordship of Christ was central in all apostolic preaching. This is recognized by every Christian whose very confession, at the time of his conversion, begins with “confessing Jesus as Lord.” (Romans 10:9)

“And ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake . . .” The Greek word here rendered “servants” is *doulos*; and it means slaves. There is but one Master, who is Christ the Lord; and it is purely “for His sake” that the apostle assumed the role of a slave of the Christians at Corinth.

Verse 6

“Light shall shine out of darkness . . .” This verse carries strong overtones of Paul’s conversion after the blinding light he witnessed on the Damascus Road.

“The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ . . .” The only true knowledge of God which is available to men is comprehended in the life and teachings of the Son of God.

Paul’s allusion seems to be the fact that he had seen the blessed face of the Son of God in the blinding light that overwhelmed him on the road to Damascus and that he unhesitatingly identified the face of Christ with the glory of God.

Verse 7

The thought of this verse is that God entrusted the gospel to men who had none of the trappings of earthly power and honor, in order that the great success of the gospel would not be accredited to its messengers as men, but unto the eternal God who inspired them. And, although it is true, as David Lipscomb, op. cit., p. 62, wrote that any earthly body, “Is an unworthy receptacle for so glorious a message,” yet there seems to be in view here the lowly earthly estate of the apostles.

EARTHEN VESSELS

“In earthen vessels . . .” The figure is possibly drawn from the “small pottery lamps, cheap and fragile, that could be bought in the shops of Corinth.” (Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 135)

This may have reference to the apostles who had been fishermen and tax collectors, and who were the most remarkable ordinary men; and Paul, as the most gifted of them, yet drastically handicapped by the thorn in the flesh, which may have been the bitter hatred of his whole race and nation, as well as by his unimpressive personal appearance, seeing such men literally take the whole world for Jesus Christ!

“The power may be of God and not from ourselves . . .” Let any man consider the facts:

- (1) of the difficulty encountered in turning pagan worshipers away from their idols, or the power required to woo men away from the fleshly lusts in which they lived, or the strength of fleshly ties that had to be served, of the animosity and hatred that invariably came from priests, magistrates and others whose vested interests were jeopardized by the acceptance of a new religion, and the combined opposition to Christianity of every evil and shameful institution in the entire social order of that period; and
- (2) the fact that none of the apostles had any standing as worldly authorities, or even as respected teachers, and having no other background except that of laborers, etc. Let any man consider all of that, and then let him declare that God’s purpose was indeed served by placing the inestimable riches of the treasures of the gospel in earthen vessels, in order that the power of the new faith would be recognized as coming from God Himself, and not from any abilities of its human advocate.

Verses 8-10

“Afflicted . . . but not crushed . . .” On Paul’s first missionary tour, his enemies had chased him everywhere, but were never able to hem him in.

“Perplexed, but not despairing . . .” The disorders at Corinth were certainly perplexing to Paul, but there is no evidence that he ever despaired.

“Persecuted, but not forsaken . . .” Forty men pursued Paul with a view to killing him, but he was not forsaken of the Lord. (Acts 23:12ff)

“Struck down, but not destroyed . . .” William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 223, paraphrased this, “Knocked down but not out!” Paul was literally stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19); and that is surely an example of his being knocked down but not knocked out!

“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus . . .” The thought here is that the same vicious hatred of every evil element on earth which finally succeeded (with God’s permission) in nailing Jesus to the cross was now focused upon the Lord’s apostles.

This was the fulfillment of exactly what Jesus had promised. “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you . . . all these things will they do to you for My name’s sake.” (John 15:20-21)

“That the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body . . .” The apostles were partakers both of the sufferings of Jesus and of the life of Jesus, a life which they were able to impart to others by the preaching of the gospel.

Verse 11

Floyd V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 321, said, “This verse repeats, and also emphasizes the thought of verse 10.”

Verse 12

Paul is not here complaining to the effect that he suffers all of the hardships, and the Corinthians had received all of the benefits. He has reference to the causal effect of his persecutions with their result in many conversions. Paul’s many escapes from death and all of the other providences

which had preserved his life miraculously through so many dangers were a part of the irrefutable evidence that God was with him.

Verse 13

“According to what is written . . .” This was Paul’s formal designation of what he was about to quote as a passage from the word of God.

“I believed, when I said. I am greatly afflicted . . .” This is from Psalm 116:10, a psalm which is entitled, “Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death.”

G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, p. 239, identified this verse as revealing the secret of effective preaching. Because Paul believed, his testimony had the ring of truth. Morgan concluded with the imperative: “If you do not believe, shut your mouth!”

In this verse Paul disclosed the first of four reasons which explained his endurance of so many trials. Number 1, he truly believed God’s word.

Verse 14

“With Jesus . . .” cannot mean at the same time with Jesus, for Jesus had already been raised from the dead and had ascended to the right hand of God.

“With you . . .” This verse is number 2. Paul knew that death itself would not rob him of the crown of life, nor would it rob his Corinthian converts, despite the fact that both he and his converts would pass through it.

Verse 15

“For all things are for your sakes . . .” This is reason number 3. Paul’s hardships were actually contributing to the conversion of many souls, and also to their being grounded and established in the faith.

“Spreading to more and more people . . . to the glory of God . . .” Here is reason number 4. Paul endured because his sufferings glorified God by the bringing of many souls unto salvation.

Verse 16

“Therefore we do not lose heart . . .” has the meaning of “For the four reasons just cited, he was able to endure.”

“Our outer man is decaying . . .” This is not a reverence to the old man” (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9), having the simple meaning that physical body, with all of its powers, was moving inexorably to its destination. All of the powers and glory of mortal life are like a flower that blooms and then crumbles into dust; and how sad it would be for man if there was nothing to anticipate except the grave.

“Our inner man is being renewed day by day . . .” The true believer in Christ is not overly disturbed by the erosion and decay of all physical life, because his soul is feasting upon the Bread which came down from heaven, even our Lord Jesus Christ. The inner spiritual life, which is the glory of the “new creature” in Christ, does not diminish or fade. “Brighter the way groweth each day” is the words of an old hymn.

Verse 17

The surprise of this verse is that the epic sufferings of Paul should be termed, “our light affliction.” This cannot mean, literally, that they were in any sense “light;” but that in comparison with the ultimate glory of Christians, they are light.

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 359, has an inspiring paragraph on this verse, as follows: “It is hardly possible to express the force of this passage as it stands in the original. Nothing greater can be said or imagined. The apostle about to describe the happiness of the righteous in heaven takes fire. He calls it not glory, merely, but a weight of glory, in opposition to the light thing of our affliction, and an eternal weight of glory, in opposition to the momentary duration of our affliction, and a most exceeding eternal weight of glory, as beyond comparison greater than all the dazzling glories, as beyond comparison greater than all the dazzling glories or riches, fame, power, pleasure, or than anything that can be possessed in the present life!”

Verse 18

The entire genius of the Christian life, indeed the entirety of faith in both the old and new covenants is here distilled and isolated as to its pure essence.

Trusting God, believing and obeying Him, are finally nothing more than what is revealed here.

SEEING THE INVISIBLE

If one can see it, it cannot last. All visible things are temporal, whether flowers, suns or galaxies; and it also applies to that which one sees when he looks at himself in a mirror.

The author of the book of Hebrews (just who could this have been, if not Paul?) devoted almost all of chapter 11 to an exposition of this verse, after thinking about it for more than a decade, took up the Old Testament and applied the principle stated here to all of the salient features in it. Note the following:

Introduction: Faith itself is “a conviction of things not seen.” (verse 1). This does not mean things which are merely overlooked, but things which, by their very nature, cannot be seen at all. Such things as the understanding of how the universe was created, the incarnation of Christ, the judgment of the world by the deluge, the Second Advent, the final judgment, and the assignment of His final destiny to every man—in fact, everything of ultimate importance relates to the things invisible. It has been a failure to discern this obvious and simple truth in Hebrews 11:1, which has contributed so heavily to scholarly disagreements about what is meant by this passage.

- (1) God framed the universe itself out of things unseen. “As made out of things which were visible.” (Hebrews 11:3)

It is literally true that the whole universe is made of “things unseen,” even regarding the tiniest particles of it; and, in addition to that, the great fundamental laws controlling all things in space, such as gravity, centrifugal and centripetal forces, inertia, radiation, etc., are, all of them, invisible.

- (2) Noah, acting upon God’s instructions preserved through the flood a new beginning for the human family. “Being warned by God about things not yet seen.” (Hebrews 11:7)

- (3) Abraham likewise trusted in the invisible; and although the word “unseen” is not used in connection with his obedience, the thought is surely in this, “For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)
- (4) Jacob, when near death, blessed his sons and “made mention of the exodus of the children of Israel. (Hebrews 11:22)
- (5) Moses forsook Egypt and cast his lot with Israel; “He endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” (Hebrews 11:27) No greater test of trusting the “unseen” was ever successfully met. The wealth, glory, power and splendor of Egypt were very visible. Moses could see the armies, orchards, palaces and pyramids which belonged to Pharaoh and might also have belonged to him; but he trusted the promises of the invisible God.
- (6) This is exactly the challenge of faith in every generation, to believe in the things which no one can see. Heaven, hell, the final judgment of all men, the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, practically everything of importance in Christian faith, regards the “things that are unseen,” and which things are designated by Paul as eternal.
- (7) “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), regards the same confidence in “things not seen.” The new birth is invisible; and although the outward act of baptism may be seen, such things as the pollution of a soul by sin, the surrender of the heart to God, the forgiveness of the sinner which takes place not on earth but in the heart of God, and the resultant change of direction deriving from the new birth—none of these things can be seen literally.

However, since the universe itself is made of “things unseen,” no one needs to fear to step out firmly and confidently upon the promise of God. “The things which are unseen are eternal.”

- (8) Just as God is invisible, the Holy Spirit is also invisible. The fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) are not visible, but are like the blessed Spirit Himself whom no man has ever seen.
- (9) The same principle is operative in the public worship of Christians. The Lord said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." (Matthew 18:20)

One may look around him at church, but he will not see the Lord, except by the eyes of faith. Nevertheless, that presence of Christ in the worship is the eternal blessing of the church. Being "unseen," His influence is the eternal essence of every true worship service in His name.

CHAPTER 5

In the first paragraph of this chapter, Paul spoke of the spiritual body which is to replace the present earthly body of Christians at the time of the Second Advent and judgment of the last day (1-10), and then delivered some of the profoundest teachings in holy Scripture regarding the ministry of reconciliation, of which Paul, along with the other apostles, was an ambassador. (11:-21)

Verse 1

This is Paul's declaration of his certainty (not mere belief) of the existence of the soul after death, when clothed with a glorious new body, which will live in eternal felicity with God.

"We know . . ." Such confidence did not derive from any human conclusions; but Norman Hillyer, *The New Bible Commentary*, Revised p. 179 wrote: "This was not by human reasoning, but by Divine revelation."

"Earthly tent . . . house . . ." The word "tent" is a good symbol of that which is transient and temporary as could be imagined. Paul was a tentmaker, and this is exactly the type of metaphor that should have been expected from him, and, added to that was the fact of Israel's having dwelt in tents during the forty years of the wilderness wanderings. No tent could last permanently when

exposed to the elements; and the same is true of men's mortal bodies when exposed to the inevitable erosion of time.

"A building from God . . ." This does not deny that men's mortal bodies are also, in a sense, "from God;" but it has special reference to that God-created spiritual body which shall replace the decaying bodies of mortal flesh.

"A house not made with hands . . ." Paul made tents with his hands; but that glorious resurrection body is far above and beyond anything that human hands might contrive.

"Eternal in the heavens . . ." When the soul of a Christian is clothed with that wonderful and glorious spiritual body, decay and death shall be no more; and the soul of the redeemed shall enjoy eternal life.

Liddon, as quoted by John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, wrote, "Man is, by terms of his existence, a being of eternity; and he cannot unmake himself." Liddon, *Ibid*, also wrote, "In this body we groan from pains to which flesh is heir."

Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, p. 327, wrote, "This reflects Paul's desire to be free from the afflictions and imperfections of his life."

"Longing to be clothed . . ." The notion that Paul was here expressing a dread of being a disembodied spirit during the interval between death and the judgment is obviously incorrect. "Clothed upon" does not refer to something Paul hoped for at death but to the ultimate replacement of the old body with a new body in the final day.

Verse 3

"Not to be found naked . . ." Paul had in mind here the sad truth that some who might expect to be clad with the glorious resurrection body in the final judgment will have no such thing; but be found naked instead. True Christians will be gloriously clothed in eternity; but for those lukewarm and self-satisfied Christians who think their "faith alone" is all they need, eternal nakedness shall be their disappointment.

That is why the apostle John instructed that class of Christians to, “Buy from Me (the Lord) white garments that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.” (Revelation 3:18)

Although salvation is of grace and of the free gift of God, there is a certain “clothing of oneself” that is required of all who would not be naked in eternity.

John Wesley, op. cit., in loco, wrote, “We shall not be found naked” is not perceptive, saying that it referred to one whose appearance in the presence of the King was without “the wedding garment.” The application of the man without the wedding garment to the “nakedness” in view here is perfect. (Matthew 22:11)

In the Savior’s parable, the naked one was indeed a guest; he had been invited, had answered the call, and had accepted the King’s invitation, even sitting down at His table; but not having the wedding garment, he was “naked” in the eyes of the King and was cast into “the outer darkness.” In exactly the same way, Christians who neglect or refuse to do the things Christians are commanded to do will appear “naked” in judgment. “Faith only” is nakedness in the eyes of God.

Verse 4

“Being burdened . . .” The physical body is an increasing burden with advancing years; and this is perhaps the saddest thing about life on earth. However powerful and glorious the physical body may be for a season, the burden grows heavier and heavier till at last the weary burden bearer stumbles into a grave. This thought was touched upon by Paul. (Philippians 3:21)

“The body of our humble state . . .” This is inspired comment upon the body which is a burden and in which Paul said, “We groan.” The body of any mortal, at last, is the body of his humiliation.

“We do not want to be unclothed . . .” This has the meaning, “Not that we want to die.”

“But to be clothed . . .” means, “Nevertheless, we still long to possess that eternal body.”

“That what is mortal may be swallowed up by life . . .” In 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, in all probability, lies the explanation of the peculiar form “clothed upon.”

Verse 5

The meaning of “earnest” is exactly that of the word as used by realtors in sealing the purchase of a piece of property. It is a token, or pledge, that the whole contractual price will be paid. The application is that through God’s impartation of the Holy Spirit (in token measure) to all who are baptized into Christ; there is a pledge of the total redemption God promised to them that believe and obey His word.

Verse 6

John William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament, p. 445, wrote, “Christ is indeed here and with us always; but in the clearer vision of the life to come, our realization of His presence will make this present existence to have been absence by comparison.”

“Always of good courage . . .” Confidence in the fundamental Christian truth that: “No matter what may happen to my body, absolutely nothing can happen to me!” is the basis of true Christian courage.

Verse 7

Faith in God is a far better aid of understanding than mere knowledge (or sight) could ever be. The simplest facts of eternity, everlasting life, salvation and knowing God are totally beyond the powers of finite exploration. There the word is, “Trust God; for you cannot know!”

Verse 8

John Wesley, *op. cit.*, in loco, made this verse the basis of declaring that, “The happiness of saints (upon their death) is not deferred till the resurrection;” because as he said, “Paul evidently thinks of no alternative except to be either at home in the body or at home in the Lord.”

Verse 9

This was merely Paul's way of saying, "Whether we live or die, it is our total purpose to please the Lord."

Verse 10

JUDGMENT, ONLY ONE

"For we must all . . ." This means everybody who ever lived, or ever yet shall live, upon this earth. It is absolutely astounding that brilliant men would try to limit this to "All Christians."

The problem does not lie in what Paul taught here, but in the theory of justification by "faith only;" of which, R. V. G. Tasker, the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, p. 83, said, "Some commentators stress the seeming inconsistency between the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the doctrine of verse 10 that Christians no less than non-Christians will be finally judged by their actions.

