

# Commentary on the Book of 2 Corinthians

## 2 Corinthians 1

**1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:**

**2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul writes this letter to the Corinthians along with the support of Timothy, his brother and fellow minister. Paul affirms his official apostleship as commissioned by Christ Himself by the will of God, not because Paul sought God. Paul writes to both the church in the city of Corinth and to the saints in that province, wishing them grace and peace from God and Christ as he typically did.

**3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,**

**4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

**5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.**

Paul praises God the Father for being the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort because He is there to comfort us in all of our afflictions. He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Even when we are in the valley of the shadow of death, He is there with us to lead and guide us (Psalm 23:4). Because God is faithful to comfort us in our affliction, we can have strength by faith to comfort others who are also afflicted. Affliction is a normal part of life on this earth, even as believers, and God is there to walk through it with us (Ecclesiastes 8:14 John 16:33). He might not take the difficulties, the pain, and the trials away, but He will be there with us to go through it with us. Being a follower of Christ does involve suffering, and we can expect persecution for the sake of Christ (Colossians 1:24, 2 Timothy 3:12). The world rejected Christ, and we can expect it to reject us also. Yet, just as our sufferings for Christ's sake are abundant, our comfort through Christ is also abundant. Thus, our hope and joy is that we always have a Savior Who understands and Who is there to comfort us in our pain and distress (Hebrews 4:15).

**6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;**

**7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.**

The apostles suffered for Christ's sake in order to bring the gospel to the Corinthians. They suffered so that the Corinthians could be saved and so that when they suffered, they could also have comfort in Christ. The Corinthians proved their salvation by being

willing to endure under trial and persecution and by the fact that they still had hope and joy during the difficulty because they knew the comfort of Christ.

**8For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;**

**9indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;**

**10who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,**

**11you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.**

Paul communicates to the Corinthians very vulnerably in that he says that he experienced times of suffering that were so great that he even despaired of life itself as did the brothers with him. They suffered excessively in Asia such that their human strength was gone, but God still comforted them even when they looked death square in the eye. They had no hope but to trust God because their very existence was dependent upon His grace and intervention alone. This surely deepened their capacity to trust God and to be able to acknowledge their absolute need for the Lord. Many times trials are for that very purpose, so that God can teach us to trust Him, which works best when it is no longer possible to even attempt to trust in ourselves. God did deliver them from such a great danger of death, and Paul believed that God would continue to preserve their lives until they had accomplished their ministry and calling. God is the One Whom they hope in exclusively because of His demonstrated and proven power to deliver. Paul is confident that God will keep looking out for them and comforting them, due in part to the prayers of the saints at Corinth. This is so that many people have an opportunity to participate in the work of the kingdom and who can be rewarded accordingly. Prayer is an invaluable ministry that bestows favor and blessing upon those prayed for, which, in turn, returns the blessing to those who do the praying because of the eternal rewards sure to come.

**12For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.**

Paul's confidence is that he has maintained a pure testimony in holiness and godly sincerity before the church. He has not served by fleshly wisdom and strength but by the grace of God. He has ministered to the world and to the church, particularly to the Corinthians, to whom he had been especially careful not to rest on human abilities but on the grace of God and upon the power of the message of the gospel itself (1 Corinthians 1:17). He doesn't need to fear as to whether his labor will count for eternity because he is sure that it was God's grace that enabled him to do all that he did. He didn't compromise along the way, but what was left from his labor was true genuine fruit of God.

**13For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end;**

**14just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.**

Paul was fully straightforward with the Corinthians, having no ulterior motive and being free of any deception (2 Corinthians 7:2, 11:9). He wrote what they had read and understood, and he was fully forthright and honest. He wants them to have full confidence in his integrity and to grow in their understanding of their kinship in Christ. They are Paul's boast because of the fruit God had cultivated in their lives, and the Corinthians could likewise be proud of having a chance to know and fellowship with Paul and the apostles, faithful men of God who loved them. Each will be able to rejoice greatly when they see each other in heaven. The faith of the apostles led to conversions at Corinth, and the Corinthians' faith to respond gave Paul fruit and rewards. So both win and benefit, and thus both should fully trust one another.

**15In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing;**

**16that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.**

In 1 Corinthians 16:5-7, Paul had said that he had planned to go to Corinth on his way to Macedonia and then again on his way back. He wanted to twice enjoy their fellowship and be a blessing to them. For some reason, he wasn't able to keep his plans to come the first time. Thus, some likely attacked his integrity, and this is why he felt compelled to argue for his credibility and trustworthiness.

**17Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?**

**18But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.**

**19For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.**

**20For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.**

Paul did not break a promise to the Corinthians, but he had merely said that he was going to try to come. He didn't lie to them as if he couldn't be trusted, saying one thing and planning another. But as God is faithful, Paul says that his word is faithful. When he says "yes," he means "yes," and when he says "no," he means "no." Christ, Whom Paul and Silvanus and Timothy preached to the Corinthians, is not One Who waffles, but He is sure. He doesn't change, and His promises always are true because He is always faithful. Nothing can thwart His plans, promises, and purposes. Because they fear Christ and follow Him as Lord, Paul's claim is that he and his brothers in Christ will tell the Corinthians the truth. They are trustworthy because their Savior is trustworthy Who gives them the grace to keep their word to the glory of God.

**21Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,  
22who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.  
23But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.  
24Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.**

God was the One Who called the apostles, Who saved them, Who used them to save the Corinthians, Who sealed them with the promise of salvation (Ephesians 4:30), and Who anointed them, setting them apart by the commission of God for service. They are sure of their future in heaven, and they are sure that they are changed people because of the grace of God. Thus, they are adamant that their integrity is intact, and that they didn't break their commitment to the Corinthians. Paul explains why he chose not to come, and he says that it was for the good of the Corinthians. He wanted to spare them his having to come and rebuke them yet again. Evidently, as the next couple verses indicate, he would have had to reprimand them and cause them sorrow. They hadn't repented to the extent that they needed, and Paul wanted to wait until they did before coming to them again. Paul didn't make this decision as if he was abusing his apostolic right and lording his authority over them. He really believed that he needed to wait for his brothers in the Lord whose faith was real to start to live it out. He wanted to give them time because he loved them and wanted to be able to rejoice with them when he came. He didn't break his commitment, but something merely caused him to reevaluate his earlier plans. His change of plans was then for the good of the Corinthians.

## **2 Corinthians 2**

**1But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.**

**2For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?**

**3This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.**

**4For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.**

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was a harsh rebuke of the varieties of sin that they had going on in their fellowship. He caused them sorrow, no doubt, but having to say those things to the believers was hard for him as well. It caused him great sorrow, and he determined for his own sake of not having to go through that again that he would not go to them if he would have to rebuke them again. He didn't want to have to deal with more sorrow on account of their sin. The Corinthians were supposed to bring Paul joy, and if they brought him sorrow, then who would be there to bring him joy in his visit? Paul's desire was that the Corinthians would have a joy that he could share and be encouraged

from. His first letter brought him much anguish and sorrow, but he knew it was necessary because he loved them and knew that they needed to be reprimanded and exhorted to change. He didn't want to bring them sorrow as if he enjoyed reprimanding them, but his purpose was to lead them to truth so that their joy could be full.

**5But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree--in order not to say too much--to all of you.**

**6Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, 7so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.**

**8Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.**

**9For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.**

**10But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,**

**11so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.**

Paul had written to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5 to put out an unrepentant professing brother from the fellowship, which evidently they did. He was testing them to see if they would be obedient, and they were. This act of putting someone out of the fellowship because of his or her sin was very difficult, and it brought sorrow on Paul and also on the church as a whole. It is not a delightful thing to exercise church discipline, but it is a necessary thing. It appears that this person who had been disciplined had repented because Paul says that his punishment had been sufficient. The church had done rightly not to associate with him any longer, but it was now time, because of his changed heart, to forgive and comfort him. To not receive a penitent sinner back is to blaspheme the grace of God, Who is always willing to forgive when we confess our sin (1 John 1:9). To reject a repentant person or to never treat them as new and clean is to overwhelm them with undue sorrow. Rather than reject such a one or always treat them as a sinner, these need to be loved and forgiven, received back with open arms and warm hearts. This person needed the church to reaffirm its love for him, to associate with him again, and to welcome him back into fellowship. Paul also forgave such a one so that the church would not be made victim by Satan's schemes. Satan would love to divide the church with some receiving the brother and others rejecting him or by causing the brother to feel overwhelming sorrow. Neither of these things should happen, and Paul wanted to make sure of that. We know that Satan seeks division and destruction, and we should be proactive, following God's Word, so that we don't give him an opportunity.

**12Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,**

**13I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.**

Paul, choosing not to go to Corinth, went on to Troas, where the Lord opened a door for the gospel. The gospel cannot be forced, but the Lord gives opportunities as He allows and designs. We must wait for these and look for them, praying for them all the while. Paul wanted to meet Titus there, but he couldn't find him. Thus, he was troubled in his spirit, and he decided to pass on the open door and go back to Macedonia. His hope would be to cross paths with Titus.

