



Much could be included in an introduction to II Corinthians, realizing it is an oft quoted resource. The underlying purpose and focus of this letter is built around a few basic concepts. First, Paul is defending his apostleship throughout, because some had come to Corinth looking to “outdo” Paul. Verses such as II Cor. 10:10 Paul describes what he has heard said of him, and that, degrading him (and this is in the context of the infamous point that comparing ourselves among ourselves is not a wise practice). Paul must defend himself, not because he is concerned for his personal reputation, but because those boasting themselves “better” than Paul are doing so to gain a hearing and a following with their distortions of the Gospel. Paul did not desire to see them swayed into error (because of its ultimate danger to their souls and growth), and in so doing we have a variety of sections where we will learn and be taught along with these Corinthians. The importance of the integrity of what we are taught and that of the ministries we participate should be considered highest priority.

Paul had also, at this point, been discouraged because he was not sure where his friend in the ministry, Titus was (II Cor. 2:13). Part way into this letter we see the thrill and waves of encouragement that comes over him as he finally sees Titus (II Cor. 7:6, indicating this encouragement comes from God Who “comforts the downcast”). Part of Paul’s discouragement is also caused by not only their questioning his apostleship, but even his motives in not coming to them directly, and this magnified in their apparent “buying into” what the false teachers were promoting. It is common for such to seek to discredit the message by discrediting the messenger. Interestingly, Paul does not build himself up, but instead, details God’s work in him to make him “adequate” (3:6), and goes on to describe the glories of the true Gospel and, in so doing, demonstrates the numerous flaws of what these other teachers are declaring. He defends his/their approach to the Scriptures in chapter 4 which would lead us to believe that these other teachers are using deceptive methods and interpretive approaches to make their points (which has been an enemy throughout each generation of Church history).

Rather than being ashamed of his sufferings, Paul lays them out as points of honor and uses the discussion to remind them of what is coming (chapter 5) versus living for the “now” and all the comforts and “safe zones” it can provide. He goes on to push personal purity/holiness not being “bound” to unbelievers, instead “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (7:1). To support this, he encourages them not only in their personal walk, but in their ministerial “walk” by encouraging them to prepare for his coming by readying their gift for the impoverished and persecuted Christians in Judea (and that from the all churches in Macedonia that were suffering themselves), chapter 8. In defense of himself, we learn of his “thorn in the flesh” and his prayer to have it removed. Yet (in chapter 12) he tells of the gracious answer from the Lord that “My grace is sufficient” and that His power “is made perfect in weakness”. The letter ends with Paul’s challenged to them to “test yourselves” to scrutinize whether or not they are “in the faith”. The most dangerous form of deception is self deception!

I. An Encouraging Greeting In The Face of Suffering - 1:1-11

A. Paul’s greeting to the church - vs. 1-2

1. “Paul an apostle” - these few words actually hold more significance in this letter than might be initially realized - since his apostleship was apparently in question by many in the church; this reality (as he uses the title here) is essential

Even if a messenger is proven to be of poor character or deceptive does not necessarily mean the message is to be rejected - clearly one of Satan’s tactics is to discredit the Truth by means of those outwardly standing with the Truth and yet being found to lack integrity themselves

- a. As referenced in the introduction, there is a natural tendency to discredit a message because the messenger is “discredited” in our eyes - and part of this “natural tendency” will be heightened when we do not like the message we are hearing
- b. Paul will stress the reality of his apostleship, and the overall integrity of his ministry for the Lord, and while doing it, stress the contents of “the message” as well
- c. His authority is in “Jesus Christ” for an “apostle” is literally a messenger sent to bear/distribute the message of another in authority over them

Paul did not seek approval nor vindication from people - he served them as he served Christ, for the will of God and not subject to the will of man in these things

Timothy could serve as another witness as to their need to hear what Paul was sending them - as the Lord laid out in Mt. 18, other witnesses should be brought in when dealing with the faults of another believer

These are more to be identified with their association with Christ and their commonness in that than they are in their being Corinthians - conformity to their age and culture was not in the "scope" of their life purpose