Note: The blunt truth is that verse 10 is not merely "inconsistent" with the theory of justification by "faith alone;" it is a dogmatic contradiction of it.

It was for the clever and ingenious purpose of supporting the "faith only" theory of justification that scholars have tried to make the judgment scene in verse 10 something different from the general judgment. However, attention is called to the following:

- (1) Jesus said, "They shall render account for it in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36)
- (2) "He (God) has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed."
(Acts 17:31)
- (3) "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."
(Romans 14:10)
- (4) "It is appointed unto men once to die, once, and after this comes judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

It is crystal clear that this foolish notion of a succession of judgment days is nowhere to be found in the word of God.

We may be absolutely certain that every man, including every Christian, shall in the last analysis be judged according to his deeds, whether good or bad. There will be no such thing in the judgment as a man of vile deeds being entered into heaven on the basis that, "Well, after all, he was a believer!" This cornerstone of Protestant heresy is effectively blasted by Paul's stern words in this passage.

It is appropriate to add that, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); but this promise is for them that "walk in the light."

Even the most deplorable sins can be forgiven, and will be forgiven them that continue "in Christ," as believing, baptized Christians, striving to do the will of the Lord and visibly associated with His kingdom in the present world; nor is it alleged that they could ever achieve or merit redemption as being due to their success in living as God directed; but the whole premise of eternal salvation includes the conscious, serious effort of the twice-born to live the new life which was bestowed upon them. "Faith" is no magic device for avoiding this eternal truth.

Note: The whole thrust of this verse is that people who do not live right shall perish eternally.

Verse 11

"The fear of the Lord . . ." One of the genuine errors of the AV was the rendition of this as, "The error" of the Lord." David Lipscomb, Second Corinthians, p. 74, said, "Fear' in all of these passages means reverence and devotion."

"We persuade men . . ." It is not God but men who should be persuaded, God having already done everything that even God could do to bring redemption to fallen humanity.

"Made manifest to God . . ." Paul was saying in this that God already knew the sincerity and integrity of His soul and that he hoped the Corinthians

also had been able to discern the same thing. R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 83, wrote, "If Paul had not walked continually in the fear of God (Acts 9:32), he might have yielded to the temptation to curry favor with his hearers by whittling down his message to suit their tastes."

Verse 12

Throughout this part of this noble epistle, Paul was laying the ground-work for a decisive attack upon his enemies that would be unleashed in chapter 10. There is a hint of what is to come here, but for the moment Paul was establishing a few facts with reference to himself, these being:

- (1) his integrity (verse 11),
- (2) the acute need to commend himself (verse 12),
- (3) his motivation of doing it all for the sake of the Corinthians (verse 13),
- (4) that the love of Christ compelled such action on his part (verse 14), and
- (5) that as an ambassador of Christ commissioned to deliver the word of reconciliation to men, the utmost necessity lay upon him to the effect that he should not merely affirm his own credentials but he should also press an unrelenting attack against the enemies of the truth (verses 18ff).

"Commending ourselves . . ." Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 34, said, "What Paul says is not self-praise; he is only giving his friends in Corinth some facts which they may use in his defense."

"Those who take pride in appearance . . ." The false teachers were boasting of certain external advantages, probably their wealth or social standing; but in heart they were wolves in sheep's clothing.

Verse 13

It is difficult to know exactly what Paul was saying in this. "If we are beside ourselves . . ." This could be a hint of criticism directed against Paul by

the false teachers. A governor called Paul “mad” (Acts 26:24); and even the Savior was accused of being “beside Himself.” (Mark 3:21) In any case, all that Paul did was “for God” and “for” the Corinthians, that is, for their sake.

Verse 14

“The love of Christ controls us . . .” Did Paul here refer to his own love of Christ, or to Christ’s love of him? F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 121, said, “It matters little whether this be interpreted as a subjective genitive, ‘Christ’s love to men,’ or as an objective genitive, ‘our love to Christ;’ the two suppose and interfuse each other.”

“One died for all . . .” Here is the same “all” encountered in verse 10, and it includes all who ever lived. “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

The atonement established in Christ’s death was no piecemeal affair, but was big enough to cover all the men and all the sins of all times and places.

“Therefore all died . . .” Frank G. Culver’s discerning comment is: “In view of Christ’s death, all men are dead in respect to any spiritual self-sufficiency. The simplest interpretation is that the fact that Christ died for all proves that all were dead.”

From this it appears that those who are not converted, and by means of the new birth “raised with Christ,” shall inevitably continue in a state of death throughout eternity. The death of Christ proved that every man deserves death; and, in the spiritual sense, all died and continue in death, till they shall be “raised to walk in newness of life” in Christ.

Verse 15

The argument is that men have been redeemed from death by Christ who died (and rose again) in their stead should live in conscious appreciation of their eternal debt of love and gratitude to Christ.

“And rose again . . .” Without the resurrection of Christ, His death was nothing, for a dead Savior could not save. The grand theme of the New

Testament is “the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, according to the Scriptures.”

Norman Hillyer, *op. cit.*, p. 1080, wrote, “Death without resurrection would evacuate Calvary of all meaning.”

Verse 16

“No man according to the flesh . . .” The new manner of life for Christians follows the principle laid down here. Raymond C. Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p. 3, wrote, “They no longer measure men by human standards of race, natural gifts, social standing, or possessions.”

“Even though we have known Christ, according to the flesh . . .” Here are some things this verse does not mean. It does not mean that Paul associated with Christ during the Lord’s ministry. It does mean that Paul’s apostleship was here taking some radical turn away from truth which he had believed and taught up to this time.

“Yet now we know Him thus no longer . . .” Paul no longer judged Christ after the false and artificial standards of the Pharisaical class to which he had once belonged.

Verse 17

“IN CHRIST”

“In Christ . . .” This little phrase is nothing if not the very eye of Christianity.

Failure to appreciate what Paul means by this is to misunderstand everything. Paul had just written that all men are dead spiritually, a deadness that shall never abate unless they are risen again in Christ. In Christ, a new spiritual life is given to the convert; in Christ all of his previous sins are cancelled; in Christ he is endowed with the Holy Spirit; in Christ a new and glorious life begins; in Christ old values are rejected, old standards repudiated, and old lusts are crucified; in Christ are “all spiritual blessings” (Ephesians 1:3); out of Christ there is nothing but death, remorse, hopelessness and condemnation; in Christ there is eternal life!

In the light of the above, how is it that one can read 57 commentaries and find not one single reference to the important question of “How does one find the status of being “in Christ?” The answer to this question is the concern of every man ever born, or at least it should be. Here is the answer.

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death.” (Romans 6:3)

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The baptism “into one body” in the first reference above is exactly the same as being baptized into Christ, because the one body is the spiritual body of Christ. The entire New Testament gives no other means, provides no other device, and suggests no other ceremony or action that can bring the believer into Christ. Why? Because, there is none.

It is alleged that “faith in Christ” saves; and so it does, but notice the meaning of this oft-repeated and frequently misunderstood expression. “Faith in Christ” means faith exercised by a believer’s faith prior to his baptism into Him. For any believer who has not been baptized, his faith is not “in Christ” (because he is not in Christ); and thus the believer’s faith prior to his baptism is not “in Christ” at all, but “out of Christ.” The preposterous assumption that one is not “in Christ” at all may have, in fact, “faith in Christ,” is an utter impossibility.

Verse 18

“All these things are of God . . .” The marvelous blessings “in Christ” are of God, as Paul would explain a moment later, because God was in Christ, Christ being called God no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament. It was the Second Person of the Godhead, however, who entered life as a man, bore the sins of the whole world and offered Himself upon Calvary as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

"Who reconciled us . . ." Men are the ones who need to be reconciled; and this thought is again implied here.

"And gave us the ministry . . ." This is a reference to the apostles of Christ, to whom was committed the ministry of reconciliation, meaning the glad news of the redemption available to every man "in Christ."

Verse 19

"God was in Christ . . ." If God was not in Christ, it would have been impossible for Him through Christ to have reconciled the world unto Himself! It was precisely this perfect identity with Christ that gave meaning and efficacy to all that Christ did.

"Not counting their trespasses against them . . ." The heavenly strategy by which God could, in righteousness, leave off reckoning unto sinners their sins is simply that of the "spiritual body" of Jesus Christ. Men who renounce self, obey the gospel, and are added to the body of Christ, are no longer (legally) themselves, but Christ.

They are then reckoned to be in "Christ," truly identified with Christ, participants in His death, sharers of Christ's righteousness, and thus wholly justified, not in their original personal identity, but "in Christ and as Christ."

"To us the word of reconciliation . . ." This is parallel to the last clause of the preceding verse; and this double reference led quite naturally to Paul's exposition of his status as God's ambassador, in the next verse.

Verse 20

"Ambassadors . . ." Throughout history, the office of an ambassador has been one endowed with plenary authority; and it is this aspect of Paul's ministry which is stressed here.

David Lipscomb, op. cit., p. 83, said, "The apostles were and are the ambassadors of Christ. They were the revealers of the gospel. All others are only proclaimers of what the apostles revealed. No preacher today has any revelation nor can he claim to be a witness of the resurrection. He may preach

the gospel, but he cannot reveal it. He has no message that is not already made known.”

“Be reconciled to God . . .” Men can be reconciled to God in only one way, and that is by complying with the conditions God has laid down in the gospel, which conditions are antecedent and prerequisite to salvation. Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 36, said, “There are conditions on the part of man. Christ died for all, but not all will be saved.”

“Christ . . . God . . .” Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 210, wrote, “The apostle makes no difference between Christ and God, Christ Himself being the Second person of the eternal Godhead.” As Christ’s ambassador, Paul could declare the conditions of reconciliation with God.

Verse 21

Christ bore the sins of all men; His stripes were he healing of all men; His chastisement was the peace of all men; His suffering was the salvation of all men. “God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.”

“The righteousness of God . . .” All of the righteousness of God ever achieved upon earth was wrought by Jesus our Lord. Those who would participate in the righteousness of God must do so “in Him,” that is, “in Christ.” It has been admitted by all who ever studied the question that only “the righteousness of God” can save men; and that righteousness is “in Christ”; thus no man can be saved out of Christ.

In this context, it should also be observed that the righteousness of God was the achievement of God Himself in Christ; and, in answer to the question of what constituted righteousness it was the perfect faith and obedience of Christ. The faith that saves, in any absolute sense, is therefore the faith of Christ, a fact dogmatically affirmed no less than seven times in the Greek New Testament.

Furthermore, even in the case of the faith of Christ, it was not “faith only,” but the perfect faith and obedience of the Son of God which wrought the true righteousness which is the foundation of all human salvation in Him!

CHAPTER 6

Paul here discussed the trials of ambassadors for Christ (1-10), made a strong emotional appeal to the Corinthians (11-13), and gave instructions against Christians mixing with the pagans (14-18).

Verse 1

Paul himself was working together with both God and the Corinthians, which work was necessary even for an apostle, that he might not have received the grace of God in vain. He entreated them also to observe the same diligent activity on behalf of the gospel that he was demonstrating in his own life.

GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN

“Grace of God in vain . . .” No apostle could have waned against such a possibility if it never existed; and Philip E. Hughes, Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 217, said Paul’s words on this passage are true. He said, “Paul unquestionably considers the possibility of grace received by the individual being again lost . . . the dangerous error of predestination, which asserts that grace cannot be lost, is unknown to Scripture.

While it is true that predestination is taught in the Scriptures (as regards the body of Christ), and not as it regards individuals), it is not predestination which is denied, but the error of it which interprets the doctrine as teaching that a true Christian cannot fall from grace and be eternally lost. The possibility is plainly inferred in the strongest manner by Paul in this very verse.

Receiving God’s grace in vain was a fate with which the Corinthians were flirting in a most dangerous manner through their close association with the pagan society around them.

E. H. Plumptre, Ellicott’s Commentary, Vol. 8, p. 383, wrote, “The Corinthians had believed and had been baptized, so they had received the grace;” but the freedom to choose good or evil still remained, and if they chose evil they would frustrate the end for which the grace was given.”

There is nothing unbiblical in the concept of a Christian’s “working” to avoid receiving the grace of God in vain. Did not this same apostle command

the Philippians to “work out you own salvation with fear and trembling?
(Philippians 2:12)

Was Paul not himself “working together” with God, with the Corinthians, or with his fellow apostles as stated in this very verse? And in such work is there the slightest hint of the grace of God being denied as the true source of salvation?

The Corinthians were suffering from the delusion that they would be saved “by faith alone” even while linking up in the most shameful manner with pagan associates.

Verse 2

The passage in Isaiah from which this comes is chapter 49:8. “Thus says the LORD, In a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you; and I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.”

F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary Vol; 19, 2 Corinthians, p. 144, said this passage was addressed, “To the Servant of Jehovah, the type primarily of Christ, and then of all who are ‘in Christ.’” Thus it is clear that in his appeal to this Scripture, Paul was referring to the gospel age as “the day of salvation” and the “acceptable time.”

Behold now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME” . . . behold now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION . . .” The urgency of immediate acceptance of the gospel was also stressed by the author of Hebrews (3:7, 8, 13).

“Now . . .” It should be noted that this tightens the urgency even beyond the passage of Hebrews. There, the message is “Today . . . harden not your hearts;” here it is “Now is the day of salvation.”

Verse 3

Norman Hillyer, The New Bible Commentary, Revised, p. 1081, has a quotation which catches the background of Paul’s thought in this place, “There are people who will be glad for an excuse not to listen to the gospel or to take it seriously, and they will look for such an excuse in the conduct of its

ministers.” It was precisely to avoid giving anyone such an excuse that Paul so strenuously defended his own reputation. No minister can be careless of the opinion that others may hold concerning his life and conduct.

Verse 4

“Commending ourselves . . .” refers to the exhibition and demonstration in Paul’s life of the utmost integrity of character which was daily exemplified in all of the patterns of his total behavior.

“Servants of God . . .” Paul included other apostles with himself in this “servants of God;” but he also called himself “the servant of Christ.” (Romans 1:1) In this, of course, he could not have meant that he was the servant of two masters, because Jesus had flatly declared that, “No man can serve two masters. (Mathew 6:24) The meaning is plain. Paul considered God and Christ as one.

“In much endurance . . .” Regarding the word thus rendered, William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 237, said, “It is an untranslatable word . . . It describes the ability to hear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them and transmutes them. Chrysostom has a great panegyric on this hupomene, this triumph Christian endurance. He calls it the root of all goods, the mother of piety, the fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbor that knows no storms.”

This great word “endurance” flies like a banner over the whole succeeding list.

All of the following difficult circumstances, called by William Barclay, *Ibid.*, “A blizzard of troubles,” and by Wick Broomall, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 670, “A multi-colored rainbow glowing with the graces of Paul’s ministry,” are listed by Paul without regard to any strict outline.

It should be remembered that Paul was writing a letter by dictation and that he was not formulating some classical essay. A failure to do this very thing is responsible for most of the wild speculation by scholars regarding his epistle.

“In afflictions . . .” Paul was beset by countless hazards and difficulties, all of which, in a sense, were afflictions.

“In hardships . . .” could refer to practically anything that Paul was compelled, by necessity, to do in order to further the gospel.

“In distresses . . .” These were of every kind:

- (1) personal rejection by former friends,
- (2) disease,
- (3) shipwrecks,
- (4) plots to murder him,
- (5) charges laid against him before governors,
- (6) anxieties for the churches,
- (7) travel delays, etc.

Verse 5

“In beatings . . .” F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 145, said “These were of two kinds, from Jewish whips, and Roman rods; but of the five scourges (by Jews), not one is mentioned in Acts, and only one of the Roman scourges.”

“In imprisonments . . .” William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 238, wrote, “Clement of Rome states that Paul was in prison no fewer than seven times.”

“In tumults . . .” All of the early preachers, especially the apostles, often found their services broken up with riots.

“In labors . . .” The thought is that Paul pressed the work of preaching the gospel with the utmost vigor and perseverance. He constantly worked at it.