**14But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**

**15For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;**

**16to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life And who is adequate for these things?**

Despite his concern and disappointment, Paul could rejoice knowing that God was sovereign and in charge of all things. Like a conquering king, we are led in triumph spiritually by our Savior Who has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18-20). Wherever we are, we can trust that Christ can and will manifest Himself through us as we love others and walk in holiness. If we do this, we can be a fragrance that leads people to eternal life, but for those who are perishing, we will be an aroma unto death, reminding them that they deserve hell (Romans 1:32). Other Christians should be able to identify us by our changed selves (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the world should also be able to distinguish us as being different (John 13:34-35). We are not adequate for what Christ does, but Christ in and through us is perfectly adequate. His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

**17For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.**

Paul and the apostles did not try to sell the Word of God as if it would have certain appeal to the selfish and greedy nature of man. Rather, they spoke the truth with a motive of full sincerity even though the world would perceive it as foolishness. They made sure that those listening knew they were hearing what was from God and not mere ideas of man. Paul didn't view his calling as some sort of career or a means toward earthly, worldly gain. Rather, he spoke as Christ led Him and in fear of the Lord, knowing that he had a stewardship and the opportunity to gain heavenly rewards (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

## **2 Corinthians 3**

**1Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?**

**2You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;**

**3being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

#### **4Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.**

Lest any would accuse Paul of being proud or drawing attention to himself, which he obviously wasn't, he pointed out that he didn't carry with him letters of commendation as if he was trying to impress his listening audience. The only evidence he desired was that which Christ proved and accomplished. He didn't need any merit badges or popular endorsements. All he needed was Christ, and Christ proved that He was working through Paul because He changed the hearts of the Corinthians. They themselves were evidence of Paul's faithfulness to the gospel as salvation was written onto their hearts. Others could see the difference in their lives, and there was no doubt that Christ was behind it. Thus, Christ got the glory and not Paul. They were letters cared for by Paul as stewards of the gospel, but it was Christ Who enlightened their hearts and minds by the Spirit of God to receive the truth of God. The Corinthians came to faith not because they were impressed with Paul's abilities, intellect, or knowledge but because Christ convicted their hearts and enabled them to understand by His grace. The apostles' confidence rested not on any letter of commendation but upon the work of Christ in and through them. They needed no further evidence, used no further evidence, and desired no further evidence. Christ was their all in all, and He would deliver them and preserve their reputation for any who really sought to know the truth (2 Corinthians 1:10).

**5Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,**

**6who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

Paul makes a very powerful point about the sufficiency of Christ. No true spiritual fruit is of ourselves. The flesh cannot produce what is good, spiritual, and eternal, but Christ can and does this in the life of the believer. We can't take credit for any wisdom or knowledge we have, for it is from Christ (Colossians 2:3). We can't take credit for any gifting we have because it is of the Spirit. That which is good and right in our lives is also credited to the Spirit as the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We are dependent beings who can do nothing of eternal value on our own (John 15:5). We need Christ through and through, and it is God through His Word and Spirit that makes us adequate to do the good works He gives us to do (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The apostles and the church of Jesus Christ are servants of the new covenant, for the old has passed away. We are not under the Law as if we are trying to fulfill it. None of us could do that (Galatians 3:24), but Christ did it for us (Romans 8:1-3). Thus, we are under grace, and we are not to leave in a legalistic fashion as if we are trying to earn the favor of God. God has given us His favor through Christ, and we cannot earn or deserve it. We have been given eternal life (John 17:3) and abundant life (John 10:10) through Christ, and there is no other life to be found. To try to gain life or preserve life by our own strength is destined for disappointment and failure. We are insufficient, but Christ in and through us is our sufficiency (2 Peter 1:3). Faith in Christ is thus the means to effective ministry, not our own human abilities.

**7But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,**

**8How will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?**

**9For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.**

**10For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it.**

**11For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.**

The Law served to move us to die to ourselves because it showed us our sinfulness and inability to keep it. Thus, it was a tutor to point us to a Savior Who alone could save us and give us the grace we needed (Galatians 3:24). Yet even this covenant of death, as it were, on tablets of stone engraved by God, had a certain glory. When Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, his face shown with the glory of God. It was a fading glory, but it was a glory nonetheless such that the people couldn't even look upon him. If the ministry of condemnation, the work of the Law, had glory, the ministry of the Spirit of God Who brings life through the new covenant of grace must have even more glory. If Moses had some glory from the Law, we, under grace, must radiate glory even more because of Christ and because it is a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). In fact, we should have so much more, that relatively speaking, the old glory could be considered as nothing. The Law had glory even in fading, but we have a glory that shouldn't fade.

**12Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech,**

**13and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.**

**14But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.**

**15But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;**

**16but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**

Because of the glory which is ours in Christ, we have great hope and should be motivated to speak openly about Christ with boldness. The glory is not we ourselves but Christ Himself in us. We aren't like Moses who had to veil the glory from sinful Israel whose hearts and minds were hardened. Even in Paul's day, the Jews remained hardened, refusing to receive Christ, who alone can remove a veil of faded glory which points to death. The Jews needed to respond to the new covenant of the Spirit and of life. But they were blind, with a veil lying over their hearts. Only when a person, Jews included, turn to Christ for salvation is the veil of blindness, darkness, and death taken away.

**17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

**18But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**



The Lord is one and the same as the Spirit yet distinct, and where the Spirit is, there is true freedom because the Lord has the authority to set free. We are not under the letter of the law as if we need to live in fear and doubt of not performing up to God's expectations as a means of meriting His favor and love. We are justified by faith in the work of Christ which is complete (Romans 6:10). Thus, we have freedom from sin to be able to live as freedmen and worship God in obedience. Sin is bondage, but the Spirit gives life and peace. We are not blinded by a veil of sin and death, but we can see the glory of the Lord as if we are looking into a mirror. In the mirror is Christlikeness, and the glory and hope we have is that the Spirit of God is continually working on our hearts to transform us to be more and more like the image of Christ Whom we see in the mirror and Whom the Word of God reveals to us. Our glory is not our own, but it is Christ in us. Our glory is thus not fading, but enduring and becoming more and more pure and permeating as we are made more and more like Christ. This glory is evidence that one day we will be glorified when we are given new bodies and made perfect with Christ in heaven (Romans 8:17, 30).

## **2 Corinthians 4**

**1Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

We have a ministry under the new covenant to proclaim the reason for the glory we have which is transforming us to be like Christ and which has set us free from slavery to sin by the power of the Spirit of God. This is not because we were deserving, but it is because of the mercy of God given to us. Since Christ is continuing to work in our hearts to make us like Himself, we must not lose heart as if God is not going to finish the job (Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 12:1-2). He will, and He delights in using us to accomplish His purposes. It is our job to be faithful, firm, and persevering (1 Corinthians 15:58). We must continue to be disciplined by faith, walking not after evil but after that which is of righteousness (Galatians 5:16). That which is evil we must firmly renounce and reject, choosing the life that is in Christ so that we can walk in purity each day. We are not to be deceitful, cunning, or manipulative, nor are we to compromise the Word of God or change it to suit our agendas or rationalizations. If we compromise or yield to sin, then we will do a poor job of showing forth the glory of God. The glory of God can be seen by others as they see our lives changed and conformed to God's righteous and good commands. Their consciences know right from wrong (Romans 1:32), and they can see when a person does right. The power and glory is God's, and thus we who obey by faith can point others to God and His glory. It also establishes our testimony before men as being legitimate. God sees all, and we must walk in holiness before Him in order to be faithful, effective ministers of the gospel.

**3And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,**

**4**in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

If people don't respond in faith, it ought not to be because our sin is veiling the gospel. It should be simply because a veil of blindness rests over the hearts of those who are children of the devil. They need the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, but they are unable to see it because of the work of the god of this world, the devil himself. Perhaps God might be gracious to open the eyes of the lost as they see our love (John 13:34-35), our unity (John 17:21), our good works (Matthew 5:16), our hope (1 Peter 3:15), and our holiness (Hebrews 12:14).

**5**For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

**6**For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

**7**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

In ministry, it is not about the one doing the ministry but the One for Whom the ministry is done. The power is in the Savior and in the gospel, not in the flesh of man. So we must not preach anything that draws attention to ourselves, but we must recognize that we are servants of Christ. We have a great treasure in that we have Christ in our hearts. He has removed the veil from our eyes so that we could see the truth. Darkness has been replaced with the Light of Christ in us to shine through us to a dark world. In Christ we are able to see the truth, for we have received Him for Who He is. He is the One Who represents fully and perfectly the glory of God, and it is His face we are to seek. His face is what we want the world to see when they look at us. Yet the treasure of Christ is not us or of us but in us. We are but earthen vessels, mere jars of clay. We are feeble, frail, fragile, and fallible, yet Christ is the glory of God residing in us. The obvious conclusion then is that Christ is the surpassing greatness which the world needs to see, and it is not us. The power is not of us, but it is His. When a person comes to Christ, it is not because we are powerful but because our Savior is powerful. When ministry is accomplished, it is because it was done by the grace of God as Christ worked in and through us. We have no sufficiency or power in our own strength to accomplish spiritual things, but Christ is our hope and our source of power. He is our glory, and He is what the world needs to see. If we rely upon Him and His Word and not ourselves, the world will indeed see Him and not us. And that is what is supposed to happen. The weaker we are, the stronger He can be shown to be (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

**8**we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

**9**persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

**10**always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

**11For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**

**12So death works in us, but life in you.**

The life of the apostles was one of great suffering as they had already alluded to. Affliction came to them in every way imaginable, but they were not crushed by it because God had delivered them in His strength and sufficiency. They had been perplexed, confused, and lacking resources in and of their own strength, but they did not despair because there was always hope with Christ. They were persecuted severely, but Christ was still there to comfort them (2 Corinthians 1:4-5), not forsaking or abandoning them. They had been brutally struck down, but the Lord had spared them from death. Their suffering for Christ's sake was part of their existence, but so was His power and life. They were constantly being made weaker and weaker such that Christ could show Himself stronger and stronger. They were being harshly treated so that the mercy and forgiveness of God could shine all the brighter. God's sustenance and grace while under fire is a great testimony to His existence, love, comfort, and provision. Death worked in the lives of the apostles such that they knew they could put no confidence in the flesh. It was weak, they were vulnerable, and they needed the grace of God just to live, let alone to do ministry. From this place of weakness, God could do mighty things, including working life in the Corinthians as they received the gospel and grew in their understanding of the Lord.