Those who live unaware of the source of these seek favor and peace in the wrong places, from the wrong sources! The "favor" of man comes at a cost (one subject to change and with the possibility of being revoked at any time) and "peace" apart from God is an ever elusive goal, and its counterfeits become less than satisfying and non-lasting replacements

"The English word comfort is from the Latin *confortis* (brave together)." RWP

When we entertain thoughts of deserving better, even little troubles become excruciating

We are not released from stress to relax, but are so "freed" to serve others

d. His position as an Apostle in Christ, is so, by means of the "will of God" (in contrast to his own will or the will of men) - this is needed, partly so, because his authority was being questioned by men - those who see their authority coming from "men" (those that are sent to serve for Christ) are likely to look to "men" for direction

e. Paul references Timothy in the greeting as "the brother" (Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός) - Timothy had been sent to them (I Cor. 16:10), so they would have known him - it is possible also that Paul references him in answering some of their objections against himself, that he had sent Timothy (not desiring they be neglected) and also to lend more authority in this letter (since Timothy would have provided an account of how things were in Corinth)

2. "To the church of God" - vs. 1b

a. We get used to the language and phrasing used here in verse 1 and are apt to skim over it, failing to consider its significance - the "Church" is God's which must serve as an ongoing reminder that we are accountable in our participation in it

b. Then it is plainly put that, as part of the church, these are then "saints" - here it is also for "all the saints" (τοῖς ἁγίοις) in Achaia - put together, considering the actual words used, it is "to all the ones called out (Church) who are set apart ones (saints)"

c. We are a gathering of redeemed believers more than we are families and citizens

3. "Grace and peace to you from God..." - vs. 2

a. This is the common salutation from Paul to Churches serving not just as a greeting, but also as a reminder of where both of these gifts come from - "grace" is favor given to the undeserving (but **real** favor none the less), and peace is a calmness (peace of mind, even containing the idea of contentment)

b. The source of such being, "God our Father", and such a relationship to the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth is made-so through the "Lord Jesus Christ"

c. These are essential to have always with us, since the absence of them (or the belief we are lacking them) will cause us to seek them elsewhere - the "peace" He gives is "not as the world gives" (John 14:27), since His is lasting and based on His immutability

B. The "God of all comfort" comforts in all afflictions - vs. 3-11

1. The first word Paul uses of God in his introduction to his account of suffering is "Εὐλογητὸς," typically translated "blessed", though it describes more God's being "good for it" (that being praise) - if anyone should be praised (honored) it is He

a. There are numerous things, people, and ideas that are given such "admiration" but, in the "long-run," they are not good for it (worthy of it)

b. It is significant that Paul is beginning a brief section dealing with suffering (his suffering be quite substantial) and this with praise of God (not questioning Him)

2. He (God) is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", not just given for the purpose to support the doctrine of the trinity, but to serve as a reminder who exactly it is that is ruler of the universe (**even He who allows** the suffering Paul faced) - vs. 3

a. Having come to know more of the Lord Jesus Christ (the promised one of God), they should also then see Him (the Father) in light of His mercy and being the source of true comfort

b. The phrase used is "πάσης παρακλήσεως" literally stating God the Father as "the whole of comfort" or "the fulfillment of all types of comfort", and "comfort" being "to call to one's side" thus to stand with them in what **must** be faced (though much of suffering is made more painful because we expect we ought never suffer, not seeing it as a necessity of life - see I Pet. 1:3-9)

c. So, God is the "Father of mercies" (not giving us what we rightfully deserve, for even in suffering, we **deserve** much worse than what we face), and "God of all comfort" (for there will be others made-out to be a "god" that offer pseudo-comfort)

3. God "comforts" so we can comfort others - vs. 4

a. He stands with us in ALL our "afflictions" (the wording being θλίψει ἡμῶν, picturing all our pressures, the troubles/challenges to us that would hem us in (corner us))

b. This is done, for our relief/aid, but for the purpose to do the same that was done to us by God to/for others suffering "affliction"

The suffering is part of bringing encouragement (comfort)- it is not rare to come across those who are without joy even though their lives seem relatively free of "affliction"

Not that we need to suffer the same "affliction", just that we need to have been comforted (challenged) in ours

It is not the comfort we have to give as much as it is the comfort we ourselves have been given