“In sleeplessness . . .” Paul watched all night on the occasion of the shipwreck. (Acts 27:29) His arduous physical labors would have made it certain that he could sleep when he had a chance!

“In hunger . . .” has no reference to formal or religious fasts of any kind, but to periods of hunger brought on by times when he had insufficient money, or when incessant labor delayed the opportunity to rest.

Verse 6

Paul's total lack of any classical classification of the things he was mentioning is revealed here by his inclusion of the Holy Spirit in a list of the Spirit's gifts. This has so frustrated some commentators that they have rendered it "a spirit that is holy." (Norman Hillyer, *op. cit.*, p. 1081)

"In purity . . ." The primary meaning of this would be "chastity," especially in a place like Corinth; but the sincerity and integrity of the total life are also included by it.

"In knowledge . . ." This is a tribute to the word of God, in Paul's case largely the Old Testament scriptures, which had provided the power to understand and overcome all hardships. Many of the greatest problems of the Old Testament would probably never have been explained without the matchless learning and perceptive powers of this great apostle. Justification by faith, the spiritual body of Christ, the significance of "in Christ," the mystery of the hardening of Israel—and many other subjects are singularly illuminated by the mind of Paul.

"In patience . . ." Even yet, after so many centuries, the amazing forbearance and tenderness of Paul's dealings with "babes in Christ," like those in Corinth are evident for all to see. No matter what was wrong, or how often difficulties came, Paul always had time to try to put it all back together again.

"In kindness . . . in the Holy Spirit . . . in genuine love . . ." Both kindness and love are among the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); but Paul was merely mentioning everything that had helped him through the storms.

Verse 7

"The word of truth . . ." It is more likely; that it means "the gospel" (Colossians 1:5), the Divine body of truth which Paul customarily preached.

"In the power of God . . ." God had worked with Paul, as in the case of all the other apostles, enabling him to perform signs and wonders and mighty deeds, thus "confirming the word." (Mark 16:20)

“By the weapons of righteousness . . .” Paul loved this figure and developed it fully in Ephesians 6:13-17. Every item in the whole panoply answers finally for identification as “the word of God.” This mention of the right hand and the left hand refers to offensive weapons (like the sword in the right hand, and defensive weapons (like the shield borne by the left hand) as more fully evident in Ephesians.

Verse 8

In the case of “glory and dishonor,” it is the good which is mentioned first; but in the next pairing, it is the evil which is first mentioned. All of these expressions have the weight of declaring Paul’s fidelity to the faith and constant prosecution of his labors as an apostle regardless of all circumstances.

Verse 9

To Paul’s enemies, especially among the hierarchy in Jerusalem, he had become a “nobody;” he was dead, the custom of having a funeral for defectors from Judaism having in all probability been observed in regard to Paul; and no less than five times they had beaten him unmercifully.

Far from being a nobody, Paul became the most famous man of all ages, other than Christ Himself. And as for his being dead, the funeral of Paul (if they had one) was premature. At Lystra they stoned him and dragged him out of the city; but he rose up to claim Timothy from that environment and to make his letters to him a part of the word of God for twenty centuries!

Verse 10

“Sorrowful . . . rejoicing . . .” his dual quality of the Christian life pertains to all believers, and not merely to Paul. In a world of sin, mortality, and many frustrations, “sorrow” is inevitable; but the distinguishing characteristic of faith in Christ is a joy.

The knowledge of the Savior’s love and consciousness of sins forgiven, the confident hope of everlasting life, and the present possession of the blessed Holy Spirit within—such things surcharge the soul with joy unspeakable.

“Poor . . . many rich . . .” Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI, p. 340, wrote, “The gospel faithfully preached betters the condition of the poor. It makes them sober, frugal, dependable and diligent. They therefore both have and gain by religion, and this must lead to increase of property. They are thus made rich in comparison with their state of drunkenness, wastefulness and laziness before they became Christians.” (Condensed and paraphrased.)

It must be admitted, however, that Paul was not speaking of material riches at all, but of the unsearchable riches in Christ Jesus.

Verses 11-13

“Our mouth has spoken freely to you . . .” means, “I have spoken fully and frankly to you.”

“Our heart is opened wide . . .” means, “We have great affection for you.”

“You are not restrained by us . . .” means, “My affection for you has not diminished.”

“You are restrained in your own affections . . .” means, “You do not love us fully as you should.”

“Now in a like exchange . . .” means, “I ask you to love me fully, as I love you.”

“Open wide to us also . . .” means, “Let your affections for me abound.”

The meaning here which probably colored to some extent what Paul was about to say; and the realization, as he spoke these words, that the false teachers at Corinth had succeeded in stealing the affections of the Corinthians away from Paul (at least to some extent—the sudden realization triggered the devastating attack he now delivered against these sons of the devil in Corinth.

Verse 14

This apostolic order has at least two anchors in what Paul had just written.

- (1) He had just warned them against receiving the grace of God in vain (6:1); and
- (2) he had just touched upon a truth which undoubtedly had superlative impact upon his emotions, that being the loss of love for Paul on the part of the Corinthians.

It was the encroachment of paganism against the holy faith which was the ground of the warning in verse 1 and the cause of defection mentioned in verses 11-13; and it was directly in response to both of these that the scathing attack on paganism was delivered.

UNEQUALLY YOKED

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers . . .” This meant that no Christian had any business making alliances of any kind with pagans; and yes, that certainly includes marriage. Why should any Christian wife accept a pagan for a husband?

Paul was not here discussing the situation where one of a pagan couple had obeyed the gospel and the other had not; he had already dealt with that. Here he was laying down a rule that forbade such alliances in the first place. Any close alliance with a pagan partner in business, recreation, marriage, or any other kind of union can mean nothing but disaster for the Christian.

“What partnership . . . what fellowship . . .?” Christianity and paganism are antithetical, as diverse as righteousness and wickedness, or light and darkness.

Verse 15

The two questions here and the other two in the preceding verse are so stated as to require the negative answer. They are all four, in fact, intended as affirmations that Christ has no concord with Belial . . . etc.

“Belial . . .” This is a synonym for “Satan.”

Verse 16

E. H. Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 386, wrote, "We see clearly the drift of the apostle's thought. His mind travels back to the controversy about things sacrificed to idols."

Their liberty had become license, their love hatred, or at best lukewarm; and their Christianity had degenerated till they stood in danger of having received the grace of God in vain.

"We are the temple of the living God . . ." This is the basis of Paul's demand that no compromise whatever be made with paganism. He had developed that metaphor extensively in the first letter; but he reinforced it here with the quotation from Exodus 29:45, deriving from it that principle that, "wherever God dwells is the true temple of God." R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 99, expressed it, "There is still a temple of God, but it consists of the whole company of Christian believers." Not only did Paul view the church as God's true temple as contrasted with the idol temples in Corinth, but it was also God's true temple with respect to the great temple of the Jews in Jerusalem.

Verses 17-18

"Come out . . . do not touch what is unclean . . ." (Isaiah 52:11) Paul was not "quoting Scripture" here; he was writing Scripture. The difference is apparent in the formula by which he introduced this paragraph. He did not say, "Thus it is written," but, "Thus says the Lord."

As further proof that Paul was writing, and not merely quoting God's word, the mention of "daughters" must be considered conclusive. Concerning this inclusion of the word "daughters," David Lipscomb, *Second Corinthians* p. 97 said: "It is characteristic of Christianity that it was the first system that ever recognized the dignity of women and raised them generally to the same moral and spiritual level with men. This was very suitable at Corinth, where above all other places in the world, women were lured to their ruin by organized immoralities under the cloak of religion."

Paganism has lost its old forms; but no person in his right mind can be unaware of the neo-paganism which today threatens to engulf the world. All of the old essentials of paganism are still operative. The deification of humanity, the gross emphasis upon the secular, the material, the sensual and devilish are still struggling to dominate the minds of mankind. The so-called sex liberation, the abandonment of ancient moral values, and the encroaching dishonesty, selfishness and libertinism even in the highest echelons of government—all of these and many other things proclaim in tones of thunder that paganism is still around.

CHAPTER 7

The first verse of this chapter concludes the paragraph which began at 6:14. Verses 2-4 are a concluding thought connected with Paul's appeal in 6:11-13).

Paul's stern warning to the Corinthians to come out from among the pagans and "be separate" (6:14—7:1) came right in the middle of his touching plea for their reciprocation of his love; and despite the widespread scholarly prejudice that views this as something incongruous, it appears exactly where such a blast should have been expected. Coupled with his yearning for a full renewal of their love of him, the demand for their separation from paganism was Paul's revelation to them of the one thing and the only thing that could have made possible such a renewal.

The conclusion of Paul's plea for the love of the Corinthians is given in verses 1-4; and the rest of the chapter is a resumption of the line of thought that Paul had interrupted at 2:14.

In verses 5-16, he takes up the story of his meeting with Titus in Macedonia, speaking of the comfort and joy derived from that meeting, of his new hope and joy for Christians, and of his appreciation of the corrections they had made in keeping with his instructions.

Verse 1

This is a reiteration of the command to, “And be separate.” (6:17), only here it is reinforced by Paul’s appeal to the promise certified to the Corinthians because of their status as God’s true temple.

“Holiness in the fear of God . . .” Only those who are holy shall see God. (Hebrews 12:10, 14) Absolute perfection is required of all those who will enter heaven. (Matthew 5:48)

How then can any man be saved? It is admitted by all that perfection in any absolute sense is impossible for mortal man. The answer lies in the perfection of Jesus Christ; and those who accept His gospel, believing, repenting, and being baptized “into Christ” are in that manner made a part of Christ, His spiritual body the church, being in a true sense actually Christ. In that state of being “in Christ” and fully identified with Him, all of the perfection of Christ Himself is credited to all of the members of the Lord’s body. That is why Paul could say, “That we may present every man perfect in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)

However, Paul did not say that “we will present every man” (that is, every Christian), but that “we may present,” indicating that Christ’s perfection, while truly available for every Christian, does not pertain to him automatically. God will in no case require of a man a perfection which is beyond his power, promising to forgive every sin that a Christian commits; but a Christian must work at it, sincerely and never stop trying.

Paul here commanded the Corinthians to “cleanse themselves” from all defilements of the flesh and to perfect “holiness in the fear of God.”

Verses 2-4

“Make room for us in your hearts . . .” Paul’s immediate mention of wronging, corrupting and taking advantage of “no man” is best understood not as a defense of himself against such charges, but as a contrast between himself and those false teachers at Corinth who were doing those very things.

“In our hearts to die together and to live together . . .” This was an affirmation of Paul’s love in the idiom known to all times and peoples. Ruth the Moabite spoke her love to her mother-in-law, “Where you lodge, I will lodge . . . Where you die, I will die, and together we will be buried.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

“Boasting, comfort, and joy. . .” E. H. Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 388 in verse 4, said these words indicate that, “There rushed upon Paul’s memory the recollection of the good news that Titus had brought;” therefore, he poured out these moving words of appreciation, personal thanksgiving and joy.

Verse 5

Having been unable to link up with Titus at Troas, as he had hoped, Paul had journeyed on into Macedonia; and this is a glimpse of the strong uncertainties and anxieties which assailed him before his meeting with Titus.

Verse 6

No joy, however wonderful, could induce Paul to forget the God who had provided it; and this mention of his comfort was accompanied by his acknowledgement of the Father who “comforts the depressed.”

“By the coming of Titus . . .” The importance of this man, to whom one of the sacred books of the New Testament is addressed, suggests additional attention to what is revealed of him.

TITUS

Titus was a Greek Christian who had been converted by Paul, a true friend of the apostle, an able and diligent helper, and his companion on the missionary field.

The very first notice of Titus is in Acts 15:2, where Luke referred to him, but not by name; the certainty that Titus was the one mentioned derives from Galatians 2:3.

Titus’ importance in the development of Christianity is seen in the fact that he was a representative test case on whether or not Gentiles had to be circumcised to be Christians. (Acts 15:13-29)

As will appear later in this epistle, Titus was entrusted with very important missions by Paul. He had apparently acted as Paul's deputy in the business discussed in this chapter; and, at a later time, he was in charge of the work in Crete, where he was living when Paul addressed to him the epistle of Titus.

He was loved and respected by Paul. Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p.76, wrote, "2 Timothy 4:10 indicates that Titus was with Paul for a while during his last imprisonment in Rome."

Verse 7

"Not only by his coming . . ." It was not the mere presence of Titus, wonderful as that was to Paul, which brought him so much joy, but the good news that Titus revealed regarding the situation in Corinth.

"Your longing . . . mourning . . . zeal for me . . ." Despite the presence of false teachers and bitter enemies of the truth in Corinth, there were those who truly loved Paul, mourned for the shameful sins which had brought disgrace upon them all, and kept up their loving affection for the holy apostle who had broken unto them the bread of life.

Verse 8

"I did regret it . . ." It was most natural that Paul should have had many tearful regrets about sending a letter which laid bare the immorality and lovelessness of a whole church. As any man who ever did such a thing must testify, it is a burden of real anguish and sorrow; it is a time of flowing tears and sorrow and heartbreak; it is a time of deep soul-searching and of bewildering wonderment whether this or that should have been said, should have been written, or should have been done.

Verse 9

"Rejoice . . . not that you were sorrowful . . ." It was not their sorrow which brought Paul's joy, but the fruit of that sorrow. It had led them, to obey his instructions, having produced repentance in their hearts.

Verse 10

REPENTANCE

“Repentance . . . leading to salvation . . .” It is strange, and at the same time significant, that the apostles always indicated repentance as being “toward,” i.e., in the direction of, or “unto” salvation as here.

Of all the primary steps of obeying the gospel, i.e., faith , repentance, confession and baptism, all are said to be “unto” or “toward” salvation, God, Christ and the remission of sins, whereas of baptism alone it is declared “into Christ.”

Some important teachings with regard to repentance appear in this verse:

- (1) Christians who commit sin are commanded to repent, the same being an invariable duty of all men, aliens and Christians alike. In the case of sin, repentance is never waived.
- (2) Christians who commit sin, until they do repent are not in a saved condition, else the repentance of the Corinthians could not have been said to be “unto” salvation.
- (3) Repentance is not sorrow for sin, which in many cases is mere “sorrow of the world” due to the inconvenience caused by sin or its discovery.
- (4) Even godly sorrow is not repentance, but a condition that produces repentance. What then is repentance? It is a change of will, with regard to sin, preceded by godly sorrow and followed by “fruits worthy of repentance.” (Matthew 3:9)

“Sorrow of the world produces death. . .” Through remorseful sorrow for sin, Judas committed suicide; and there have been countless other examples of the sorrow of the world working death; but what is mentioned here goes beyond physical consequences and speaks of “eternal death, which is the opposite of salvation.” (Romans 5:21) (F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 19, p. 171)

Paul gives us an exuberant description of the victory that always appears when men accept the word of God and obey it.

“Vindication of yourselves . . .” suggests that their whole hearted repentance and prayers had resulted in their complete forgiveness.

“What indignation . . .” is the indignation against sin which every sincere Christian manifests.

“What fear . . .” refers to the holy fear of God and reverence for His sacred word.

“What longing . . .” is a reverence to that hungering and thirsting after righteousness mentioned by the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount.
(Matthew 5:6)

“What zeal . . .” True repentance always results in the multiplication of Christian works and the conversion of the Corinthians had inspired all of them to redouble participation in the work of the Lord.

“What avenging . . .” There is a hint in this that the Corinthians had turned upon their false teachers with the full anger and determination of men aroused to do God’s will and to remove the influence of all persons standing in the way of it.

“In everything you approved yourselves to be innocent in the matter . . .” Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p.274-275, wrote, “Having taken action, the past was put right and they were in a state of purity so far as the affair (all of that immortality mentioned in the first epistle) was concerned. There is no need for Paul to specify any details since it is all too familiar to them. Hence he just refers to it as “the matter,” or “the affair.”

Verse 12

Paul’s avoidance of specifics in this verse was for the very purpose of not focusing attention upon any individual, either wronged or wrong-doer; and this left the way open for destructive critics, intent on destroying the credibility of the entire epistle, to move in and supply specifics Paul purposely avoided. Such conduct is not merely reprehensible, but devilish.