**13But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,**

**14knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.**

**15For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**

Quoting from the Greek translation of Psalm 116:10, Paul makes the point that his belief is sure which leads him to continue to speak the truth. He is willing to continue to endure hardship for the sake of Christ because he knows Christ is Who He said He was. He can confidently look forward to the future when he is resurrected to meet the resurrected Christ along with the resurrected saints, including the Corinthian believers. Paul serves and preaches so that more and more can come to Christ and move them to give thanks to the Lord for His grace to the glory of God. Salvation honors God as does those who preach the gospel. The fruit of salvation is hope, joy, and thanksgiving.

**16Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.**

**17For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,**

**18while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

In light of the hope of the future resurrection and inheritance with Christ, the apostles keep preaching the truth and persevering in righteousness. A strong belief in the Word of God leads to right practice. We are less likely to be deceived, to rebel, or to give up because we are certain of what we believe and what is to come. As life goes on, the body wears out and eventually dies. It can also get beat up from persecution as the apostles experienced. Yet the inner man continues to be renewed because Christ gives strength to do His will each day. It does not die, but it will live forever and be given a new immortal body. The affliction that takes place on earth is but momentary and light given the weight of the glory of eternity. The rewards and joy will be so great that the worst amount of suffering now is so slight in comparison with all of the rewards for being faithful even under persecution. We, like Paul, must keep our focus on the eternal which is not seen rather than on the pleasures of sin now, lest we lose heart or become unfaithful to Christ. What the eyes see is temporal, but what the heart must be devoted to is the eternal, which is not seen. Having an eternal perspective changes how we react to suffering, persecution, and sacrifice while on earth.

## **2 Corinthians 5**

**1For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

**2For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,**

**3inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.**

**4For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.**

While we are as yet in this feeble, earthly body, we groan, often in physical pain, for we long for our new body which will be a far better “tent” for our soul. Even if our body is destroyed and we die, we have the hope of a new body to come and a home in heaven. We will not be “naked,” that is, abandoned to death or without hope. Indeed, we groan because we are so sure that the immortal is going to be so much better than the mortal. Thus, we want the new “clothes” of our new bodies.

**5Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.**

**6Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord--**

**7for we walk by faith, not by sight--**

**8we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

**9Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.**

God has prepared us to suffer for Him now and to be glorified with Him later (Romans 8:30). It will happen, and the Spirit Who indwells us is given as a promise of God that

we will inherit heaven and be raised immortal with Christ in heaven. Therefore we can have courage while on earth no matter what we face because of the certainty of life with Christ after death. While we are yet on earth in our mortal bodies, we are absent from the Lord in person. We look forward to that day, but in the meantime we walk by faith, believing that day will come, even though we cannot see it with our physical, mortal eyes. The better thing is to be absent from this mortal body and present with the Lord, for such is our true home. This will happen when Christ wants it to happen, and while He gives us life, we must use our opportunity to serve others (Galatians 6:10). Whether we are on earth or in heaven, it must be our ambition and purpose to please God. We will worship Him forever in eternity in our new home, so we should do it even now in a world that is not our home.

**10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

**11Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.**

Every believer will be judged by Christ at His judgment seat. The unbelievers will go to the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11), at which point Christ will sentence them to hell for failing to repent and put their faith in Him while on earth (Revelation 20:12-15). Believers will get rewarded based upon their level of faithfulness and the purity of their hearts and motives (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). What is done by the power of God and not by our own strength will bring rewards. Some will receive many, some will receive few, and some will just barely get in by the grace of God. But all of us have great hope and joy to look forward to, and it is not in doubt that we will get in (1 John 5:13). What is important is that we will be held accountable for how we live while in this mortal body, so we must make the most of our time and be faithful to Christ. In light of our accountability before Christ, we should live in reverent fear, knowing that we will be judged. Thus, we should be moved to live out the commission of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) and call people to repent and receive the gospel. We are not to influence them with human influence and means, but we must reason with them according to the truth of God's Word, doing all that we can by God's grace through faith to encourage them to respond in faith. Our faithfulness manifests us as being children of God Who love Him and fear His judgment. God takes note of our faithfulness, and He is faithful to reward us accordingly. Paul hopes that the Corinthians can see their faithfulness and integrity as well.

**12We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.**

**13For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.**

Paul is not commending himself and the apostles as if he is bragging upon himself and upon them. He is merely saying that they should be counted trustworthy which should give the Corinthians reason, not to challenge them, but to be proud of them. Some prefer

appearance, that is, apparent success and notoriety among men, but Paul is saying that it is the heart that matters. Since they press on faithfully in light of the judgment and despite persecution, it should be clear that they are not interested in keeping up appearances but in suffering for Christ because they truly believe what they are preaching. This fact should give the Corinthians plenty of ammunition to refute any who challenge Paul as being one interested only in himself and his own notoriety. What is for sure is that the apostles don't have false, secondary motives. Perhaps they are crazy and honestly deluded, which would mean that they live for God at least in their own heads. But if they are not crazy but truly rational, then their lives are a measured, reasoned sacrifice for the sake of the Corinthians. It is not about vain glory, but it is because they love the brethren and wish to see the gospel advance. There is no reason not to trust them.

**14For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;**

**15and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

**16Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.**

Paul emphasizes that his life is not his own and that he is not living according to selfish ambitions or for vain glory. He is interested in Christ's glory, and he is driven by love for God. In fact, he says that the love of Christ controls him. Sin doesn't have a controlling influence on him. He has disciplined his body so that it has become his slave. He lets the Spirit rule in his heart and lead him in the way to go, which is the way of love. When Christ died, we who trusted in Him, died with Him. We were buried with Him unto death and then raised to new life with Him (Romans 6:4, 6). All died so that the opportunity is available to all to live no longer for themselves but for Christ who died for them and rose again on their behalf. The opportunity is there in the form of a gift of grace if only the world will receive it (Romans 6:23). The old can die and a new self can be born (Colossians 3:9-10), but repentance is required (Luke 13:5). It is imperative that we as believers recognize one another as new creations from the time we come to know Christ. We cannot find our identity in our past, but we must find our purpose, worth, and identity in Christ Who changes us, rebirths our spirits, and gives us new life. So we must not recognize people according to what they used to be or according to manmade measures of worth but according to whether or not they are in Christ. Before Christ, we might have known Christ in a fallible, unbelieving way, but now we have received Him as our own into our hearts. We know Him in a much different way now, a way that is personal, real, and subservient to His will and leading.

**17Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**

In Christ, we are reborn (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3, 23). The old self along with its evil heart and corrupt nature that is prone to sin and incapable of pleasing God dies, and we are

made new from the inside out. Our spirit is reborn, our soul begins the process of sanctification (Romans 12:1-2), and the desires of our hearts change (v. 14). What was old, the evil things we valued and the sin we clung to, is gone. We don't have to continue in sin (1 Corinthians 15:34), for we are new creations in Christ. We have put on the new self as we were reborn in Christ, and the old self was buried with Him (Romans 6:4, Colossians 3:9-10). Our life and identity are now found in Christ (Colossians 3:3-4, Galatians 2:20) rather than in what we had done or achieved in our flesh. Christ is what makes us who we are and beings of value. Otherwise we are but dust which will die and go to hell. With Christ, we are dust indwelt by the glory of God, and one day that dust will become a new immortal body. We are so greatly changed, and that should be evident by the outward fruit (Matthew 7:20). Of course, if we believe our hearts are still evil (Jeremiah 17:9), then we will have trouble living as new creations, given that the heart is the center of our desires (Proverbs 4:23). The Christian should have changed desires and the power in Christ to be able to fulfill those desires (Psalm 37:4). Christ's glory must be our desire, and it can be because of Christ in us and our new nature. We still have the flesh to battle in this life, but we are not bound to do its will (Romans 6:6).

**18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,**

**19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

**20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

**21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Our certain inheritance and inward transformation are from God, Who gave us Christ to bring us back into right relationship with Him. Having received Christ, we are now given a calling as ministers of the gospel to call others to be reconciled to God. God sent Christ to the world to reconcile the world to Himself. He desires all to repent (2 Peter 3:9), and Christ calls all men to be saved (John 3:16). Not all respond in faith, however (Matthew 22:14). God's desire is to not count the sin of the world against it because He put the sin of the world on Christ. It is our job to go and share this truth with the world so that they can be saved (Romans 10:13-15, 17). We are ambassadors for Christ as if God is appealing to the world through us to be saved. Paul begs any who would hear this letter who do not know Christ to be reconciled to God through Christ. Christ took on the sin of the world so that we could receive His righteousness (Isaiah 53:6). Our only hope of redemption and salvation is to receive the righteousness of Christ.