William Barclay, op. cit., p. 201, wrote, “When Paul had visited Corinth there had been ring-leader to the opposition. The short, unhappy visit had been poisoned by the activity of one man. This man had clearly personally insulted Paul!”

“This man’s insulting Paul is nonsense. Two verses later in this very paragraph, Paul declared, “I was not put to shame!” (7:14)

Verse 13

Paul’s words here signal a total victory in Corinth. Floyd V. Filson, Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. X, p. 362, wrote, “By you all” (in this verse 13), combined with “everything” (verse 14), “all” (verse 15) and “in all things” (verse 16), indicates that the entire church responded to Titus’ appeal and is now loyal to Paul.”

These expressions by Paul, however, are hyperbole. As will be seen in chapter 10, there were still pockets of resistance and much wrong-doing still remaining at Corinth.

Verse 14

Titus was going to Corinth, to assist the Corinthians in their reception and obedience with reference to 1 Corinthians, but before he had arrived Paul had spoken glowingly to Titus “glorying on behalf” of the Corinthians.

All of the complimentary things Paul had said of them had turned out to be true. That Paul could have gloried on their behalf even before he learned of the correction of their immoralities shows that his glowing compliments, however, deserved by some, were not deserved by all of them.

“I was not put to shame . . .” has the meaning of Paul’s complimentary remarks to Titus about them, had proved to be fully justified.

Verse 15

Paul in this spoke of the obedience which had marked the conduct of the Corinthians toward the preaching of Titus, and also a tactful word of Titus’ appreciation of their receiving and obeying him.

“The obedience of you all . . .” There are only two meanings of “you all” as used here. It is either a simple plural for the Corinthian church; or, if anything more is intended, it would have to be hyperbole.

Verse 16

The victory had been won; Titus’ mission had succeeded; but the problems that remained could be dealt with in confidence. The many were back on the right road; and, with this fundamental achievement, Paul was fully confident of the future of his precious converts at Corinth.

The very epistle we are studying, which is about to be dispatched to Corinth by the hands of Titus, proves that the apostle knew many instances in which they still needed correction, teaching and disciplining.

CHAPTER 8

Henry H. Halley, Bible Handbook, p. 555, said in this and the following chapters are found, “The most complete instructions about church giving which the New Testament contains; though it is offering for charity, we presume the principles here stated should be the guide for churches in the taking of all of their offerings. The gifts should be voluntary, proportionate, systematic, and above reproach in the manner of their business administration.”

The outline of chapter 8 has respect to three reasons presented by Paul as motivation for the liberal giving which he suggested for the Corinthians. Wick Broomall, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 675, suggested, “The example of the Macedonians (1-8), the example of Christ (9), and the requirements of honor (8:10-9:5).”

Verses 1-2

What an astounding thing it is that “two of the loveliest flowers of Christian character, joy and liberality,” should bloom in the Macedonian poverty fields. Their poverty was extreme and unusual in an age when poverty was almost universal.

J. W. McGarvey, Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 210, pointed out: “Macedonia had suffered in three civil wars, and had been reduced to such poverty that Tiberius Caesar, harkening to their petitions, had lightened their taxes. But in addition to this general poverty, the churches had been made poor by persecution. (2 Thessalonians 1:4)

James Macknight, Apostolic Epistles and Commentary, Vol. II, p. 396, saw in Paul’s mention of other people’s poverty in this letter to Corinth writing, “A delicate insinuation that the more opulent Corinthians should equal or exceed what had been given by the Macedonians.”

The afflictions of the Macedonians had been aggravated from the very first declaration of the gospel among them by those unreconciled elements of Judaism who had sent their emissaries throughout Macedonia in order to harass and hinder Paul’s preaching; and as J. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, op. cit., p. 112, said, “This had excited the hatred of the Gentiles toward Christianity.” (Acts 16:20; 17:5, 13)

The collection that Paul had in mind here was for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, although the destination of the funds is not stressed. The joy and liberality demonstrated by the Macedonians sprang from their consciousness of the forgiveness of their sins and the pure happiness of restored fellowship with God. Their liberality was a spontaneous expression of that joy.

“Liberality . . .” R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 112, explained this, “The word translated liberality, *haplotes*, means simplicity or single-mindedness; and as in Romans 12:8, it refers to giving which was uncalculating and free from ulterior motives.”

Verses 3-5

Philip E. Hughes, Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p.289 wrote, “These three verses constitute one continuous sentence in the original . . . a long and characteristically Pauline sentence.” The verb “gave” governs the whole statement.

“Beyond their ability . . . not as we had expected . . .” Their giving was above what Paul had expected and even beyond what their extreme poverty indicated as possible.

“Begging us with much entreaty . . .” It is clear from this that Paul “had urged some restraint in their giving, in view of their dire poverty.” (Raymond C. Kelcy, *Second Corinthians*, p. 49)

“Participation in the support of the saints . . .” refers to their participation in the collection, and the ministering to the service which the money would render to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter’s Bible* Vol. X, p. 365, pointed out that, “For no other church, or churches, was a collection ever taken, as far as we learn.”

Antioch, a Gentile congregation, was “the mother church” of all the churches founded by Paul. It was Antioch, not Jerusalem, which sent him forth with the gospel, and it was the “so-called” mother church in Jerusalem which opposed receiving any Gentiles at all, except on the basis of their prior circumcision; and added to all this, Paul himself flatly contradicted the notion that the Jerusalem of earth was in any sense a mother church, saying, “The Jerusalem that now is in bondage . . .” The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother.” (Galatians 4:25-26)

“They first gave themselves to the Lord . . .” If understood as a reference to their “first” becoming Christians, this would have the meaning of “in order of time;” but, as John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, said, “It is better to understand it of the order of importance, that is., “above all.” Of course in point of time, all Christian graces are derived from the first decision to give oneself to the Lord.

Verse 6

“This gracious grace as well . . .” That Paul’s words here may be touched with a bit of friendly irony may not be ruled out. Certainly, some of the first epistle is loaded with outright sarcasm; and, in a church of so many pretensions to “knowledge,” and with Paul’s immediate reference to their abounding in “knowledge,” there would seem to be here a very delicate

suggestion that perhaps the deeds of the Corinthians ought to catch up with their knowledge.”

Verse 7

“In everything . . .” Not only does this mean a great deal less than “everything, absolutely,” but there might even be implied some deficiency in the qualified areas of Paul’s explanation of it. Paul here extended to them this accolade regarding their excellence in certain graces with the admonition that the grace of giving should also be exemplified in them in a degree proportionate to their excellence of other graces.

Verse 8

“The sincerity of your love also . . .” How can this be anything else except a gentle reminder that their “abounding love” needed proving by their deeds?

I am not speaking this as a command . . .” It is not giving, as demanded and extorted by inexorable demands of Divine law, that can bless the giver, but giving spontaneously and freely done, and springing from motives of love, appreciation, gratitude and thanksgiving. It is that kind of giving, and only that kind, that ever did the giver any good.

Verse 9

“Though He was rich . . .” Adam Clarke’s, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI, p. 349, said, “If Jesus Christ was only a man, in what sense could He be rich?

Joseph and Mary were poor in Jerusalem, and poor in Nazareth; and, from the stable to the cross, Jesus never possessed any property among men, nor did He have anything at His death to bequeath, except His peace! The question of the riches of Christ, on the Socinian scheme, can never be satisfactorily answered.”

The riches of Christ are those riches which pertained to His status with God and equality to God before the world was (John 17:5), the riches of His

eternal power and godhead, the riches of His everlasting divinity and glory. Only such an explanation as this can pertain to Paul's words here.

“He became poor . . .” Christ's becoming poor has a double meaning:

- (1) referring to the contrast between His eternal, and His incarnation, and
- (2) also to the extraordinary poverty of His earthly state as compared with the affluence of some of His contemporaries.

“For your sake . . .” It should ever be remembered that Christ forsook heaven with its glory to live upon earth with its shame in order to redeem men from the curse of sin. It was not merely for the sake of the Corinthians, but for the sake of every man, that He humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was found obedient, even to death on the cross!

The simple, objective truth of Christianity is founded upon the conviction of the supernatural. In the final analysis, if there is no supernatural, there is no Christianity. So-called Christians who do not believe in the supernatural are unbelievers; and there can be no reconciliation of the supernaturalness of Christianity with the existential and speculative denials of it. What is affirmed in the New Testament is either true or false. Paul here assumed as a fact, nor did he even pause to defend it, that Christ existed with God before the earth was created.

Verse 10

“For this is to your advantage . . .” Paul ever had in mind the best interests of his converts; and, regardless of what they may have thought about, it was to their advantage to acquire and improve the grace of giving.

“A year ago . . .” As Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 303 supposed: “It would seem that their original zeal in this matter had flagged.” He further suggested that this slackening zeal might have been due to natural apathy, or to mistrust of Paul induced by false teachers; but the simple fact of Corinth

having been a troubled, factious and sinful congregation was more than enough to have diminished their interest in any kind of giving to further the work of the Lord. When trouble strikes a church, the collection is the first thing to suffer.

“Who were first to begin about a year ago not only to do this but also desire to do it . . .” The Corinthians—he is inherent in the fact of their having been the first to act, apparently with enthusiasm; but they had suddenly grown cold.

Verse 11

Given its bluntest interpretation, this means, “Get with it and do what you have already promised to do. It is not enough to promise!”

Verse 12

This was written to relieve the Corinthians of any thought that a certain amount of money was required of them. The intention and willingness to give were far more important than any merely quantitative consideration.

Christians must give, there being no such thing as a penurious, ungenerous, stingy Christian. Regarding the amount that should be given, David Lipscomb, *Second Corinthians*, p. 113, wrote, “It is clearly a self-deception for an individual to think he pleases God under the perfect dispensation of Christ while doing less than the Israelites did under typical dispensations.”

Many who profess to be giving “the widow’s mite” are doing no such thing. That amount they indeed give; but it is not “all of their living” as was the case for her.

Verses 13-14

The thought here is not that the gifts of the Corinthians would ease the burden of the Macedonians in raising the collection, but that those now able to

give might in time, be themselves the ones in need, and the giving should be done as a recognition of the uncertainties and vicissitudes (changes) of life. The fact that certain people now are not in need is no guarantee that their lack of need will be permanent.

“That there may be equality . . .” Paul’s object here was the relief of want, not an artificial equalization of property. In Paul’s philosophy, a man who would not work was to be denied the privilege of eating. (2Thessalonians 3:10)

Possessions may not be held by any Christian without regard to legitimate claims of those in want or distress. The great principles of Christ recognized the rights of property, but at the same time imposed upon its possessors the obligation of genuine liberality and sincere regards for the needs of others.

Verse 15

This is a quotation from Exodus 16:18, where is described the gathering of the manna; and in the typical things which happened in that miraculous situation, one may read the prophecy of all subsequent history of mankind. Those who tried to hoard the manna found that “it bred worms and stank” (Exodus 16:20); and this is precisely what is true of hoarded wealth in all ages.

“He who gathered much did not have too much. . .” The richest men who ever lived “have nothing over” when death comes. All that any man has is what he truly needs and uses.

“He who gathered little had no lack . . .” Even men with the most meager income may often diminish their requirements and find a little to be sufficient. The great lesson is that the man with much should ever hold his stewardship of abundance as subject to the just claims of the man whose necessities are impossible for himself unaided to meet. This is especially true of “the household of faith.”

Verse 16

Paul here emphasized the fact that Titus, who probably delivered the 1 Corinthian epistle, and who would shortly deliver the epistle then being written, was of one mind and heart with Paul, not merely in regard to the collection, but also in regard to the earnest care and love of the Corinthians themselves.

Verse 17

“He accepted . . . he has gone to you . . .” Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p.51, said: “Paul here used what grammarians call an epistolary aorist, speaking of the event as already completed, because it would be completed when the Corinthians read this epistle.”

Verse 18

If this brother is Luke, it would mean that Luke had been concerned with compiling a gospel long before the date usually assigned to the third Gospel, (which is not an impossibility). However, whether or not this was Luke (and no one really knows); one thing is positively evident: there was a written gospel even at this early date, a fact confirmed by Luke’s introduction. (1:1-5)

“Through all the churches . . .” The brother mentioned was known “through all” the churches. This is a reference to the evangelist Luke and to the gospel that bears his name.

Verse 19

These are further remarks about the “brother” whose fame through all the churches was in the gospel. Luke was Paul’s constant traveling companion; and in the word here that the churches had appointed someone to travel with Paul, there is strong inferential support for the view that it was none other than Luke.

The good sense of the churches in appointing a physician to this task is evident, and this would also explain who paid Luke's charges for those long years of his abandonment of his medical practice for the purpose of traveling with Paul. The real objection that some scholars have to this view is that it blows their late dating of the Gospel of Luke right out of the water.

If one is not married to the theory of a late date for Luke, the supposition that Luke is probably the one Paul mentioned here is quite reasonable.

Verse 20

“Avoiding this” This word “avoiding” is a nautical term. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 197, wrote, “It means furling sail that is, taking precautions in anticipation of danger.”

There is no area of human behavior more likely to give occasion of slander than that of handling public funds; and Paul's precautions were not merely wise, they are also an apostolic precedent that should be observed by the churches of all times and places. The wise, prudent and business-like handling of a congregation's financial affairs is without exception prerequisite to any general confidence of a congregation in its leadership.

Verse 21

It is not enough for God to know that a man's conscience is clear he should order his affairs in such a manner that men will also be aware of it. Paul surely did this; and therefore the notion is rejected that Paul was always trying to respond to slanders of his enemies. He did not wait till slander was alleged but took steps to refute to refute lies before they were spoken.

E. H. Plumptre, *Elliott's Commentary Vol. VII*, p. 393, thought it remarkable that Paul evidently found help for his daily guidance from the book of Proverbs, showing that even one who was taught by the Spirit, “Could find daily guidance in a book which seems to many almost below the level of spiritual life.”

Verse 22

This was the third member of the group Paul sent to Corinth with 2 Corinthians. Nothing is known of who this brother was, other than what is written here.

Verse 23

“Messengers of the church . . .” This is the same word translated “apostles” in a number of New Testament passages, but these were apostles only in a secondary sense. Norman Hillyer, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1082, declared, “This does not put them into the same category as Paul and Peter who are ‘apostles’ by the will of God.”

They were messengers of information only, not messengers of plenary power.

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 118, has some weighty words in this connection he said, “Those messengers could not change or modify any decision, nor legislate for God, nor determine what was best for the churches, nor meet other messengers and organize a body, nor confer with one another on how the Lord should act, nor sit in judgment, nor otherwise change or direct the work of the churches.” Thus it is clear that some modern “church messengers” are in no sense justified by what these men did.

Verse 24

This line is as stern as anything in chapters 10ff. When a person has professed love, and the object of such alleged love hurls the challenge to “prove it” in the face of a competent witness just cited, and “before the face of all the churches,” there is absolutely “nothing mild,” in such a response.

CHAPTER 9

These verses are an intensification of Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to make good on their promises of a year ago and to make up a bountiful contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

An outline of this chapter has two divisions:

- (1) Paul's reasons for sending the brethren instead of coming himself, (verses 1-5) and
- (2) the blessings of Christian giving, (verses 6-15).

Verse 1

"For . . ." Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 321, wrote, "This word indicates a logical link with the immediately preceding matter. R. V. G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, p. 128 pointed out that "to write" as used here indicates the same thing. "The present tense of the infinitive 'to write' signifies "to go on writing."

"Ministering to the saints . . ." John Wesley's, One Volume New Testament Commentary, in loco, made a quaint comment on this: "Anything that conveyed God's good gifts from one member to another was in the apostle's eye, a 'ministry.'"

Verse 2

"Your readiness . . ." does not mean that the promised contribution had actually been prepared, but that they had been prompt to promise their full cooperation.

It would have been a permanent disgrace to the Corinthians if, after being an example to others, they themselves should have fallen short.

Verse 3

"I have sent" R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 124, said, "This has the meaning of 'I am ending.'"

"Boasting . . ." Paul's boasting here is neither in men nor in human achievements, but is in the grace of God as manifested in the beauty of lives which had been touched with the knowledge of Jesus the Lord.

Verse 4

"Lest if any . . ." does not have any meaning of uncertainty.

"We should be put to shame . . ." This is a great example of Paul's use of "we" in order more fully to identify himself with his readers for the purpose of making a more delicate and forceful appeal. It was not his own face which Paul sought to save by this admonition, but the reputation of the Corinthians.

Verse 5

"Ahead . . . beforehand . . . promised . . ." This repeated emphasis on the fact they had already promised this collection more than a year ago had an element of sternness in it that should not be overlooked.

"Bountiful . . . not affected by covetousness . . ." It is remarkable to read the comments designed to soften the force of the word "covetousness," which by implication is here applied to all radical and high-pressure methods of fund raising. He wanted the Corinthians to desire the fulfilling of their promise.

Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, p. 375, correctly read the implied criticism of Paul's words here as indicating that, "There had already been too much delay."

Having thus disposed of the explanation of why he was sending messengers on ahead for the purpose of raising the collection, Paul devoted the balance of this chapter to extolling the joys and benefits of Christian giving.

Verse 6

Giving as an exhibition of trust in God's promise to bless the giver is as exalted as any other motive taught in the word of God.

Verse 7

The importance of consecrated Christian giving is so great, that the following studies with reference to it are included.

WHY GIVE?

God owns the world and everything in it. Underlining the entire structure of the word of God is a ledge-rock principle of Divine ownership. God owns the earth, by right of creation; and when man was introduced, he appeared not as an owner, but as a gardener in Eden. Every beast of the forest, every bird of the mountains, and every beast of the field, even "the world and its fullness" belong to God.

Title deeds and legal grants always have regard to social custom, not Divine authority. No man "owns" any of the earth; it belongs to God by the dual right of creation and constant maintenance.

All men, especially Christians, are themselves the property of God. Paul had warned these Corinthians already that they were not their own, having been bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

All men are accountable to God as stewards of His wealth. In very much the same sense that Joseph was the slave of Potiphar yet he had control of all of Potiphar's possessions, the Christian is the slave of Christ and answerable to the Master for his handling of the Lord's goods, a day of reckoning being clearly revealed in the New Testament. (Matthew 25:19) When man's

possessions are treated as Jesus' property, it will be the end of the problem of how much to give.

The proper motivation in giving is determinative. The great gift of Ananias and Sapphira was rejected because it was motivated by selfishness; and the gift of the widow's mites, though exceedingly small, was praised by Jesus because of her true devotion. Some pretend to be giving "all I can," whereas everyone knows that their "all" is merely the leftovers from a gluttonous feast of selfishness. God will judge the hearts of men.

Any motive that is based upon pride, vain glory or selfishness is wrong and should be put far away from every Christian.

Note: The incentives that should impel men to give are revealed in God's word; and among those which are high and holy are the following:

God Himself is a motive. The Father in heaven is the first and greatest of motives. He so loved the world that "He gave." (John 3:16) Let men teach their hearts to give; and, if they do this, their hands will not need teaching. God has proposed to win back to Himself a big, lost and sinful world, putting all of the resources of heaven itself into the effort. He has called up His reserves and is doing all that even God could do to save humanity. Entire nations lie in rebellion and darkness; millions know not His mercy; the blessed Father needs our help; and what a privilege it is to help God Himself by giving toward the realization of the Creator's plans.

Christ is a motive. It was to this that Paul appealed in verse 15, below, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." Christ redeemed men; and it is a strangely perverse and hardened heart that cannot find in this unspeakable truth the key that will unlock the springs of liberality.

The church of Christ is a motive. The church is truly the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9); the spiritual body of the Redeemer Himself (Ephesians 1:22-23); and what is done to the church is done to Christ.

How beautiful was Jesus' entrusting the care of His beloved mother to the apostle John; but the care of His bride the church has been entrusted to us!

The world is another motive. There are millions of reasons why men should give liberally to God's work. All of the sin, pain, and sorrow; all of the defeat, doubt and despair; and all of the sad groaning of miserable humanity are reasons why men should give. Let men give so that broken hearts can be healed by the love of Jesus and quickened with the gospel of salvation. Unloose the strings, therefore, not of the purse, but of the heart.

I myself am a motive. Paul warned the Corinthians that there would come a time when their "want" might require the generous help of others; and every Christian should take this possibility seriously. At some future time, the Christian may find himself in the agony of doubt, or of some blinding sorrow; and, if such should come to pass, it will be the church that helps him to ride out the period of distress.

Gifts to Christ are saved; all else is lost. Joaquin Miller's poetic eulogy of Peter Cooper stressed the impressive truth that "All you can hold in your cold, dead hand is what you have given away!" This is particularly true of what is given to Christ, that is, to His church. Men need to be reminded that giving to the church is giving to Christ. (Ephesians 3:21)

Partnership with God is a motive. "Enter into the joy of you master." (Matthew 25:21) Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The New Testament, an American Translation*, in loco translated it, "Come, share your Master's enjoyment." Is not this a partnership with the Lord? Christ is not in business for Himself alone, but for the benefit of His slaves, and no man can afford to hinder what Christ would do for him by a rebellious refusal to handle as Christ commanded those few goods (or many) that were entrusted to his care and stewardship by the Lord.

Men love cheerful givers. In this very verse, Paul made the fact of God's loving a cheerful giver a means of motivating the Corinthians. There is no

more certain way into the hearts of men than by the practice of a sincere and honest liberality. Stinginess is universally despised.

A generous man or woman, on the other hand, is given a welcome in the heart of mankind. This is a worthy motive for giving, because it is certainly a mark of the highest character when one desires the love of men. However, it is the love of men, not their praises, which is the true motive.

“God loves a cheerful giver.” Has there ever been a human being who could decide that he does not wish to be loved of God? For any thoughtful person, this must be the greatest motive of all. That the eternal and omnipotent God should love a mortal man is a concept so wonderful that it surpasses the powers of human imagination to understand it; but here Paul bluntly stated it.

If God loves a man, it is better than his being loved by the richest and most powerful man on earth. If God loves a man, no matter how much he gives, God will not let him suffer from doing so.

Verse 8

R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 126, said, “Generous giving, seems very hazardous;” but Paul here stated the truth that where the generous spirit is, God will provide the means of expressing it. The amount of any man’s giving is inevitably influenced by his trust, or mistrust, of the promise here.

Verse 9

“As it is written . . .” Wick Broomall, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* wrote: “This exact construction occurs twelve times in Romans, twice in 1 Corinthians, and twice in this epistle (8:15 and here), and nowhere else does Paul use it.”

Verse 10

Here is further inducement for giving liberally. Paul had already said in verse 6 that the man who sowed sparingly should reap sparingly, and that the

bountiful sower should also reap bountifully. A collation of New Testament teaching on how men should give is as follows:

HOW TO GIVE

God is deeply concerned about how men give, for it is not enough that one merely turn a part of his wealth of income to holy uses. It is of primary importance that such be done in a manner approved of God. Note the following on how not to give:

- (1) Not for vain-glory. Jesus warned that giving should not be done “to be seen of men.” (Matthew 6:1-4)
- (2) Not grudgingly. (2 Corinthians 9:7). It is a positive violation of God’s law for any man to permit himself to be high-pressured into giving to the church, or anything else. Giving should mark a Christian’s character, because of what he is, not because of a good sales talk.
- (3) Not deceitfully. (Acts 5:iff) Ananias and Sapphira are the New Testament examples of this error; but it may well be feared that even now there are many who pretend a liberality they do not have.
- (4) Not without love. The gift of all one’s earthly goods “without love” profits the giver “nothing” at all. (1 Corinthians 13:3) Nothing big, or good, or beautiful can come out of a loveless gift.
- (5) Not while estranged from a brother. “First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.” (Matthew 5:23-24) That is Christ’s command; and it may not be violated with impunity.

WHAT ARE THE PROPER GUIDELINES FOR PROPER GIVING?

It should be done with simplicity. (Romans 12:8) Simplicity oils the rough usages of charity in such a manner that the recipient is not wounded. An ostentatious giver is an offense:

- (1) to the observer because of his vulgarity,
- (2) to the recipient of alms because of his pride and lovelessness, and
- (3) to the heavenly Father because of his vanity and conceit.

In the name of Christ. “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41)

All that a Christian does should be done in the name of the Lord. (Colossians 3:17) In a practical sense, this generally means doing it through the church, which is the spiritual body of Christ.

Systematically. “Upon the first day of the week.” (1 Corinthians 16:2) The meaning of the New Testament is that giving should be done regularly on the first day of every week. Systematic giving creates and sustains the habit of giving, keeping the springs of the Christian heart open.

Liberally. Liberal giving means just that. (Luke 6:38)

Sacrificially. A Christian’s body is “a living sacrifice.” (Romans 12:1) It is not enough that men give merely crumbs that fall from the table where self is feasted. (13:16) This means that men should give enough to God that it requires sacrifice to do it.

Cheerfully. (9:7) A man said he could give a dollar much more cheerfully than he could give a hundred dollars; but that is not what Paul meant. The cheerful giver is the one who derives joy from obeying the Lord and imitating the giver of all things by his own obedience. Under every divine commandment is the great principal of benefit to the one who obeys it. Only the givers are happy people. The miser is so-called because he is miserable.

Purposefully. (9:7) This shows that giving should be in accordance with the inward purpose and intention of the giver; and it does no justice to this

principle when a man merely thrusts a hand into his pocket and casts whatever might be handy into the collection.

Secretly. “That your alms may be in secret . . .” (Mathew 6:3-4) This principle applies especially to person-to-person giving, a grace in which every Christian must share; but it does not mean that every man’s giving is his business alone. Paul commanded the church to withdraw from the covetous man. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

Upon a basis of equality. It was never God’s plan that 20% of the church should give 90% of the church budget, allowing all of the religious hitch-hikers to take a free ride. God’s way is a way of equality.

The only method of finding equality is for all to give a certain percentage of their income; and that ancient principal of giving a tithe to God (which is 10%) is a good place to start. The tithe was recognized as the duty of all men to Almighty God, long before there was any such thing as Judaism upon this earth. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, a time when the Jewish dispensation was merely an unfulfilled prophecy. (Hebrews 7:7)

One’s self to be given first. (2 Corinthians 8:5). When one gives his heart to the Lord, in his conversion to Christ, the problem of giving is already solved. For the person who finds difficulty in becoming a liberal giver, it would be well for him to ask himself, “Have I really given myself to the Lord?”

Verse 11

“Enriched in everything . . .” This is a promise that Christians who give as they should will “in everything” be enriched, meaning, not merely in their financial ability, but in countless other ways also. The heavenly promise is the pledge of God Himself that giving pays rich dividends to the giver.

DIVIDENDS RECEIVED FROM GIVING

Underlying every sacred commandment is the purpose of God to achieve the utmost happiness and benefit for the obedient child of God; and obedience to the commandment to give, in the normal progress of human life on earth, is inevitably rewarded in the richest possible dividends.

The classical example of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16ff) is a startling demonstration of this principle. When he knelt at the feet of Jesus and asked how to inherit eternal life, the Lord commanded him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor and to come and “follow” the Lord Jesus. (Mark 10:21)

The Lord’s command to this rich young ruler was for the man’s own benefit, not the benefit of Jesus. The Lord did not need his money; Judas was already stealing what little the Lord had; and, in a short time, the Lord intended to die upon the cross.

Forty years after this young man knelt at Jesus feet, all of his wealth and posterity was swept away in an hour by the soldiers of Vespasian and Titus. If he perished, along with over a million others, or if through some chance his life was spared to see the Holy City forever humbled under the feet of the Gentile, there was for him, in either case no joy, no consolation, and no hope.

There were special circumstances involved in Jesus’ words of “sell all” in his case; and this is not a requirement of being a true Christian; but the command for liberal giving is applicable to all who obey the gospel and for ourselves, no less than for him, Jesus commanded that which will benefit His followers, not only in the eternal world, but now and here.

Satisfaction. Giving as the Holy Scriptures command pays a one thousand percent dividend in satisfaction. This is precisely the thing that all men are seeking; and in their efforts to procure it, they leave home and friends, travel over continents and oceans, climb mountains and cross deserts, build skyscrapers, torture their bodies, seal their consciences, and deaden their

souls—all they want is satisfaction! However, the deepest needs of the soul cannot ever be satisfied by any such activity. The true satisfaction is available only in Christ. (Matthew 10:39)

A higher standard of living. What is the mystery of two families from the same neighborhood with approximately the same income, same number of children, same health, same obligations, etc., but one of which has a standard of living dramatically higher than the other? The mystery is even more perplexing when it is discovered that the family with the higher standard gives liberally to the church, whereas the other never gives anything.

What is the explanation of this family which gives and gives and yet has more? It is found in the influence of Christianity in their lives. The wisest investment any man can make is a regular and faithful contribution to the church.

The terrible cost of not giving. A man grew very rich and had no time for the church. “All the church wants is my money,” was his reply to every invitation. His only son grew up in a non-Christian home, became a libertine and a squanderer. One day he quarreled bitterly with his father, while drinking heavily, and in an angry fit shot and killed his father. Something like this, or worse, will happen to every home where the teaching of Christ is refused.

One cannot love the Lord and the church without giving to it; and if one is not a giver, his religion is worthless; and all men will know instinctively that he does not love the Lord or his church. The unchristian life is far more expensive than the Christian life.

Increased prosperity. In this chapter, Paul declared that the bountiful sower will reap a bountiful harvest; and that is a pledge of increased prosperity. Some people are almost afraid to hope for prosperity, fearing that it might be wrong to do so; but one of the apostles prayed for a friend, ‘that you may prosper and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 2)

It is not the apostle's intention however, that prosperity should exceed spiritual growth, but keep pace with it. (Mark 10:29)

Some profess not to believe this; but no one who ever tried it disbelieves it. God's hand is still visible in the affairs of men.

A better personality. The world is divided into two classes, the givers and the hoarders. The first class is continually becoming more and more selfish and unlovable. The other class continually increases in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and are "changed from glory to glory" by His gracious Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Friends out of the Mammon. James Moffatt, The Bible, A New Translation, in loco, said Jesus was speaking of the use of wealth when He commanded His followers to "Use mammon, dishonest as it is, to make friends for yourselves, so that when you die, they may welcome you to the eternal abodes, (Luke 16:9)."

The friends to be made by the wise use of money are the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the angels of God. The eternal abodes are the mansions of the blessed, the "many mansions" of the Father's house. (John 14:1ff) This is the eternal dividend of those who honor the Savior's command to give.

A memorial before God. It was written of Cornelius that an angel of heaven stood in his house and said, "Cornelius your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial before God." (Acts 10:4)

The deep, eternal longing of human souls to be remembered after death is realized only by faithful Christian givers. Not only will they be remembered on earth, but in heaven.

The return of the principal. Jesus said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, etc." (Matthew 6:19-21) This is proof that the Master will repay at the last day the full account with all accrued dividends.

“Riches make themselves wings and fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” (Proverbs 23:5) If any human doubts this, let him ask the man who has seen his life’s savings swept away in a fire, a robbery, a revolution, and epidemic, a flood, a drought, an earthquake, a tornado, a broken trust, a wreck, an accident, an unjust law, or by means of any one of a thousand unpredictable disasters which may strike like lightning at any time and at any place.

Nobody ever gave Jesus anything, whether a grave, as did Joseph; or a basket lunch, as did the lad; or anything else, without receiving more than he gave. Joseph received his grave again; and the little lad was the lawful owner of twelve baskets taken up after the feast! Let men try giving it to Jesus.

These studies on the subject of giving have been included in this commentary because of the near-universal need for Christians to be taught and to understand the truth about the central duty of the Christian life.

Verse 12

“The needs of the saints . . .” refers to the necessities which they lacked, and not to things which they merely wanted.

“Many thanksgivings to God . . .” The Lord’s name would be glorified, souls convinced of the truth of the gospel and converts won for Christ; but, beyond all these objective achievements of their liberality, there would be the multiplication of grace within the hearts of the givers themselves.