## **2 Corinthians 6**

**1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--**

**2 for He says,**

**"AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU,**

**AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU."**

**Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--**

**3giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,**

Paul, drawing from Isaiah 49:8, urges the Corinthians both to be sure of their salvation in Christ by repenting of their sins and putting their trust in Him if they haven't already. This is the time to turn to Him, and only while we are alive and until the return of Christ, will sinners have a chance to repent. God desires to listen and help the sinner if only he would call out to Him in faith. Paul and the apostles desire that the Corinthians be their fellow workers, which they only can be if they are saved and then living out their faith in obedience. An ambassador of the gospel must have received the gospel, must be able to share the gospel, and must live a life transformed by the gospel such that no one can discredit his testimony. Paul wants the Corinthians to become effective ambassadors of the gospel so that their salvation truly amounts to fruit for the kingdom, but in order to do this, they must walk in holiness. Otherwise, offenses will be given to those watching, and the ministry can be discredited. Even part of the body being unfaithful can make it more difficult for others to preach and be respected. Faithfulness in the body in one place leads to credibility even in another. Thus, Paul desires that the Corinthians walk in holiness so that their testimony and his can be made effective and believable.

**4but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,**

**5in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

**6in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,**

**7in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,**

**8by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;**

**9as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,**

**10as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.**

Paul's desire is that believers everywhere can be proven to be genuine because their lives are evidence of their saving faith in Christ. A servant of God is not to walk in disobedience, and if someone does this continually, there are Biblical grounds to question his salvation (1 John 3:9). But Paul's message is that genuine believers live in holiness continually and regularly so that they stop sinning (1 Corinthians 15:34). Perseverance in resisting sin and in preaching the gospel are marks of true servants of God who desire to have a legitimate testimony before men. They will stand firm for truth and for the glory of the Lord despite any amount of distress, persecution, suffering, affliction, hardship, beatings, tumults, severe labors for the sake of the gospel, imprisonment, or any other related suffering for the cause of the gospel. To serve the kingdom takes a lot of toil and hard work, and often it is accompanied by opposition and persecution, which the apostles



were no stranger to. Yet Paul was adamant that perseverance would mark the lives of the believers as well as purity, a growing knowledge of God, patience and forbearance with one another, kindness, love that is without hypocrisy or false motives, the power of the Spirit and God, and the word of truth which is the revelation of God in the Scripture. Believers need to arm themselves with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17), raising their shield of faith with one hand to deflect Satan's temptations and with the sword of God, which is the Word of God, in the other hand, to speak truth into a world that needs it. These weapons are powerful, and the servant of God uses them regularly lest he fall. There will be some who praise believers for their sacrifice and service, but more often than not, there will be those who curse and mock. Some will say good things and others bad, but at all times, whether in season or out, the Word must be preached (2 Timothy 4:2). Some will even attack a faithful person's reputation and falsely accuse him of things he didn't do. In some circles, a faithful preacher might become well-known, but popularity is not something he holds dear. Popularity is both fleeting and relative, and he accepts being unknown or well-known, regardless of what each brings, without changing his purpose and focus. Regularly, the faithful will suffer, and daily they must die to self. Yet in death to self there is life in Christ, and these know it better than most. Until they die, they often get punished for their faithfulness by unfaithful men and by those in the "church" who are too stubborn to deal with the sin in their own hearts. God's Word is not usually popularly received, though it is popularly known. Those who live it and preach it, expecting others to adhere to it, can expect to suffer while alive, and at some point they may even have to die for Christ's sake. Much sorrow fills the life of a faithful Christian, yet because of his faithfulness, he can have great joy all the while. Joy transcends bad circumstances as one finds deeper fellowship and intimacy with Christ. There is not typically wealth and the comforts of the world which accompany service for Christ. Most servants of God have next to nothing, and they are very poor. This is sacrifice, and it is evidence of their willingness to be servants and to be disrespected by the world. Yet, though they might not have much in the way of material possessions, they are rich in that they are storing up many rewards for themselves by making others spiritually rich as they come to know Christ. Thus, behind the material poverty lies spiritual treasure, and the faithful know it and believe it even if they cannot see it. They might not own much if anything, but they have all that they need in Jesus because God owns all things. Thus, they can trust Him to meet their needs and to provide them an inheritance of abundance in the life to come. The faithful continue on in love, purity, and perseverance, continuing to do what God called them to do no matter what people think and regardless of the opposition they might face. They don't live for the approval of men, and the disapproval of men doesn't distract them. These are the characteristics of ambassadors for Christ that God desires.

**11Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.**

**12You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.**

**13Now in a like exchange--I speak as to children--open wide to us also.**

Paul is saying that his heart is enlarged in love for them, opened wide in great care and concern for the Corinthians. He wants them to know Christ if they do not and to walk in Him faithfully if they do know Him. Paul has freely declared his love and compassion

toward them, and he desires that they respond in love and care to him, listening to his advice and admonitions by becoming faithful ambassadors of Christ. It is their choice, for Paul has demonstrated his grace and patience for them to change. Like a spiritual father, he calls to his spiritual children to grow up in Christ, to follow his example, and to live out the character of Christ in the world.

**14Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**

**15Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?**

As believers, we live in a hostile world full of false teaching and deception. It is imperative that we set ourselves apart from it. This does not mean that we go out of the world so that we cannot be salt and light, but it does mean that we don't join hands and partner with that which is not of the Lord or of sound doctrine. To do so demonstrates an approval of false teaching or at least a tolerance of it, which is compromise. In marriage, believers must not marry unbelievers, for this is an example of utmost importance where standing for Christ matters. To not clearly maintain one's position for Christ defames His name, compromises our witness, and corrupts our own hearts. Light does not have any fellowship with darkness nor righteousness with unrighteousness. Christ has nothing in common with the devil, and believers have nothing in common with unbelievers because Christ is the issue of supreme importance. Unity can only be had between those who have a common faith in Christ. Otherwise, those in the relationship, partnership, or joint enterprise can consider themselves "unequally yoked." Such a union should not be.

**16Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,**

**"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;  
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

**17"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.**

**"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;  
And I will welcome you.**

**18"And I will be a father to you,  
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"  
Says the Lord Almighty.**

Believers are the temple of God Who lives within us. Thus, God does not want His temple intermingled and confused with the temple of idols. The Corinthians needed to be sure that they didn't compromise the gospel by condoning any of the idolatrous practices in Corinth. They also needed to guard their own hearts so that spiritual idols were not set up in God's temple. That which is Christ's is to be separate from the world and holy such that the world can see the difference and be called to respond accordingly. Christians are not to participate in the evil ways of the world, but we are to be clean, holy, and righteous by the power of Christ as we fulfill His law of love by grace. If we compromise, we will have a poor testimony and dishonor God.

## 2 Corinthians 7

**1Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Paul's conclusion after speaking of the importance of holiness in order to be effective ambassadors for Christ is to hold to the promise of God that He will enable His children to better and better imitate their Father. Thus, we are to continually grow towards perfection by the grace of God, part of which means walking in holiness as we are able today. We don't have excuses as if sin is allowable simply because we are not glorified yet (1 Corinthians 10:13). God will give us an escape route from every temptation, so our job and calling is to fear the Lord and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). We must cleanse ourselves by turning from sin and receiving the forgiveness that is in Christ. We have been forgiven once and for all at salvation, but there are practical things to be cleansed of in the day to day course of life. These we must confess and then obey, putting away any contaminating force or thought from our bodies, minds, and hearts. We have no reason to continue in sin with our body or with our mind, for we have all we need in Christ to walk in godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We need to let God control what we do with our bodies, for they are His temple. We need to ask God to make us steadfast in spirit, thinking rightly, and ready and eager to do His will (Psalm 51:10).

**2Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.**

**3I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.**

Paul wants the Corinthians to repent, to trust him, and to rest in his kind heart toward them. Never in the past had he defrauded them or wronged them in any way. Even now, his goal is not to condemn them because they are near and dear to his heart as a father loves his children. In life he views them as dear to him, and even in death, he expects to be rejoined with them. Yet he desires that they put away sin and be all that Christ wants them to be.

**4Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.**

**5For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.**

**6But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;**

**7and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.**

Paul is not only upset at their sin, but he is grateful for the comfort which they have brought him. This brings him great pride and encouragement that those whom he has led to the Lord are showing some evidence of Christ working in their hearts as they cared for

him. Despite his affliction, he is able to overflow with joy and be filled with comfort because of the work they have done for him. When Paul had left for Macedonia, he was troubled. He was physically worn out and anxious in spirit. He had left an open door for ministry to go and find Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). When Titus came to him, he greatly encouraged Paul simply by his presence but also because he had been so impacted and encouraged himself by the care of the Corinthians. So there were some signs of contrition and change among the Corinthians as they were grieved by what Paul had sent to them in the earlier letter. They were zealous to see him and desired to be with him, which demonstrated that they didn't ignore what he had said but that they respected him and looked forward to additional teaching and direction. This demonstrated their humility and gave Paul reason to rejoice even more.

**8For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it--for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while--  
9I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.**

Paul evidently had some regrets initially about sending the letter that he did probably because of how harsh of a rebuke it was. Yet, now knowing that the Corinthians received it with humility such that it made them seek the Lord more, he no longer had reason to regret it. God used it, and the sorrow that the Corinthians had was a healthy, temporary sorrow, leading to repentance. It was a sorrow produced by the Holy Spirit and according to the will of God as they realized the severity of their sin and turned from it. True repentance carries with it a sorrow over sin, not merely because of the consequences of sin but because it hurts the heart of God and the hearts of those who care. God used Paul's letter to keep them from suffering loss (1 Corinthians 3:15) in the day of Christ because of a lack of faithfulness. Now that they had repented, they had a chance to begin storing up eternal rewards once again. The motive for confrontation ought always to be for the restoration of the sinner for their own eternal well-being.

**10For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

**11For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.**

Sorrow that is according to God's will is a sorrow that leads to repentance. The repentant person will take joy in being forgiven, he won't regret having to give up the sin, and he will not have to wallow in the mire of sin forever. God's sorrow is a temporary sorrow that accompanies the turning from sin such that Christians can be free of regret and moved to change. This true repentance leads to salvation and continued sanctification, whereas merely regretting the destructive effects of sin accomplishes nothing that would edify spiritually. Those who abandon sin in true repentance don't regret doing so. The sorrow they have is a sorrow over having offended God, and this is sorrow that is quickly

replaced by joy. The sorrow that the world gives is the direct result of sin. Sin is always destructive, and it destroys the heart, mind, and body in addition to sending the soul to hell. Godly sorrow creates an earnestness to do right. Godly sorrow makes us want to have a clean slate before God, whereas while we are in sin, we don't care so much. Godly sorrow leads to irritation and vexation at sin and having wasted time in sin. It creates a healthy fear of God as we come to respect His authority and judgment, and it makes us long for righteousness and truth. We become zealous and passionate for the things of God, and we quickly desire to do what we can to right what we have wronged. Rather than participate with the devil, we quickly despise what we have done and switch allegiances back to serving God. God's promise to us is that when we turn from sin, He forgives and forgets our sin such that we are innocent in His sight. We stop sinning as we were, and we change directions such that we start doing right and seek the forgiveness of those whom we have offended (James 5:16, Matthew 5:23-24). Repentance is a return to reverence for God and innocence in how we live.

**12 So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.**

Paul's purpose for writing his letter in which he confronted the Corinthians about their sin was not merely for the sake of the offender or one offended but for the sake of seeing the Corinthians repent and be restored. He wanted them to have the chance to experience God's forgiveness and thus know what it is like to be earnest and eager to do what is right. Paul wanted to see repentance and restoration of broken relationships, but he had in mind, first and foremost, the result and fruit of repentance. He knew that when a person truly repents, he is set free and has more joy than ever before. Thus, Paul's ultimate motive was for the joy of the believers and to be able to see them seek out eternal rewards rather than fleeting, self-centered, destructive sin.

**13 For this reason we have been comforted And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.**

Because the Corinthians did repent and long to see Paul again and to do right, Paul and his fellow apostles were able to be comforted and rejoice because of the news Titus brought and because of how their repentance had so encouraged him. Seeing God work and people change such that they are freed from sin always brings joy to those who love the truth and the Lord. It is refreshing to have sin and bondage washed away and exchanged for healing and forgiveness. This is why churches must deal with sin, for it is the only road to the freedom and joy that the church has a right to in Christ.

**14 For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.**

**15 His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.**

## **16I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.**

Paul had confidence in the Corinthians that they would come around and repent at some point, which they were gradually doing and which delighted Paul. What he had said to Titus about being confident of the Corinthians' eventual repentance was coming to be reality as they did repent. Paul had sent Titus to deliver his letter, and the Corinthians treated him warmly and openly, choosing to repent and obey. If Paul had met Titus sooner, perhaps he might have made a second trip to Corinth, but fearing having to give another rebuke, he passed on to Troas. Once he met Titus, Titus brought him good news and refreshed his spirit. They had received Titus in humility, trembling before Paul's words, and they responded in obedience. Paul had confidence that they would do this eventually, and the news that they were being humble greatly encouraged his heart. He had joy that the church in Corinth would keep growing and being humble, continuing to trust him and listen to him.

## **2 Corinthians 8**

**1Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,**

**2that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.**

**3For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,**

**4begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,**

**5and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.**

**6So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.**

Paul desired that Titus would be able to go to the Corinthians and receive up their free will gifts which would be used to support other churches which were in need. Giving is a way that Christians can make God's grace manifest to other believers and to those in need. The grace of God had been going forth through the gifts of the churches in Macedonia, and Paul wanted the Corinthians to do their share as well. Although many of the churches had to give during a time of affliction and poverty, they still overflowed in generosity toward those in need. Their giving was clearly a sacrifice and an act of trust in the Lord. They gave not merely according to their ability but beyond it, meaning that they were casting themselves upon the Lord in faith. This they did freely, which was above and beyond what God asks of us (v. 12). God's desire is that we give cheerfully from what we have, and a good baseline is ten percent, given that that is what Abraham gave Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20), a priest of God who served before the giving of the Law and the Old Testament civil laws. Thus, Abraham's giving was not a mere tax paid to a government, but it was a model of God's intention for us. Right from the top of what God gives us, we should give our first and best, amounting to ten percent or more, based on the ability we have. Giving should not be coerced or manipulated, but it is to be done

of our own free will so that we can have an eternal reward for our earthly sacrifice (1 Corinthians 9:17). These churches begged to have the privilege of taking part in giving to the needs of the saints, even though they had next to nothing. They surrendered their finances to the will and purposes of the Lord, which they trusted Paul and the apostles to be carrying out. Thus, they understood that financial stewardship involves yielding one's finances and material well-being to the care of the Lord Who is Lord over all. To put our trust in money rather than in the Lord is dangerous and idolatrous (Luke 16:13). Paul's hope was that the Corinthians would do their part, not in pressure or competition, but freely before the Lord because they wanted to and could.

**7But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.**

**8I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.**

**9For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**

**10I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.**

**11But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.**

**12For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.**

Paul sees faith, the willingness to declare the truth, a growing knowledge, and a passion and love for Christ and His church in the lives of the Corinthians. Thus, he believes that the only reasonable thing for these to do because of their love for the Lord is to give to the needs of the churches. Since they have repented to be faithful in other ways, they should be faithful in this way as well. Paul is not commanding the Corinthians to give because giving is to be of one's own free will (v. 3), but he believes it will serve as evidence to the other churches of their own sincerity which will greatly encourage them in the Lord. Knowing that other churches care about one's own church and needs is greatly edifying. Christ had all privilege in heaven (Philippians 2:5-11), but He was willing to lay aside some of His rights and riches so that He could become poor and make us spiritually rich. Christ modeled sacrifice for eternal gain for others, and this is what Paul wanted the Corinthians to do. In fact, it wouldn't be just for the gain of others, but it would be to their own advantage because of the spiritual rewards. They had started a year ago to want to give and to give, and Paul wanted them to now finish doing what they had started. He had earlier instructed them to put money aside regularly each Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2), and now it was time to complete the work which they had been doing for awhile. Readiness to do good is one thing, but completion is another. We should be ready and eager for good works, and we should then obey and do them.

**13For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality--**

**14at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality;  
15as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH,  
AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."**

God's plan is that those in the church who have an abundance will give to those who lack. There are always going to be those who are poor among us (Matthew 26:11), and it is God's design as a means of showing His grace and mercy that those who are materially blessed will give to those in need. Thus, the church distributes as needed to those who have needs (Acts 2:44, 4:32). The point is not to give so as to destroy ourselves or so that the rich can get richer, but God's design is that the churches that have much would supply the needs of the churches that don't. Thus, in areas where wars or famines strike, for example, other churches can send relief. Giving is not to bring self-affliction, though it should be sacrificial. We should give according to our means, but the understanding is that we can expect gifts in return because those who have will take care of us in our any need that might arise. Thus, all have their needs met (Philippians 4:19) by the grace of God working through the giving of the saints (v. 1). The goal is equality across the church such that none live in wasteful extravagance and none live in poverty. If the church does things God's way when it comes to giving, then each person will have exactly what he or she needs. Some need more than others, but the point is that we all get what we need while being mindful of the needs of others. This creates a healthy dependence upon God, it allows us to store up eternal rewards, and it allows us to have our needs met through the service of other believers, creating unity and community.

**16But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.**

**17For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.**

**18We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches;**

**19and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness,**

**20taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;**

**21for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

**22We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you.**

**23As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.**

**24Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.**



Titus of his own free will obeyed Paul's appeal so that the Corinthians could have a chance to give to the other churches. He went to them because he was burdened in his own heart that this was something God wanted him to do. A "want-to" mentality is always God's desire for His people, and such an attitude enables us to better discern His leading and will. Titus was sent along with a well-known brother in the early church, whose name is not given. Possibly, God did this so that we would remember that no matter how well-known we might think we are fame is vain. We in modern times don't even know who this person was, demonstrating the temporal and finite nature of fame. But what is clear is that this person was trustworthy because he was appointed as a messenger by the churches in Macedonia to travel with Paul to do the gracious work of God for His glory as they demonstrated to Him their willing and eager hearts which God loves. They wanted to be careful, however, that there was no reason for the churches to worry as to whether their gifts were in safe hands. There was evidently a lot of money to be sent, and Paul emphasized that he wanted those who carried it to the churches in need to be trustworthy. Thus, he took precaution with the generous gift so that they could prove themselves to be honorable in its delivery. In addition to Titus and the well-known brother, a brother who was well trusted and proven faithful to the Corinthians was sent. Titus was Paul's fellow worker and could be trusted, and all of these messengers were servants of God, serving for His glory and not selfish gain. The gift would be safe in the company of these three faithful brothers. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to freely and openly give their offering which would prove their love and demonstrate why Paul was so proud of them to begin with.