Verse 13

“The proof given . . .” Giving is the Divine test of Christianity. Non-givers are non-Christian.

“Your obedience to your confession . . .” By virtue of one’s conversion, he is already pledged as a giver to support God’s work.

Verse 14

Paul here continued to elaborate the spiritual benefits that would come from the contribution at Corinth. The recipients would remember them with thanksgiving in their prayers, “prayers on your behalf.”

“Yearn for you . . . “ The reputation and honor of the Corinthians would be enhanced and magnified.

“The surpassing grace of God in you” shows that Paul was projecting a very liberal and bountiful contribution and that he was not looking for a merely token response to his appeal.

Verse 15

“Indescribable . . .” is hardly the word that Paul would have chosen for any lesser gift than the Savior and, while it is true that the working of the grace of God through Christ in the hearts of the Corinthians is in view here, it is not such a work of Christ but Christ Himself who is meant.

It is the word “indescribable” which, more than anything else, compels one to see in the gift “none other than Jesus Christ Himself.”

CHAPTER 10

There is a break in thought with the beginning of this chapter, but it is nothing which can reasonably reflect on the unity of the epistle.

Verse 1

Paul was about to deal with “some” who were still incorrigible sinners at Corinth (verse 2); but his attitude toward his beloved converts has not changed.

“I who am meek . . . when face to face . . .” This has been thought to echo some of the slanders of Paul’s enemies who had been saying that “When present he was mild and timid, but when absent full of boldness.”

Verse 2

There is no admission on Paul’s part here that there was anything “weak” about his personal appearance. The whole theory of these later chapters “blasting the whole congregation” is nullified by the distinction between the “you” which included the whole congregation and the “some” which referred to the false teachers.

Verse 3

“Flesh . . .” is used in two senses here. Although still in the body (the flesh), his warfare is not according to the nature of unregenerate and sinful men, whose works are governed by material and secular considerations (according to the flesh).

Verse 4

What were Paul’s weapons? E. H. Plumptre, Ellicott’s Commentary, Vol. III, p. 397, wrote, “We learn from 1 Thessalonians 5:8, and Ephesians 6:11-16, that they were the energies of spiritual powers given by the Eternal Spirit.”

“For the destruction of fortresses . . .” The imagery is that of a bitter and relentless warfare. The strongholds were those entrenched and fortified positions of institutionalized sin which dominated the Corinthian culture, and indeed the whole social fabric of the ancient Roman Empire. Satan had organized evil on a world-wide scale; and the teachings of Jesus Christ were leveled against every form of wickedness, no matter how securely it was embedded in the gross culture of that era.

“Divinely powerful . . .” Paul’s meaning here is that he had the proper ammunition to blow up and destroy the entrenched positions of the devil.

Verse 5

“Speculations . . . and every lofty thing . . .” appear here in company with other evils; and despite the fact of man’s imagination being a glorious distinction between himself and the lower creations, the misuse of it is superlatively sinful.

It is the “imagination “ of scholars which seeks to challenge the unity of this epistle; and there is hardly any attack ever launched against Christianity that has not been grounded in the evil imagination of its enemies.

“Every lofty thing . . .” The imagery is still that of evil men, under the power of Satan, who have exalted themselves against the gospel truth, and who are entrenched, as in a castle with “battlements and high powers which Paul must attack,” in order to vanquish them.

The conflict is not physical, but it is in the realm of ideas and imaginations against the truth.

Verse 6

“Your obedience is complete . . .” It was to be complete when Paul had disposed of “some” who were enemies of the truth. Their obedience, even at that time, was approaching fullness. The thing that would complete it was Paul’s determination, or “readiness,” to destroy the influence of the “some” who were still holding out against the truth.

Verse 7

“You are looking . . . outwardly . . .” should be understood as, “Look at what is before your eyes.” giving the meaning of, “Take a look at what is obvious.” (Frank G. Carver, Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, p. 593)

“If any one . . .” This probably refers to an outstanding example of the false apostles who had gone to Corinth to try to supplant Paul. (Floyd V. Filson, op. cit., p. 385)

Whoever he was, he was pretending to be Christ's; but his pretensions were refuted by the certainty of Paul's being actually "of Christ."

Verse 8

"For building you up . . ." It was solely for the purpose of checkmating the evil, false apostles who intended to put Paul to shame. Notice the distinction between Paul's "casting down" envisioned of the false apostles, and his "not for casting you down" when addressing the whole congregation.

Verse 9

This too is addressed directly to the great faithful majority, the thought being that "Paul could with justification elaborate upon the nature and extent of his apostolic authority, but refrained." (R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 133)

Paul did not wish to terrify the young converts whom he dearly loved, and the vast majority of who were faithful and obedient.

Verse 10

"They say . . ." proves that Paul had in mind a number of false teachers, not merely "the ring leader." And as for their slander, it is precarious indeed to put any confidence in it.

Verse 11

By this sharp retort, Paul denied their slander; but despite this, one may still read all kinds of comments about the weakness of Paul's personal presence.

F. W. Farrar, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19. 2 Corinthians, p. 240, wrote, "Paul here is rebutting with calmness and dignity the false charge that he was in any way different from what he was when present."

Verse 12

Paul had a single estimate. They were “without understanding!”

Verse 13

“The measure of the sphere . . .” According to the Greek, the word is measuring-rod, which certainly makes a lot more sense than the word our translators substituted for it. Paul’s plain meaning is that in the “glorying” or “boasting” he is about to do, he shall stay within the limits which God authorized in order to authenticate the message he is addressing to the Corinthians, “To reach even as far as you.”

Verse 14

Paul here stated that his authority was fully ample to reach Corinth without, in any sense, stretching it! The perspective of the false teaches was local; Paul’s was universal. Paul had come to Corinth in the first place, not as a final destination, but as a stop en route on a preaching tour of vast dimensions.

Floyd V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 389, very properly applied this passage to the false teachers as follows, “The self-important intruders, when they came to Corinth, were going where they had not been sent by God. But not so with Paul, he went to Corinth under the guidance and direction of God. Corinth was included (“you also”) in his assigned field of work.”

Verse 15

“Not boasting . . . in other men’s labors . . .” God had sent the apostle to Corinth; the field was therefore his; and the false apostles, not Paul, were the intruders and usurpers.

“With the hope . . . as your faith grows . . . enlarged even more by you . . .” In all of this, Paul’s love and appreciation for the Corinthians shines conspicuously. He had the highest hopes of them.

Verse 16

James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles and Commentary*, p.429, makes the correct application to the false teachers as he writes, “So as to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, where no person hath yet preached, and not in another man’s bounds, to take praise to myself on account of things already prepared, that is, of churches already planted, as the false teacher hath done.”

This was Paul’s affirmation that even after correcting the disorders that still existed among them, he had no intention whatever of settling down there to exploit them, as the false apostles were doing, His mission was still pointed to all the world.

Verse 17

The false teachers were glorying in many things, but in nothing that God had done through them. They were preening themselves like peacocks, boasting of their credentials, which were doubtless as phony as they were, bragging of their “liberty” to attend idol feasts, and flaunting the sophisticated rhetoric in vogue among the Greeks. There was nothing of the Lord in any of that; and Paul nailed them down as wicked imposters. Whatever they had done, God had not authorized any of it.

Verse 18

Paul’s work among the Corinthians has been marked by the authority and blessing of God, they themselves having accepted the gospel through his preaching; and, in the light of those facts, the honor that some of them were willing to give the false prophets was as scandalous as it was unjust and wicked.

John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, wrote, “The only true ground of approval is to do the work of Christ.”

CHAPTER 11

This is sometimes called, “Paul’s Boasting Chapter.” A large number of different subjects are touched upon, and it ranks as one of the most interesting passages in the New Testament.

Verse 1

Paul was about to speak of his own labors, sufferings and qualifications; and, to him, it was distasteful and somewhat embarrassing to do so; however, the false apostles who had intruded themselves into the Corinthian scene had spoken of the apostle so adversely, and the rather naive Corinthians had shown such vulnerability to their seductions, that Paul destroyed them in the withering attack recorded here, reluctantly meeting them upon their own grounds, and, in a sense stooping to their level of personal boasting in order to do it.

His enemies were only a minority of the Corinthian church; and even those “are divided into two classes, the leaders and the led; and Paul does not always keep these separate in his mind.” (J. W. McGarvey, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 225)

The great majority at Corinth had Paul’s confidence. He believed they would be with him and not misunderstand his motives.

The unity of this epistle is evident in the fact that, “His confidence in the Corinthians, his ‘boldness’ on their behalf, shines clearly through.” (Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p.144)

“A little foolishness . . .” God’s word commands that a fool should be answered according to his folly (Proverbs 26:5), and this was exactly the thing Paul proposed to do here.

Verse 2

“Godly jealousy . . .” Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. X, p. 392, wrote, “This means a jealousy like that of God, or unworthy passion, but a justified concern for the honor and purity of the church at Corinth.”

“Betrothed you to one husband . . .” E. H. Plumptre, *Ellicott’s Commentary* Vol. VII, p. 401, said, “The word ‘betrothed’ is used of the act of a father who gives his daughter in marriage.”

Wick Broomall, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 682, noted that, “The betrothal took place at conversion; the ‘presentation’ will be consummated at the Second Coming.

E. H. Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 401, said, “Paul was very far from despising marriage since he made it a “symbol” of the final union of the church with her Lord.

“As a pure virgin . . .” This whole verse means That Paul was just as jealously concerned for the purity of the church as a father would be for the purity of a daughter betrothed to a kingly bridegroom.

Verse 3

At the time of Paul’s writing, only a few of the Corinthians were under domination of the false apostles, R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 145, said, “But there was a risk that they might distract the church as a whole from its loyalty to Christ.”

Just as Satan through subtlety deceived Eve, Paul feared that the false apostles, doing the work of Satan, would deceive the church.

Several things of great importance appear in these lines.

- (1) The account of the temptation and fall as recorded in Genesis “was regarded by the inspired writers of the New Testament not as

myth, allegory or fiction, but as a true record of what happened.
(David Lipscomb, Second Corinthians, p. 138)

(2) Human egoism has ever been the point of vulnerability of men.

R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 146, said, “From Eve onwards the human heart has been prone to be deceived by those who, appearing to have wisdom, insinuate the most destructive of all lies, that is, that men are not under an imperative duty to recognize and obey God.”

“Craftiness . . .” means according to Frank G. Carver, op. cit., p. 603, “An extreme malignity which is capable of anything.”

“The serpent deceived Eve . . .” True and historical as the Genesis account is, there are mysteries in it which remain unknown.

Verse 4

“For if one comes . . .” Floyd V. Filson, op. cit., p. 393, wrote, “This either designates the outstanding leader among the false apostles, or is a generic reference to all, of this group.” Since it is not known that there was an “outstanding leader,” it is better understood as “any man that comes” to proclaim so false a doctrine. All of the true apostles were “sent” of God; but the false apostles were mere “comers” who commissioned themselves and were in no sense messengers from God.

“Preaches another Jesus . . .” It is not revealed in the New Testament exactly what the false teaching was. It is enough for us to know that their teachings were unsound, tended to immorality, denied essential truth and were utterly destroyed by Paul’s inspired epistles.

Verse 5

This verse has been construed as a reference to the Twelve, especially to Peter, James, and John, the inner circle of that sacred group but the true meaning, as advocated by McGarvey, Kelcy and many others, appears to be that

“the chief apostles” is Paul’s designation of the false apostles who were troubling Corinth.

We shall construe “chief apostles” as a term of derogation applied sarcastically by Paul to the false teachers.

Verse 6

“Unskilled in speech . . .” In no single area of Christian literature is there a more widespread and generally accepted error than the notion that the apostle was deficient as a public speaker.

The verse here “Unskilled in speech” does not mean, lacking in ability as a speaker. Paul here made a sarcastic reference to the slander of the false apostles; and the true meaning is, “They say I am unskilled in speech; but it has to be admitted that my speech makes sense, whereas theirs does not!”

This has no reference whatever to Paul’s ability as a speaker, but reveals his rejection of the stylish but worthless oratorical style of the Greeks. There is not a hint of Paul’s ability. He was an eloquent and powerful speaker.

Verse 7

Paul’s bitter sarcasm is, “Have you been so completely taken in by these false apostles that you believe I am a sinner because I did not demand your money when I reached to you the gospel?”

Verse 8

During Paul’s eighteen months ministering at Corinth when the Corinthians had been converted, he had received no money from them. He had decided that, in Corinth, the gospel would in some manner be compromised by his asking and receiving support of his many converts.

It was in Corinth that Paul had labored as a tent maker, working with Aquila, in order to be free to preach without charge. It was from Corinth that

he had written the letter to the Thessalonians, among whom also he had preached without imposing any financial burden upon them. (1 Thessalonians 2:9)

“I robbed other churches . . .” This is a reference to the churches of Macedonia (mentioned a moment later); and thus, “It is once again that the ‘earnestness of others’ (8:8) is set before the Corinthians; and in this we may ‘discern another internal strand uniting these last four chapters to those which precede them.” (Philip R. Hughes, op. cit., p. 386)

Verse 9

“The brethren came from Macedonia . . .” These were in all probability Silas and Timothy.

“I was not a burden to anyone . . .” The word here translated “burden” is a medical term derived from the name of a certain kind of fish listed by Aristotle, a creature which benumbed people who came in contact with it.

Verse 10

Frank G. Carver, op. cit., p. 608, wrote, “Paul knew the spot he had them (the false apostles) in, and he meant to keep them there.” Even the most naive persons in Corinth could not have failed to be impressed by the fact of Paul’s obvious sincerity, a fact demonstrated and made certain by his attitude toward money.

Verse 11

The false apostles hoped to induce Paul to accept money from the Corinthians; but this Paul adamantly refused to do. However, this was not a sign of lack of love for them, but just the opposite.

This was due to Paul’s loving determination to destroy the hold of those parasites upon his beloved Corinthian converts. The false apostles were already feeling the pinch of the situation in which they found themselves.

Philip E. Hughes, op. cit, p. 392, said, “They desire an occasion for inducing Paul to accept payment as they do, so that the disadvantage forced upon them by the contrast might be removed.”

Verse 12

This is a somewhat tricky and involved sentence; but the meaning is apparently that suggested by F. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 153, “Those superlative apostles receive pay for their work, and would like for this difference between them and Paul to be eliminated by Paul’s behaving as they do, so that they may be on an equality with him.”

”What I am doing, I will continue to do . . .” Paul meant by this, “I will go right on doing as I have done all along.” Why should he have taken the heat off of them?

Verse 13

These men at Corinth were in no sense genuine, being phony self-seekers playing the religious game for money. Lies and deception were their stock in trade; they were evil hypocrites pretending to be apostles of Christ.

Verse 14

The tactics of such deceivers follow closely the pattern of Satan in Eden.

- (1) As Satan flatly denied God’s word, evil teachers do the same today, stridently declaring their soul-destroying doctrines of salvation “by faith alone,” contradicting the word of God which says men “are not justified by faith alone.” (James 2:24)
- (2) As Satan promised Eve she and Adam would “be as gods,” the sophisticated false teaches of this generation are doing everything in their power to deify humanity.

- (3) The same triple allurements of fleshly delight, pride of life, and lust of the eye which overthrew Eve are today carrying the thoughtless into every kind of sin.
- (4) As Satan pretended to be wise, so do the false teachers of all generations masquerade as wise ones, people in the “know” who make light of God’s commands and rush into rebellion against the Creator.

These are the people who made fun of Christian ordinances, deny the claims of God’s church upon men’s loyalty, and represent Almighty God as a doting, loving Father who will never punish anybody, and who will never notice the crimes of blood, lust and savagery raging under His very nose. And as for worshiping God, “Let that be every man doing exactly what he pleases, when he pleases, if he pleases, and God will at last save everybody.”

Verse 15

In connection with this and the preceding verse, it has been suggested by some that “Paul may be alluding to a Jewish legend that Satan appeared to Eve in the form of an angel and sang hymns like the angels;” but such a tale could hardly be anything except human imagination.