## **2 Corinthians 9**

**1For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;  
2for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians,  
namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up  
most of them.**

**3But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be  
made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;**

**4otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to  
speak of you--will be put to shame by this confidence.**

**5So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you  
and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same  
would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.**

Paul is confident that the Corinthians will follow through on giving to the churches because they had earlier on been very zealous to do this work. In fact, it was their zeal that inspired many of the other churches in the region to start giving themselves. Now these other churches had given, and it was time to take a collection from the Corinthians. Given their earlier desire which even led Paul to have pride in them and to use them as an example to encourage the other churches to give, he was confident that they would indeed give. So Paul sent the three brothers to receive the gift from them, and he wanted them to be prepared so that they and Paul would not be put to shame. The brothers who went ahead of Paul were to make sure the gift was in order and that no covetousness had

arisen to take from the gift which the Corinthians had stored up. The Corinthians had made a promise to give generously, and Paul wanted to see the fulfillment of their promise.

**6Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

**7Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

Paul lays out a fundamental principle of giving. He has already said giving was to be a regular setting aside of funds for the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:2). Second, it should be generous and sacrificial, but not poverty inducing (2 Corinthians 8:7, 13-14). Third, giving is to be as God leads an individual, so that giving is according to his own desires, from a “want to” mentality rather than a “have to.” Thus giving is not something to be forced upon someone, nor should legalistic standards be imposed. Legalism makes this work of grace an annoyance or compulsion, and this is not right before the Lord. We should want to give, and we should give freely without others watching over us in judgment. God loves a cheerful giver, one who does so out of joy and eagerness, rather than regret, sadness, and sorrow. Giving should be done for the joy of the Lord and out of a desire to serve Him as a means to support the churches around the world as well as our own local church. Giving in Scripture was to one’s own church which then oversaw the giving of gifts to other churches and missionaries. Those who give sparingly will have few rewards, while those who give generously will reap many eternal rewards (Galatians 6:7-8, Luke 6:38). The more we give according to what we are able (2 Corinthians 8:12), the more joy we can experience.

**8And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;**

**9as it is written,**

**"HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR,  
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."**

**10Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;**

**11you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.**

**12For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.**

God is faithful in overseeing the giving done in His name and according to His principles. Those who give can trust God to look after their needs and to meet them (Philippians 4:19) such that they will continue to have the means to give to others regularly. When we give, it is not as if we are signing up to be in poverty and destitute. We give to have the chance to have joy as ministers of grace to those in need, and we are able to give God thanks and praise when we are given to in return. This is what Luke refers to in the book of Acts when he speaks of the early church having everything “in common” (Acts 2:44, 4:32). A benefit of fellowship in the early church was that one could rest in the care of

the community. But the promise we have here from the Lord is that even if some in the church are unfaithful, God sees and knows His faithful ones, and He promises to take care of them, giving them the needed grace such that they can abound in every good deed. God's desire for life is one of abundance when it comes to serving Him (1 Corinthians 15:58) because He loves us and desires us to have many rewards in heaven. He will enable this to happen as we trust Him and by faith obey His commands. Paul desires the Corinthians to give and trust God Who gives bread for food and seed for sowing, given that He owns and has made everything. He will be faithful to give them the means to give to others and to be given to, even multiplying their efforts to produce an abundant harvest of righteousness. Giving what we can to God cheerfully leads not to poverty but to God supplying us with even more to give. We don't give to get rich as if we expect God to give us more to spend on ourselves, but we give so that we can be trusted by God to give more when He gives us more. He enriches us when we trust Him in giving so that we can give in even more liberality and generosity. Giving is not for getting or for making a profit, but it is for the purpose of resting in God's faithfulness so that we trust in His sufficiency and not our own. When He then provides and gives us more opportunities to give to His kingdom and even in greater quantities, then we will have more and more thanksgiving for Him for letting us be part of His kingdom work. Giving supplies the needs of the saints and gives us a chance to thank and worship God. Giving is God's idea, and it is a good thing, teaching us humility, generosity, trust, compassion, and community.

**13Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,**

**14while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.**

**15Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

The result of the Corinthians' faithfulness in giving will lead to the rest of the churches glorifying God because of their obedience and submission to the principles of living out the gospel of Christ in the world. They will be so thankful to see their needs met through other Christians who care about them even if they don't personally know them. Such is the love and community of the true church of God, or so it should be. The other churches will pray for the Corinthians, desiring to meet them and enjoy getting to know them, if such is possible while on the earth. At least in heaven, we will meet those whom we have loved and served while on the earth, and what a glorious time that will be. Paul concludes this section by praising God Who thought up the idea of giving because of how it blesses those who give spiritually and because of the fellowship it creates. Giving does so much good for our spiritual lives as we trust God and love others.

## **2 Corinthians 10**

**1Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!**

**2I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.**

Paul is going to spend some time defending his authority and apostleship. He writes boldly to the Corinthians, but when he is with them, he speaks mercifully and gently. This certainly contributed to why he didn't want to visit them as per his initial plan given that he might have had to be bold to their faces. He hopes that when he is present with the Corinthians that he doesn't have to be bold with the courage and directness that he might have to be if some reject his reproof and spurn his authority as an apostle. Some treat him as if he is weak, fleshly, and without the authority from the Lord, but such is wrong.

**3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,  
4for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**

**5We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,**

**6and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.**

Just because Paul is a mere man does not mean he fights on mere physical terms. He didn't rely upon his fleshly attributes or human strengths to accomplish spiritual ministry, but his strength and confidence was in the Lord. He understood that he fought a spiritual battle against the spiritual fortresses of the enemy, and thus victory was only possible through the strength and grace of Christ. Since the war was spiritual, the weapons of battle must also be spiritual, namely prayer, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God. These are the means by which the devil is stopped in his tracks. He doesn't fear mere man, but he does fear Christ. He is defeated as sound doctrine is fought for and contended for. Mere human wisdom, speculations, and supposed "lofty" understanding which is nothing but lies and human arrogance must be displaced with the truth of God's Word. When these deceptions of man and of the devil are raised up in an attack against the Lord, these need to be brought down with the truth of God's Word. Every thought that is wrong must be challenged so that God's people think rightly and then live accordingly. Wrong theology leads to wrong living, whereas right doctrine leads to obedience. Thus, Paul's purpose in coming is to see that the church as a whole is living obediently and in accordance to the truth, and if there are any in opposition, it is God and His Word which must put them in their place. Once it was clear who was going to follow Christ, then those who rejected sound doctrine were to be disciplined by being put out of the fellowship. This purging was for the good and preservation of the church, and this honored Christ because He demands obedience.

**7You are looking at things as they are outwardly If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.**

**8For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame,**

**9for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.**

**10For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."**

**11Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.**

There were some among the Corinthians that didn't value or respect Paul's God-given authority as an apostle simply because his personal presence wasn't all that impressive. His letters were strong, heavy, powerful, well-written and authoritative, but when these false teachers met Paul, they feared him not at all. He certainly didn't have anything about him that appealed to their natural mindset of what a powerful person should look like or act like. Thus, they despised him and ridiculed his speaking ability as if it was nothing. They cared not at all for what he said in person because they thought they should be able to set the rules. Yet Paul wanted any who thought this or said this to realize that he is one and the same as the person who writes the letters. God's authority is with him, and he must be respected as an apostle. It doesn't matter what he looks like or how he speaks as much as that he is the same Paul who writes the letters. He is the same Paul who was called and commissioned of God. Thus, he must be listened to and respected. Some were thinking merely outwardly as if they could evaluate who was to be taken seriously just by how they looked or carried themselves.

Just because a person at Corinth claimed to be a believer didn't mean that they were an apostle. Paul would have to give reason for his authority so that none would have grounds to reject his authority or to persuade others to do so. He would not be ashamed for having to defend his credibility, for his commissioning was for their edification. He was called not to shame them, destroy them, or terrify them but to encourage them. Yet, if some refused to listen, he would defend his apostleship.

**12For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.**

**13But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.**

Paul didn't brag about himself unnecessarily or in a way that compared himself to others. He wasn't trying to compete with others for recognition or notoriety. To compare oneself with another is a relative measure that may or may not have any truth attached to it whatsoever, and to do so demonstrates a lack of understanding. Paul refused to boast beyond what was true before the Lord so that he did not lie or exaggerate to make himself look good. Paul would only defend himself within the boundaries of what God had done for him and called him. God had called him to bring the gospel to Corinth, and within his God-given calling, Paul would defend his authority. He would not use any other natural means which would appeal only to a natural mindset. Paul chose to go with what was true and absolute, rather than relative and of men.

**14**For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

**15**not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,

**16**so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.

Paul has a right to claim authority on the basis that he was the one who brought the gospel to them in the first place in Christ. This is not boasting beyond measure or taking credit for what others have done. He was there from the beginning, preaching the gospel to them, and he has been faithful to shepherd them to continue to grow in faith. As they grow, Paul is blessed to reap spiritually, which serves more to show that he indeed has a right to speak authoritatively to these spiritual children. As the church grows through Paul's ministry, he can take a certain responsibility in what has happened, though not taking credit for what others have done in their sphere of ministry.

**17**But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.

**18**For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

Boasting that exalts self and one's own ability apart from God's grace is despicable and blasphemous. God is a jealous God, demanding all glory, and to boast in ourselves is to steal glory from God that is rightfully His. But we have the right to glory, boast, and celebrate what God has done in and through us and in the world around us. We can always be confident in the Lord and praise Him because of what He does and because of His sufficiency and grace. Yet we should never commend ourselves as if we deserve glory because of our own fleshly strength, but we should praise the Lord for being our strength (Philippians 4:13). Commending ourselves is meaningless because our judgment is fallible, particularly if we evaluate our achievements based upon comparisons to others. The only evaluation that matters is God's, and He will approve those who live by faith and operate by His strength and by the power of His grace.

## **2 Corinthians 11**

**1**I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.

**2**For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

Paul understands the limits of self-commendation (2 Corinthians 10:18), but he is going to set forth his own credentials as an apostle hoping that the Corinthians will see that he speaks the truth. He hopes to point them to the fact that God is behind his ministry and that God approves of his work. He is not interested in trying to brag about himself as if he is better than other men. His purpose is to show that his life is directed by God

because of a special call on his life as a minister to the Gentiles (Romans 15:16). He trusts the Corinthians to bear with him as he lays forth the reasons that they must respect his authority and reject the accusations of those who exalt themselves based upon the commendation of men rather than that of God. Paul cares greatly about the purity of the Corinthians because it was he that led them to Christ as the bride of Christ. He wants the Groom to be totally satisfied and fulfilled in His bride, so Paul is very driven to make sure that the Corinthians walk in holiness. This is a godly motive, not a man-centered one.

**3But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**

**4For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.**

The gospel is simple and straightforward (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), and this is what Paul had given to them. But he was afraid that perhaps the devil had deceived some of them as he had deceived Eve, leading them away from the simple and pure gospel to cleverly-devised tales and fables. Paul's fear is that they will receive a false gospel, a different Jesus, or a different spirit leading to a corrupted lifestyle. He wanted them to be steadfast, holding to precisely the same gospel that he had preached to them. Since the stakes are so high here, he must defend his credibility as an apostle so that the Corinthians can be sure that his gospel is the one and only true gospel.

**5For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.**

**6But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.**

Paul does not consider himself inferior to even the most well-known and well-respected apostles. Some have disrespected him simply because they think he is not a good speaker, which perhaps he wasn't or perhaps he wasn't according to their view of what defined good speaking. After all, he had decided not to wax eloquent but to simply declare the gospel so that their faith would not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Perhaps Paul could have impressed with his speech if he had wanted to. He was highly educated and knowledgeable, but he chose not to draw attention to himself but to the gospel message itself. It should have been clear to the Corinthians one way or another that Paul was very knowledgeable about the Word and about mankind in general. He had a lot of wisdom from the Lord, and surely they should have been able to perceive this. This spiritual wisdom is what should be expected of an apostle of God, and Paul certainly was this.

**7Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?**

**8I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you;**

**9and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.**

Paul did not sin by not accepting a gift from the Corinthians and by choosing to supply his own need by working (1 Corinthians 9:15). Some might have accused him of being a false teacher simply because he didn't take money, which the culture would have thought would have made him more credible. Paul, in great humility, didn't take money so as not to offend anyone or to cause them to think that he might be ministering for the sake of money. Yet the false teachers tried to deceive the people that even Paul's humility wasn't humility but incompetence. Paul sacrificed because he loved these believers, and he used support that he received from other churches (e.g. Philippians 4:15-16) to support himself. So there is no credible reason to argue that he was not worth listening to because he didn't demand money. Even when Paul was with the Corinthians during a time of need, he didn't seek their support, but he rather took it from other Macedonian believers. In everything he kept himself from being a burden to the church at Corinth, and his intention was to continue to do so. In a culture that exalted the strong, powerful, rich, and well-known, Paul continued to demonstrate that he was willing to become weak for the sake of Christ, even poor and unappreciated, so that the gospel could be unimpeded in its progress. It was not about Paul but about Christ, and Paul did not want to take money in case that message wouldn't be understood.

**10As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.**

**11Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!**

**12But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.**

Paul will continue to declare the gospel of Christ and to exercise his apostolic authority in the churches in Macedonia and Achaia. He will not stop because he loves those whom he is serving, and God knows that also. Paul will continue to speak authoritatively no matter what people might say because he knows it is for the best of those who hear. He must do this because he loves them lest the false teachers exalt themselves such that the people accept their falsities on the same level as Paul's truths. Paul must condemn them and defend the truth and his right to give it. The false teachers wanted to usurp Paul's authority, but Paul was going to demand otherwise lest the people get led astray and respect the wrong people.

**13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.**

**14No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.**

**15Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.**



Those who preached a different gospel and attacked Paul's apostleship and authority were false apostles and deceitful workers, making themselves out to be apostles when they really weren't. They hadn't been commissioned and called by God to preach the gospel, and they didn't even preach the gospel. Yet they tried to deceive the people into following them, which required them to trick the people into not trusting Paul. Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. He doesn't show people that he is evil, horrific, and trying to destroy them, but he comes in as a gentle wolf in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), undermining faith without people even realizing what is happening, even in the church. Therefore, the false teachers who serve the devil also follow the devil's example of deception and act as servants of light when in reality they are servants of darkness. They will be judged according to the evil deeds as will the devil (Revelation 20:10-15).

**16**Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little.

**17**What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

**18**Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.

**19**For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

**20**For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

**21**To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison But in whatever respect anyone else is bold--I speak in foolishness--I am just as bold myself.

Paul is forced to speak in terms of folly in that he must boast about his authority in Christ in order to refute the self-exaltation of the false teachers. This he does not so as to boast in himself or for vain glory but in order to protect the Corinthians from going after the false teachers. Paul did not enjoy pointing out his qualifications, but it was necessary in this instance for the sake of the preservation of the church at Corinth. The Corinthians trusted in their "wisdom" which wasn't true wisdom but the wisdom of the world which led them into getting deceived and taken advantage of by the false teachers. They tolerated the foolish teaching and treatment of the false teachers rather than standing up for righteousness and purity in Christ. They allowed themselves to be enslaved by bondage to lies and sin rather than being free in Christ. They allowed themselves to be devoured and destroyed by succumbing to false teaching and its devastating effects. They allowed themselves to be easily deceived and exploited so that the false teachers could gain power and influence. They allowed the false teachers to be exalted in their midst in outright blasphemy against Christ, and they allowed themselves to be utterly humiliated in the process. They yielded themselves to the false power and influence of false teachers who took over control of the church rather than resisting them and defending the truth. They did whatever they said as if they were mindless slaves of these men, and it is even possible that they let themselves get literally struck in the face, though the phrase is more likely figurative and communicating humiliation.

Paul's "foolishness" by comparison has been weak in that he has not attempted to get the people to follow and exalt him. His purpose has been to preach Christ and to be a

servant, not one who lorded his authority over them, mistreating the people and humiliating them. Rather, he tried to edify them and encourage them in Christ. If the Corinthians were going to view this foolishness as “boldness,” then Paul had some “boldness” of his own to offer.

**22Are they Hebrews? So am I Are they Israelites? So am I Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.**

**23Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.**

**24Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.**

**25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.**

**26I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;**

**27I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.**

**28Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.**

If the false teachers bragged about being descendants of Abraham, Jews according to the flesh, so was Paul. If they thought they were servants of Christ, which Paul obviously doesn't believe them to be, so is Paul, in fact, even more so based on criteria that the false teachers would never relate to. Paul had suffered greatly for the sake of the gospel unlike the false teachers. Paul toiled much harder for the gospel than they ever did, he was in prison far more, beaten far more, and often in danger of death. If he was seeking popularity and power, why would he allow these things to happen to him? Clearly, he wasn't seeking comfort but the truth. Five times he received beatings from the Jews, the customary thirty-nine lashes to go above and beyond the requirements of Deuteronomy 25:1-3. Three times he was beaten with rods, the Roman beating. Once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, and once he was in peril of drowning for a day and a night in the open sea. He has traveled extensively through dangerous terrain, in danger of rivers that could wash him away and robbers who would attack and plunder him. His own Jewish people attacked him often as did the Gentiles. He was in danger in the wilderness, at sea, and from false teachers, as in this case. Sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, exposed to the cold, and the pressure of shepherding the churches were his “bragging” points. If the false teachers wanted him to play the game of “credentials,” then Paul would “win” it by explaining all of his suffering for the sake of the gospel.

**29Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?**

**30If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.**

If anybody is weak, Paul was, given how much he sacrificed and suffered. Paul also was a very concerned shepherd in that if anybody was led into sin, Paul would be concerned about it. His life demonstrated his commitment to the churches and to the Lord, and there

was no reason to discredit him as not being a person of integrity. The false teachers sought power while Paul sought servanthood and humility. His “weakness” stood in condemnation of their “strength.”

**31The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.**

**32In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,**

**33and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.**

Before God, Paul could say this because he knew he was not lying. Even in this foolish emphasis of his own life and suffering, he was sure to bless God and Christ Who alone deserves all praise and blessing forever. Paul’s life was not about Paul but about the Lord. To put the icing on the cake in terms of proving his authenticity and credibility as a humble servant of the Lord, Paul mentioned the time when he was let down over a wall in a basket to preserve his life from the authorities seeking him (Acts 9:23-25). His own countrymen stirred up even the secular authorities to seek the life of Paul. Despite all of this opposition, still Paul loved the church and tried to bring the gospel to them, thereby demonstrating his commitment and the absence of any false motives. Paul believed that recounting how much the world hated him would remind the Corinthians that he was a true apostle of the Christ Whom the world also hated.

## **2 Corinthians 12**

**1Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.**

**2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven.**

**3And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows--**

**4was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.**

Paul again explains that he doesn’t enjoy having to boast about his apostleship and authority, for he would rather speak of the Lord. Yet it is necessary in order to keep the Corinthians from following the false apostles. Thus, he decides to tell them of his visions and revelations from the Lord, something a true apostle would have experienced while a false one would not have. It pains him to even speak of himself as having the vision, given that he doesn’t want to make himself the focus. Thus, he speaks of his experience in the third person, though it is clear that he is speaking of himself (v. 7). He says he was caught up into the very presence of God into heaven. Whether in the body or not, he didn’t know, and it didn’t much matter. The important thing was that Paul witnessed paradise firsthand and heard words from God that he wasn’t allowed to speak or share

with others. What these words were was not the point, but the point was that Paul had the chance to be in the very presence of God and to witness things pertaining to utter holiness.