“Servants of righteousness . . .” This the false teachers do literally; and from this basic truth, there derives the necessity for every soul who would be true to God, to “examine the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)

No one teaching of the New Testament is free from the corrupting devices of men; there are none of its doctrines that have not been denied; and there is no commandment in it which is not rejected out of hand, if not by one false teacher, then by another.

Verse 16

Paul here stated that his boastings were in no sense foolish. They were the only way to open the eyes of those being deceived by the false boasters.

Verse 17

“Not speaking as the Lord . . .” The Revised Standard Version perverted it completely, giving this: “What I am saying, I say not with the Lord’s authority, but as a fool!” Paul was familiar with both “authority” and “inspiration;” and, if he had meant anything like the words attributed to him in the Revised Standard Version, he would have used those words. The fact that he did not use them shows that something else was meant.

It means that his words if spoken in conceited boasting would not be “after the Lord;” but Paul was not speaking in that manner at all, but as in foolishness. Of course they were spoken “after the Lord,” that is, according to the will of the Lord.

“Not speaking as the Lord would . . .” was interpreted thus by Raymond C. Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p. 66, when he wrote, “It was not the Lord’s usual method; but Paul speaking by inspiration, certainly had the Lord’s approval. The Lord granted this use of boasting because it was the best weapon to use in the situation Paul faced.”

Many of the so-called translations have committed grievous sin in the perversion of Paul’s words here. It should be noted that Paul did not say that he was speaking “in foolishness” but “as in foolishness.” In that distinction lies the understanding of verse 17.

Two things are in view here:

- (1) boasting for reasons of personal pride, and
- (2) boasting for the purpose of saving a church, when no better method is available.

Verse 18

Having laid the groundwork for it, being careful to reveal his natural loathing at being forced, in a sense, to resort to such a thing, and also his pure intention of redeeming his beloved converts from the control of their enemies, Paul announced in this verse his purpose of proving the utter worthlessness of the false apostle's vaunted credentials, not one of whom could even approach the matchless authentication manifested in a true apostle like Paul.

Verse 19

This is sarcastic irony at its withering best. This sting in it comes from the obvious meaning: "Such smart people are bigger fools than the fools they indulge!" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 1261)

Verse 20

The failure of some of the Corinthians had been in their putting up with the arrogance and aggressiveness of the false apostles, and in submitting to it as if they were actually true apostles, incredibly failing to notice how anti-Christian and contrary to the Holy Spirit their outrageous behavior surely was. Note what these false apostles were doing:

"He enslaves you . . ." This could have meant that they were being enslaved to keep the ceremonial laws of the Jews. (see Galatians 2:4; 5:1)

"He devours you . . ." This, like most of what is said here, has overtones of the Pharisaical methods in Jerusalem. Jesus, for example, said that they "devoured widows' houses." (Matthew 23:14) They took as much money and substance as they could lay hold of.

"Takes advantage of you . . ." This suggests 2 Timothy 2:26, where Paul spoke of Satan's taking people "captive" to do his will. The false apostles were leading the people into gross sin.

“He exalts himself . . .” Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 400, wrote, “Light is thrown on Paul’s meaning here by what he had already said about ‘every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God.’” (10:5) Those evil men were placing their own words above the word of God.

“Hits you in the face . . .” That class who had smitten the Son of God Himself in the face would have been perfectly in character by perpetrating such actions against the Lord’s followers.

Verse 21

If arrogance, greed, deceit, tyranny, oppression and robbery of Christians of their wealth are marks of true Christian oversight, Paul was willing to admit that in those categories he had indeed fallen somewhat behind the super-apostles who were plundering the church of God at Corinth. This is sarcastic irony.

Verse 22

This is the best hint of all regarding the identity of the false apostles. They evidently belonged to the fierce Judaizers who almost succeeded in stealing the church of God itself. The Christians are the true Israelites, as well as the genuine seed of Abraham. Paul developed this extensively in Romans, and also in Galatians 3:29.

Verse 23

“Servants of Christ . . .” This is not, as suggested by some, a reference to a sinful “Christ party” at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12); for, if it had been Paul would not have said, “I more.”

“Speak as if insane . . .” The RSV descends to the level of a ridiculous paraphrase in rendering this “I am talking like a madman.” This has the same meaning of “as in foolishness” in verse 17.

“Labors . . . imprisonments . . . beaten . . . danger of death . . .” The amazing sufferings and tribulations suffered by Paul were so numerous that they tumbled over each other in his mind as he dictated these words.

E. H. Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 405, said, “All that follows from here to verse 28, inclusive, is proof of Paul’s right to call himself a minister of Christ.”

Verse 24

A Jewish beating with stripes was a cruel, brutal and in-human punishment. It was founded on Deuteronomy 25:3 which fixed forty stripes as the number inflicted. The barbarous instrument was a three-ply scourge of knotted leather thongs, with the knots so arranged to give the maximum pain and injury to the victim.

The thirty-nine blows were delivered thirteen on the chest, thirteen on the right shoulder, and thirteen on the left shoulder.

Verse 25

“Beaten with rods . . .” In Acts is the record of Paul’s being thus beaten at Philippi; but nothing is known of the other two punishments. (Acts 16:22-23)

“Once I was stoned . . .” Acts 14:19 describes this event, in which Paul was apparently thought to be dead by his enemies. It occurred at Lystra.

“Three times I was shipwrecked . . .” Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 411, said, “As this was written before the shipwreck on Malta, it has to refer to events no-where else recorded. Paul made no less than nine voyages before these lines were written and another nine afterward.” Travel by ship in those times was hazardous indeed.

“I was shipwrecked a night and a day . . . in the deep” Floyd V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 401, wrote, “After one of the shipwrecks, Paul spent a night and a day clinging to wreckage while adrift at sea.”

At least four times, this blessed apostle heard the dreadful cry, "Abandon ship;" and anyone who ever heard it once knows the soul-chilling terror of such an experience.

Verse 26

A thousand pages could not tell the whole story if God had given it to us; but the vast majority of the events which stormed Paul's memory in this recital are forever shrouded in the modesty of Paul and in the mists of nineteen centuries.

Verse 27

Paul's hardships were genuine and included physical hunger, cold, nakedness, thirst, unending toil and a host of other hardships which these things suggest but do not elaborate.

"Sleepless nights . . hunger and thirst . . without food . . in cold and exposure." Paul was boasting of his sufferings, his hardships, survival of many deaths, and his merciless tortures from rods and stripes. It should be evident to all that no man ever boasted like this, except one under the direct inspiration of God.

Verse 28

The loving concern and care for all the churches God had blessed him to establish—that was the heart of Paul. Everything else was peripheral. One wonders if the Corinthians did not weep when they read this. Could any human being be so unresponsive to pure and holy love as not to be touched by what was written here? The only answer we have is history. The false apostles disappeared, their names unknown, their doctrines not identified, even their number merely a conjecture; but the church of Corinth continued though centuries; and these priceless letters are living treasures twenty centuries afterward.

Verse 29

“Intense concern . . .” Floyd V. Filson, *Ibid*, p. 403, said, “This probably means “to burn with indignation.”

Verse 30

The great spiritual power of Paul was inherent in the strength through weakness which marked his whole life. Norman Hillyer, *op. cit.*, p. 1076, wisely observed, “In this verse, Paul looks back to the experiences he has just catalogued. A “boastful” person, in the ordinary sense, would never have mentioned such things.”

Verse 31

Recalling what he had just written, the list seemed almost unbelievable, even to Paul; and the sheer size and significance of it led him to affirm in these most solemn words the absolute truth.

Verses 32-33

Before relating the glorious experience of being caught up into the third heaven, Paul would again emphasize his humility, doing so by placing the narrative of his undignified and inglorious flight from Damascus in the dead of the night squarely alongside the account of his rapture into heaven, making the incident here a foil of the glorious experience next related.

Philip E. Hughes, *op. ci.* P. 422, wrote, “Paul’s rapture into the third heaven is hemmed in, as it were, on one side by the escape from Damascus, and on the other by the humiliating record of “the thorn in the flesh.” (12:7ff) Paul was determined to keep himself in true perspective, that of a weak, unworthy mortal who owes everything to the grace of Almighty God.”

“In Damascus . . .” The account of what occurred here harmonizes perfectly with Luke’s record of the same event. (Acts 9:23-25) Philip E. Hughes, *Ibid.* wrote, “There is no discrepancy between Luke’s assertion that

the Jews watched the gates and Paul's that the ethnarch (appointed by some central authority to look after the interests of some particular race, in this case the Jews), did so.

"I was let down in a basket through a window . . . and escaped." It is the abasement of his undignified escape that Paul deliberately placed as a foil of his being caught up into heaven.

Note: There also seems to be in Paul's narrative of this event a feeling on his part that it was symbolical, typical and prophetic of all the hardships and sufferings that he was destined to undergo as a Christian, and at the same time a pledge of God's perfect providence and blessing which would inevitably protect and preserve him for the fulfillment of the task to which God had called him.

CHAPTER 19

Subjects treated by Paul in this chapter are: The revelations he received from the Lord (1-6); the counteracting thorn in the flesh (7-10); another regret at the necessity of glorying (11-12); his independence (13-15); a reply to false charges (16-18); and certain cautions and warnings (19-21).

Verse 1

"Though it is not expedient . . ." is rendered, "there is nothing to be gained by it."

Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol X, p. 405, said, "Paul does not mean literally that there is nothing to be gained by it, for he hopes by the boasting, forced upon him, to make the Corinthians see that they have been wronging him and following the false leaders at Corinth. He feels driven by a necessity which he cannot evade."

“Visions and revelations . . .” John Wesley, One Volume New testament Commentary, in loco, wrote, “Visions are seen; revelations are heard.” The plural here , as regards both visions and revelations, supports the possibility that the “third heaven” and “Paradise” could have been the subjects of different visions.

“Of the Lord . . .” identifies the Lord as the source of the visions and revelations.

Verse 2

“A man in Christ . . .” The thought behind the use of the third person here is that it was not as himself that these experiences came to him, but that “as Christ” and “in Christ” he was granted these things. On this account, his glorying is “glorying in the Lord,” not in himself.

“Whether in the body . . . or out of the body . . .” Paul simply did not know what state he was in; and modesty should restrain all commentators from elaborating n what it was.

“Such a man was called up to the third heaven . . .” The words “caught up” are the same that Luke used of Philip (Acts 8:39) and that Paul used of the resurrection. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

“Fourteen years ago . . .” Norman Hillyer, the New Bible Commentary Revised, p. 1086, wrote, “This was in 41-42 A.D., some years after his escape from Damascus.”

“The third heaven . . .” This is mentioned only here in the New Testament, and there is no certainty about what is meant. David Lipscomb, Second Corinthians, p. 157 wrote:

- (1) The air or atmosphere where the clouds gather (Genesis 2:1, 19),
- (2) The firmament containing the sun, moon and stars (Deuteronomy 18:3; Matthew 24:29) and

(3) God's dwelling place. (Matthew 5:12, 16, 45, 48)

The third heaven where God dwells is not a thing of space and physical location at all. It is a state of being beyond, above and higher even than the second heaven.

The eternal spirit is ubiquitous; and as Paul said, "In Him we live, and move and have our being. (Acts 17:26)

There has never been anything written that carries any greater internal evidence of being the truth, than what Paul wrote here. The visions and revelations referred to occurred more than fourteen years previously; and it may be assumed that Paul would never have mentioned them at all, except for their connection with the "thorn in the flesh."

Paul did not intend to convey any information at all beyond the fact that he had experienced such marvelous events. He explained his brevity (verse 4) by declaring it to be:

- (1) an outright impossibility to elaborate, and
- (2) contrary to God's will, even if he could have done so. Finite, limited, mortal and sinful men simply do not possess the intellectual tools to comprehend, either the God and Father of mankind, or the nature of His dwelling place. Of God, men may know only what is revealed.

Therefore, as far as "the third heaven" is concerned, we do not profess to know anything beyond the truth that an apostle was "caught up" into it.

Verses 3-4

The conviction here is that Paul described two experiences taking place on one occasion. The time of "fourteen years" thus applies to both. The plural "vision" (12:1) is thus fulfilled by the two here given; and, as Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 435 said, "The word 'and' at the

beginning of this sentence at least seems to indicate that he is narrating something additional.”

PARADISE

There is another important consideration which supports the understanding of two events, rather than merely one; and that is Paul’s use of the word “Paradise.” There is no authority whatever for making this mean the same thing as “the third heaven.”

“Paradise . . .” This word in the New Testament is found only here and in Luke 23:43 and in Revelation 2:7. If it is true as has been assumed, that the “third heaven” is the place of God’s dwelling, Jesus had not yet ascended to it on the day when He arose from the dead. Yet, the Lord had promised the thief on the cross, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) In light of these Scriptures we must set aside the learned opinions to the effect that Paradise and the third heaven are the same place. Jesus had been with the thief in Paradise already, but He had not yet ascended to the third heaven.

“Inexpressible words . . . not permitted to speak . . .” In these words are Paul’s reasons for not satisfying human curiosity about the things he mentioned. F. W. Farrar, Pulpit commentary, Vol 19, 2 Corinthians, p. 291, wrote, “Paul here revealed nothing, either of what he saw or what he heard. The New Testament deliberately veils the next life, though it makes plain what is needful for our salvation.”

Verse 5

“Such a man,” . . . “ (verses 2, 3, 5). Each is equivalent of “A man in Christ” (verse 2) and should be understood as Paul’s repeated affirmation of the truth of his experiences being, in a sense, not his own but Christ’s. It was in unity with Christ that the events occurred. In that exalted sense, therefore, Paul could not glory on his own behalf. “Every spiritual blessing is in the heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

If one is ever saved, he shall not be saved as himself, but as Christ, in Christ, and fully identified with Christ.

Verse 6

There is an insinuation here that the wicked “apostles” in Corinth were not telling the truth. James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles and Commentary*, p. 455, wrote, “He showed them the absurdity of fancying that the whole of a teacher’s merit lies in the gracefulness of his person, in the nice arrangement of his words, and in the melodious ones with which he pronounces his discourses.”

Those things, of course, were the principal commendations for the false teachers at Corinth. It would appear, however, Floyd V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 406, really got to the heart of Paul’s message here by saying, “To recount further instances (of his visions) would be speaking the truth; but he refrains so they may judge him, not by his secret visions, which could be challenged by hostile men, but by what he had done.”

Verse 7

THORN IN THE FLESH

Like the visions themselves, the thorn in the flesh is little more than a hint, revealed in terms of tantalizing brevity, and described by enigmatical allusions which have puzzled men for centuries. The thorn has been speculatively identified as follows: a headache, epilepsy, malarial fever, fleshly temptation, infirmities of the mind, lustful thoughts, false teachers, the devil, and Malta fever.

Chrysostom said it was “all the adversaries of the Word.” (R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 176, said, “The thorn in the flesh is believed to be the malignant opposition of secular Israel, a view contained in Chrysostom’s identification.” The reasons for this opinion are as follows:

- (1) Any crippling or disabling bodily ailment simply does not conform to the amazing strength and endurance of the matchless apostle.

R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 175, wrote, "He is revealed in the New Testament as a man of exceptionally strong constitution and remarkable powers of physical endurance."

- (2) "In the flesh" as used in his verse would almost surely indicate a bodily infirmity; but Philip Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 447, declares the word to be "of the flesh," thus leaving the question open. Paul thus avoided words which would have implied bodily sickness. His meaning appears to be "a thorn in the flesh for the duration of Paul's fleshly life."
- (3) Paul described the thorn as "a messenger of Satan." There is a strong evidence here that Paul referred to bitter and relentless enemies of the gospel, doing the work of Satan; and that is a perfect description of the hardened secular Israelites who engaged in every device that hell could suggest in their godless and persistent opposition to Paul throughout every moment of his apostleship.
- (4) In Thessalonians there is a probable reference to the thorn in the flesh, wherein Paul said, "Satan hindered me." (2:18) The thorn had impaled him; and what was it? It was the hardened countrymen of the apostle himself.
- (5) Understanding the thorn in the flesh as the savage animosity of hardened Israel explains a number of things which otherwise would have no explanation:
 - (a) the humiliating effect of this upon Paul himself. He had even dared dispute with the Lord in his protestations that the Jews would believe him (Acts 22:19); but their stubborn refusal was a continual humiliation to Paul throughout his life.

- (b) No bodily infirmity could have had the counteractive effect upon Paul's pride that was implicit in the rejection by Israel of the gospel he preached. Every town he ever entered, he went to them first, only to be despised, rejected, hated, persecuted, stoned and prosecuted by every means at Satan's disposal.

The thorn in the flesh was the rejection of Christ on the part of the chosen people; and therein lies the explanation of

- (c) why the Lord did not remove it. It was simply not within the purpose of God to overrule the freedom of the will of those who elected to hate the Savior.

At the end of Paul's third prayerful entreaty to the Lord to remove the thorn, the Savior assured him that it was enough that he had personally received the grace of Jesus.

Verses 8-9

"Might depart from me . . ." If the thorn is understood as advocated above, what is meant by Paul's prayer that it might depart from Him? The thorn in Paul was the humiliation, the shame and ignomy, from every earthly view point, of his total and irreconcilable separation from the people he loved better than life itself; and that could have departed only by the conversion of Israel which Paul so eagerly and faithfully tried to bring about. Paul continually viewed his lack of success in winning Israel as weakness; and from the earthly viewpoint it was weakness.

"My grace is sufficient . . ." Christ only, and not Christ as an accepted and honored hero of redeemed Israel, was enough, not merely for Paul, but for all who ever lived on earth.

Verse 10

“Therefore . . .” This verse describes Paul’s living with the thorn not removed; and there is not a word of sickness, disease, or near-sightedness, or anything of the kind. It is “injuries, persecutions, etc.” of which he speaks; and what were these but the multiplied efforts of the hardened Israel against the gospel of Christ?

Nevertheless, Paul will continue, thorn and all; even with the humiliation of his noblest personal aspirations in their rejection; even in that weakness he is strong.

Verse 11

“I have become foolish . . .” Paul says, “You have compelled me to boast of myself, whereas in truth you should have been recommending me yourselves, especially since I certainly rank as high as those super-super apostles of yours!”

“I am a nobody . . .” Paul’s meaning is that “as a mere man” he is nothing, but “an apostle of Christ,” he possessed the mighty weapons necessary to the overthrow of every evil and the establishment of the Lord Jesus as the singular hope of all men, in all times and places.

Verse 12

Jesus Christ had promised His holy apostles that they would be able to perform miracles and that God would work with them, “confirming the word.” (Mark 16:20)

Paul laid hands on the sick, and they recovered (Acts 28:8); he raised the dead (Acts 20:9ff); he spoke with other tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18); and there were countless other miracles not recorded. (Romans 15:19)

“Signs, wonders and mighty deeds . . .” are not three classes of miracles but three characteristics of all genuine miracles.

“Signs of a true apostle . . .” Frank V. Filson, op. cit., p. 411, has a precious comment saying, “Writing to churches that would have challenged him if he had falsified facts, Paul unhesitatingly refers to such miracles; he knows that even his enemies cannot deny their occurrence. The study of miracles must begin by accepting the fact that many such remarkable events happened. Moreover this verse implies clearly that other true apostles were doing similar mighty works.”

“Were performed . . .” By this Paul disclaimed personal credit for his mighty miracles, regarding himself, “Only as the instrument of the power of God.” (Frank G. Carver, op. cit., p. 631)

Verse 13

“Forgive me this wrong . . .” I did not want to become a burden to you.

Verse 14

“This third time . . .” None may deny that a third visit automatically means there had been two others; but not even the approximate time of when it took place may be affirmed from the basis of the scanty references.

“I will not be a burden to you . . .” Paul will not alter his purpose of preaching in Corinth without their financial support.

“I do not seek what is yours, but you . . .” Paul wanted more than money from them; he wanted them.

“Children are not responsible to save up for their parents . . .” This teaching should not be misunderstood. Frank G. Carver, op. cit., p. 634, said, “The apostle made use of this analogy only as an illustration of why he did not take advantage of his right as a minister in the gospel. He does not mean by this that grown children have no obligation to their elderly parents when they are in need.”

Verses 15-16

“If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? . . .” Paul’s sacrifices in not receiving their money were actually founded in his abundant love for them.

“But be that as it may . . .” Far from changing his mind about it, Paul here revealed that at that very moment the allegations against him were being circulated to the effect that he was taking them “by guile.” The slander was that, whereas Paul did not take money personally, he was getting the big collection being raised for the poor saints.

Verse 17

Paul’s reply here indicates the nature of their “guile” in verse 16.

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 165, interpreted this, “His contemptible enemies not only stated that Paul did not dare accept support, but insinuated that there was something suspicious about the collection he was taking, and that perhaps he had a secret personal interest in it.”

Verse 18

Titus is standing by, here in chapter 12, just as he was in chapter 8, to bear this epistle to the Corinthians.

“Titus did not take any advantage of you . . .” is a reference to Titus having begun the business of the collection at the time of the delivery of the first epistle. Paul’s question affirms in the accepted idiom of that day, the absolute integrity, honesty and sincerity of Titus and the unnamed Christian brother.

Verse 19

The first sentence here carries the thought that the Corinthians ought not to consider Paul’s words as a mere defense of himself; on the contrary, he

was speaking “in Christ,” that is by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and every word he has written is for the purpose of their edification.

“Beloved . . .” The precious word “beloved” is here directed to the great faithful majority, by whose loyalty Paul displaced and expurgated at the church of its false teachers.

Verse 20

It should also be noted that the four pairs of disorders are exactly those which existed at the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians, making this letter a logical sequel to that, and not to some supposed “severe letter” written later.

The problem was that, despite the good news brought by Titus, R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 185, said, “There was still a minority of Christians in the city who were still carnally minded and undisciplined in the school of Christ.” It was that faction still pressed with the false apostles, against whom these warnings were directed.

Verse 21

Paul was determined that nothing would prevent his cleaning up the mess in Corinth. Neither the displeasure of the sinners to be rebuked, nor his own pathetic grief over the fallen, nor any humiliation before God that would come of dealing with such wickedness would deter the effective steps contemplated. There was no way then, nor is there now, for the holy teachings of Christ to be accommodated to the lustful sins mentioned here. The magnificent Paul would meet the challenge frontally; there would be no compromise; and either the sinner would renounce their sins or the church of God would renounce them.

“Impurity, immorality and sensuality . . .” These are not mere synonyms for one sin, but are a general description of all kinds of profligate living. “Impurity” means luxurious impurity and profligacy; “Immorality” refers to

promiscuous sex indulgence and prostitution; “Sensuality” describes all kinds of misconduct and defiance of public decency.

“That when I come again my God may humiliate me before you . . .” David A. Clines, *A New Testament Commentary*, p. 440, said that, “Again” modifies “humble” instead of “when I come.” Likewise Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 472, commented that, “What Paul fears here is a second humiliation.”

We do not deny that there was another visit; but this verse may not be pressed into service to prove it.

CHAPTER 13

Having already exercised marvelous patience with the Corinthian congregation, the apostle in this chapter stated his intention of coming to them as soon as he could with a view to having a genuine showdown regarding the minority of the congregation, including the false prophets who had been causing the trouble (verse 1-10); he concluded with an affectionate greeting to them all, a thumbnail summary of the epistle; and the world-famed Trinitarian doxology, perhaps the most widely used on earth (verse 11-14).

Verse 1

“The third time . . .” Paul’s establishing the church in Corinth was his first visit; and afterward there had been a second, probably between the times of the two canonical epistles; and this one Paul proposed here was the third. Nothing is known of that second visit except what may be inferred from the scanty allusions to it in this epistle.

“Two or three witnesses . . .” The principle of justice requiring that no accused person be convicted upon the testimony of a single witness was established in the Law of Moses (Numbers 25:30 and Deuteronomy 19:15), and Jesus had indicated the continuing validity of the principle in Matthew 18:16.

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 297, described what Paul announced in these verses as, “To put it in our modern idiom, Paul insists there must be a showdown. Paul knew that there comes a time when trouble must be faced. If the healing medicines fail, there is nothing for it but the surgeon’s knife.”

“Every fact is to be confirmed . . .” Paul was going to Corinth to discipline and correct them and to cast out of God’s church all incorrigible offenders. Paul made it absolutely clear what he intended to do. W. J. Conybeare, *Life and Epistles of Saint Paul*, p. 463, wrote, “This is almost verbatim the rendition from LXX, meaning: I will judge, not without examination, nor will I abstain from punishing upon due evidence; I shall now assuredly fulfill my threats.”

Verse 2

Paul was just as much in charge of that “painful visit” as he proposed to be in charge of the proposed third visit, having given all of those sinners there a firm and vigorous warning.

“If I come again . . .” does not imply any doubt as to Paul’s return.

“I will not spare anyone . . .” Charles Hodge as quoted by R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 187, wrote, “The Apostolic churches were not independent democratic communities, vested with supreme authority over their own members. Paul could cast out of them whom he would.”

Verse 3

Wick Broomall, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 688, was correct in seeing this verse, “As a definite affirmation of the apostle’s inspiration and authority. Rejection of him meant rejection of Christ.”

James Denney, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. V, *2 Corinthians*, p. 806, also pointed out that, “In challenging Paul to come and exert his

authority, in defying him to come with a rod, in presuming on what they called his weakness, they were really challenging Christ.”

Some of the false apostles had been saying, “No matter how boldly he writes, when he comes he will be weak and unimpressive;” but Paul here promised to come and discipline them in the sternest manner.

Verse 4

The weakness of Christ mentioned here applies only to those weaknesses inherent in the fact of incarnation. Being a man, Christ was subject to death.

“We shall live with Him because of the powers of God directed toward you . . .” By this, Paul meant that severe punishment would be visited upon gross and impenitent sinners at Corinth. Just as Christ the humble sufferer has now ascended to the throne of God, Paul will put aside the weakness of his patience and forbearance and exercise the full power of His apostolic office against the wicked deceivers.

Verse 5

Someone at Corinth had suggested that Paul “prove” himself by exercising the authority he claimed, perhaps suggesting that they would like to examine him, but here Paul thundered the message that he would conduct a trial, not of himself, but of them, they, not himself, being the persons who needed to prove that they were in the faith.

“Christ is in you . . .” is a complimentary remark. Despite the sins of some, Christ was yet in the Corinthian church, unless, of course, the whole church had become “reprobate,” a possibility that Paul rejected in the last clause.

“In the faith . . .” is a significant word, as used here, being a synonym for the Christian religion. Usually, when Paul says “saved by faith,” it is not the subjective faith of the believer, but an objective reference to Christianity, which is meant.

Verse 6

Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 481, said Paul's logic here is to this effect, "You know only too well that Christ is in you; and by that very fact you already have proof of Christ speaking in me, through whom the message of Christ was brought to you."

Verse 7

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 943, wrote, "We pray to God that you may lead a pure and holy life, not to do us credit, but because it is right, even though we should be like false apostles."

Of course, Paul would have been more completely demonstrated as a true apostle if, in response to gross evil, he should have invoked such a penalty as fell on Elymas. On the other hand, if the Corinthians repented, as he hoped they would, he would appear among them as his usual kindly and tolerant self.

Verse 8

Floyd V. Filson, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, p. 421, wrote, "The word 'truth' here refers to the gospel message which Paul preached."

"We . . ." along with all the other holy apostles, having this meaning: James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 471, wrote, "We apostles cannot exercise our miraculous powers in opposition to the truth, but always in support thereof."

Verse 9

"When we ourselves are weak . . ." means "when we appear weak" because of no need to exhibit Divine power. Raymond C. Kelcy, *Second Corinthians*, p. 78, wrote, "He is perfectly willing to be deprived of the opportunity to manifest apostolic power at Corinth, and thus be thought weak by some."

“You be made perfect . . .” It is not the conversion of a whole congregation which is suggested by this, but the conversion of the rebellious minority, thus perfecting the whole congregation. Thus is made clear the necessity of seeing these last four chapters, not as a blanket indictment of the whole church. The body had not at this point been destroyed, although some of its members needed “restoration,” or “perfecting.”

Verse 10

This is a more concise statement of what Paul has been saying in the previous verses. John William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 457, wrote, “Paul’s ardent desire to forestall any need for rebuke shows his great wisdom in developing the church along lines of love, with no display of authority.”

Verse 11

“Finally brethren, rejoice . . .” Paul is not saying, “good-bye,” until a little later. It was precisely because Paul had not lived in Rome that he could send greetings to all of his friends in a general letter to the church. To have done so here at Corinth would have offended every person whose name he might have omitted.

“Be made complete, be comforted; be like-minded: live in peace . . .” Norman Hillyer, *op. cit.*, p. 1088, said, “This closing’s fourfold appeal aptly summarizes Paul’s letter.”

Floyd V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 423, admitted that these words “May be in the middle voice,” thus giving the meaning exactly as it is rendered in the Nestle Greek text: “restore yourselves” and “admonish yourselves.” This is the true meaning, because as regards both restoration and admonition, it is the will of the person which is prerequisite to either one of them being accomplished. Thus the thought is similar to “work out your own salvation.” (Philippians 2:12)

Verse 12

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

THE HOLY KISS

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 944, called this, “The token of brotherhood in the early church.” Peter called it the “kiss of love;” but it is called the “holy kiss” elsewhere.

Frank G. Carver, *op. cit.*, p. 644, said the practice came from the Jewish synagogues, where the sexes were segregated in worship.

Raymond C. Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p.78, understood this verse to mean, “The kiss of greeting, a social custom of the times, was not to be a meaningless formality; it was to be holy.”

Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 488, said, “Like our handclasp today, the kiss was a symbol of mutual confidence; and, where the Corinthians were concerned, a sign of the healing of old divisions.”

Paul’s reference to the “holy” kiss thus continued an embryonic warning of things to come. The Christian congregations continued to use it as Christianity spread over the world.

Despite abuses, the custom prevailed till the thirteenth century, when the Western Church abolished it, and substituted: “The act of kissing a marble or ivory tablet, upon which some sacred object, such as the crucifixion, had been carved.” (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* in Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. II, p. 417)

Verse 13

Although the Corinthians were not personally known by very many Christians throughout the ancient world, nevertheless the community of interest, mutual affection, and highest brotherly respect was considered to be

the right of every Christian on earth. This word indicated clearly that Paul still considered the church at Corinth as a valid part of the larger body of Christ on earth, and that in spite of the disorders which threatened them.

Verse 14

Commentators are agreed that there is nothing formal or stylized about this doxology, otherwise the Father would have been mentioned first.

“Grace of the Lord's Jesus Christ . . . the love of God . . . the fellowship of the Holy Spirit . . .” As R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 191, said, “As the first of the three genitives here is subjective, it is probable that the other two should be construed in the same way.”

It is the grace of Christ shown to men, dying for their salvation (not the grace of men toward Christ), and the love of God toward men in the sending of His only begotten Son, and the communion with mankind on the part of the Holy Spirit, in their sacred writings of Holy Scripture, and not personal indwelling in Christian hearts as the earnest of human redemption. Just as the grace of Christ and God's love, are their actions, the communion of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's action, for all men is seen in the inspired messages of holy writ.

This priceless doxology prayerfully closes the Second epistle to the Corinthians; and after all that has been said, of censure and warning, the lowest sinner in the congregation is made a beneficiary of this apostolic benediction, no less than all the rest. John Wesley, *op. cit.*, in loco, said, “It is upon all, the slanderers, the gainsayers, the seekers after worldly wisdom, the hearkeners to false doctrine, as well as upon the faithful and obedient.” Surely here is the overflowing of a heart full of true love for the tried and tempted, for weak and sinful Christians. Nothing ever written before or since this Spirit-breathed epistle to Corinth ever succeeded in reaching and sustaining such a high level of personal impact, not only upon a troubled church of two thousand years ago, but upon every soul that has the grace to receive it.