**5On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.**

**6For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.**

Paul speaks of himself in the third person because he would prefer to only boast in his weakness given his appreciation for the glory, holiness, and jealousy of God. Paul wasn't lying to share this glorious vision, but he didn't care to draw attention to himself, only to the Lord. He chose not to share any more lest people would think more highly of him than they ought. Paul made it his purpose simply to declare the truth and not to exalt himself or make himself the focus. Paul wanted to be known only as a messenger of truth and a vessel of Christ. Christ was to be the focus and the glory.

**7Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!**

**8Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.**

In fact, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh in order to keep him from exalting himself. This points to Paul's vulnerability and human weakness, and thus he is not trying to brag about his own strength. It also shows how much God loves him that He would go to extreme measures to keep Paul from becoming arrogant and thus unusable for His purposes. The revelations and visions were so wonderful that God had to send a messenger of Satan to torment him. The word "torment" literally means to "strike with the fist" or to "maltreat with violence." So Paul clearly suffered as a result of this harsh treatment which God ordained and allowed a demon to orchestrate. God knew that suffering in the flesh would be good for Paul, for as Peter says, those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin (1 Peter 4:1). Sometimes God ordains suffering and allows Satan to torment us so that we remain weak, which allows God to use us and show Himself strong through us. If we start bragging about ourselves as if we are the main event or can rely in our own strength, we have robbed God of worship and glory. God graciously kept Paul from doing this by allotting suffering for him, not more than he could handle with God's grace but just enough (1 Corinthians 10:13). Paul prayed three times to the Lord, begging that God would take the pain away, but God's answer was "no." God knew this was best for Paul, and so he let the suffering continue.

**9And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness " Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**

**10Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

God's explanation to Paul for why He didn't take the suffering away was so that Paul would demonstrate faith and trust in the sufficiency of God's grace to sustain him through it. It made him weaker and weaker so that he couldn't turn to his flesh and trust in himself. He could only turn to Christ for strength, and thus, even in this time of great weakness, Paul could be used powerfully of the Lord. God's power is always perfected in weakness because it keeps us out of the way so that God can show Himself strong and work through yielded, pliable vessels. So if Paul was going to boast, it would be in weakness, not in the supposed strength of his own humanity. His boast would be that God loved him enough to weaken him so that God could be seen as strong in and through him. Paul's ministry legacy was not about his personal presence or speaking ability because he chose to be weak, but it was about God's power which worked extraordinarily through a man who made himself ordinary by faith as God worked in his heart to make him weak. So Paul could take joy and contentment from weakness, insult, distress, persecution, difficulty, and all suffering for Christ's sake because these were the times when he was really strong by faith in Christ. When he was weak according to the flesh, he could be strong in spirit. God delights in showcasing His strength and power through those who by faith recognize that they have none. This is God's way, and God gets the glory.

**11I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.**

**12The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.**

**13For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!**

So Paul bragged, though he bragged about his own weakness as a means of criticizing those who boasted in their own strength, namely the false apostles. The reality is that the Corinthians should know the truth such that Paul shouldn't have been forced to prove his apostleship at all. They had seen that he wasn't inferior to the other true apostles and certainly when compared to the false apostles in that he had performed signs, wonders, and miracles among the people. This was to be expected of a true apostle, and Paul did these things. Furthermore, he treated the Corinthians with great love and care such that he didn't even take money from them. In no way did he treat the Corinthians worse than other churches, particularly given that he used the support of other churches to fund his service for them. Sarcastically, he asks them to forgive him for doing that wrong of genuine service to them.

**14Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.**

**15I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls If I love you more, am I to be loved less?**

Paul first visited the Corinthians in Acts 18. His second visit would have led to the harsh rebuke, namely the book of 1 Corinthians. He almost came another time (2 Corinthians 2:1), but he decided not to given that he was concerned that he would have to be harsh again. Now, he has planned a third time to come to the Corinthians. Again, his pledge is that he will not burden them financially by taking any funds from them. He is not interested in their material possessions but in their hearts. Just as parents save money for their children and not children for their parents, so too, Paul, as their spiritual parent, did not want them to save money for him. He would gladly spend himself in order to contribute to the well-being of their souls. So, given how much he loved them, he could certainly have demanded that they pay him his due support, but he wasn't going to do that because of his love for them.

**16But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.**

**17Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?**

**18I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?**

Paul did not exercise his right as an apostle to take support, but still some might have said that he was being crafty because he asked Titus to take money. Yet clearly he had not taken advantage of them through the brothers whom he sent to them. Titus did not take advantage of them, and neither did Paul. They both acted in good faith before the Lord.

**19All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.**

**20For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;**

**21I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.**

Paul is not defending himself to them, but his purpose is to edify them in the Lord because they need to be rescued from the deceit of the false apostles. Thus, Paul's purpose in this discourse was to point the Corinthians to God, not to focus on his own apostleship. He did speak of his authority as an apostles because he was afraid that they might not continue in obedience and in sound doctrine but that they might fall away into strife, division, jealousy, anger, slander, gossip, arrogance, and other confusions, commotions, and tumults. Where there was order and unity, Paul was afraid that it would be all destroyed because of the false teachers. This would humiliate Paul in that it would

make him feel as if he had failed the Lord in shepherding the flock. Paul fears that he would come and see many still in immorality, impurity, and sensuality, things he had rebuked them for previously. This would cause him to grieve and mourn greatly, and because he doesn't want this to happen, he defends his authority to them. In defending his apostleship, he defends the truth about the gospel and Christ so that he can exhort the Corinthians to live in holiness.

## **2 Corinthians 13**

**1This is the third time I am coming to you EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.**

**2I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone,**

**3since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.**

Paul is going to come to the Corinthians a third time, and he is going to address all issues of sin, sparing no one. He will not put a person out of the fellowship unless there are two or three witnesses to prove his or her guilt. But Paul wants all of them to know that sin will be addressed when he comes, which will serve as a demonstration of the strength and power of Christ which works in and through his weakness. Christ is not weak but mighty, and He will reveal where the sin is and what needs to be changed. Those who don't repent will be disciplined by the church as they are removed from fellowship.

**4For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.**

Christ was crucified because of weakness in that He willingly submitted Himself to the plan of God, allowing Himself to be crucified by men who deemed themselves stronger than Him. Yet He demonstrated that He has all power when He rose from the dead. As believers, we are weak in Him, choosing to suffer with Him and be mocked by the world. Yet we will live with Him for eternity by the power of God, the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

**5Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?**

**6But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.**

Paul wants the Corinthians to be introspective before he comes to them. He wants them to determine whether they are saved or not and whether they are walking according to the faith or not. Either Jesus is in them or not. If they are saved, He is. If they are not saved, He is not. Those who have Christ in them should be known by love (1 John 4:7-8) and by the fact that they don't continue practicing sin (1 John 3:9). It is imperative that every

person comes to a place where they know where they stand before God. Believers should rest in their relationship with God Who will keep them until the end (1 John 5:13).

**7Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved.**

**8For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.**

**9For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.**

**10For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.**

Paul prays that the Corinthians repent and stop sinning. This is not because he wants the Corinthians to follow him for his own ego's sake, but it is that he wants them to obey God and live in righteousness for their own well-being and for the glory of God. He is on the side of truth, and he wants them to be on that side as well. What is true will be true, no matter how many deceptions and lies there are floating around. The truth can't be stopped because Christ will build His church (Matthew 16:18). We must guard ourselves lest we oppose the truth and thereby fall under its condemnation. We can't stop the truth from being true, but we can receive rewards from the Lord if we participate in the advancement of His truth. Paul rejoices when he sees the Corinthians strong in the Lord, even if he must suffer greatly in order to see it done. He desires that they grow to maturity in Christ and that the church continues to be sustained and sanctified in Corinth. Paul says that he writes this letter now correcting them so that he doesn't have to come to them in severity yet again and use the authority which he has been given to set things straight in the church, though he will if he must (v. 2). He doesn't want to have to rebuke and tear down when he visits, but he would rather build the Corinthians up, enjoying good fellowship in the Lord all the while.

**11Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

Paul concludes this letter by commanding the church to rejoice, grow to maturity, be comforted, be like-minded, and at peace. This will only happen if they repent of sin and stop listening to the false teachers. They must listen to Paul's teaching if they want to have joy. As they obey and humble themselves, God will give them peace and enable love to overflow through them to one another and to the world in need.

They have pushed God away by their sin and error, and God will be with them to bless them and help them if only they will seek Him by obeying His commands (James 4:8).

**12Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

The holy kiss was a customary greeting in this culture that was between men or between women. There was nothing immoral or sensual about it, but it was akin to a handshake or hug. It was holy in that it was not corrupt and not tied to pagan practices.



**13All the saints greet you.**

**14The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.**

Finally, Paul passes on the greetings of the saints from other churches. He prays that the grace of Jesus, Who is Lord of all and the Messiah, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be with them. If they obey, they can expect to know God's love and to be overflowing with it. They can expect to be showered with the grace of Christ to be able to do good works, and they can expect that the Holy Spirit will comfort them, commune with them, lead them, and create a unity among them. All members of the Trinity will be at work in them, but they must first repent and draw near to God. God is always eager to bless and bestow sufficient grace to His people as they turn to Him in faith.

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