As Saul was asked in Acts 9:4 "why are you persecuting me?" by Christ - Paul was persecuting Christians

Many man-made causes come to a quick end when there is no willingness to suffer for it - few other realities lend weight to a movement as much as the willingness and actuality of suffering for it - many Christians are unwilling to suffer for their association with Christ

This is a core work (responsibility) of being a Christian - we are encouragers (to "stay with it") in times of trouble (and distractions) as well as standing with each other through pressures, as God has done with us

To successfully escape such pressures/endurance, would be to miss-out on the truest comfort

And such fearful living produces a steady, non-stop stress of its own, where "comfort" is more seen in less stress than no stress

- c. It is important to note that the word for "comfort" is far more than something to numb the pain or a "hammock" of sorts to let us reach a state of relaxing; instead it is also "... emboldening another in belief or course of action..." (BDAG)
- d. So we are to **encourage** others in their hurts/troubles and pressures because we are so encouraged by the "God of all encouragement" - we are often less likely to seek out those needing comfort when we ourselves cannot escape pressure
- e. The reason for the comfort in ALL affliction is to enable us to comfort others in ANY affliction - suffering of all sorts is a vital part of our growth (in a sin-infected world) because of what we learn, the disciplines that are developed, the character and integrity that are grown into us by them, and then the scope of our ministry of comfort/support increases
- f. The source and content of this "comfort" is key - those who yield to despair and **resolved pessimism** have nothing of use to share - we are comforted "through Christ" (all that is associated with Him, His example and our position in Him) as well as (in the upcoming verses) "patient enduring"

4. The "sufferings of Christ are ours" as is His comfort - vs. 5-7

- a. "For" starts an explanation that needs to be carried all the way through, to understand this seemingly odd start - how would it be considered comforting to be told that the "sufferings of Christ" are ours "in abundance"?
- b. The sense is along the lines of "there is an overflow of the sufferings of Christ that overflow to/on us" - these are not sufferings that are needed to finish His work; these are the sufferings of association with Christ (any and all costs of being one of His and like Him)
- c. The advantage here though, is that in the abundance of the troubles and hardships we face as we follow Christ, **so we have in like amount** (abundance) comfort "through Christ"
- d. Christ suffered doing the will of the Father (as will we), yet what an encouragement to know that there is such purpose in all our suffering with/for Him!
- e. The "no-lose" scenario (a "win-win") - Paul clarifies that if they are afflicted it is "for your comfort and salvation" - they are comforted (encouraged) for "... the sufferings one man endures for a good cause are the source of profit to others." (Cambridge Bible) and they are so **emboldened in the worthiness of "the cause"**
- f. Yet the practical purpose for Paul's suffering was for their "consolation" (encouragement), he suffering in various ways in bringing the Gospel to them and standing with the Truth, so as to bring to them the way of salvation - and much of his suffering (apart from what he is about to share) came even from their midst - sadly, running from such suffering is not conducive to leading others to "salvation"
- g. And then, as part of the "win-win", if Paul is comforted (encouraged) it is such as will be shared with them, comforting them - encouragement begets encouragement just as discouragement tends to beget discouragement in others - we don't strive for encouragement just for ourselves, but for the sake of those around us
- h. Ironically, this type of deep, enduring encouragement is only to be had in suffering - for such comfort is "effective" (ἐνεργουμένης ἐν ὑπομονῇ, working in endurance) as one is patiently living through the troubles - see Heb. 12:11
- i. So, with this as truth, Paul can say with confidence that his expectation is secure in the reality that as they are led into sharing the same sufferings Paul and his team were facing (because of Christ), so they would get to share in this exceptional encouragement
- j. How is this all possible? It will not be fully known until lived, but we can at least see that if one is **able to face** what they would expect would be too difficult, too fearful and painful, then they would be immensely encouraged, since so many live their lives afraid of such sufferings, not seeing them as endurable - see also James 1:2-4, II Thes. 1:4-7

5. Pushed beyond their ability to handle the ordeal - vs. 8-11

- a. We need to understand that Paul is about to deal with the apparent complaints that were directed at him for not coming as he had planned to come to them - their criticism was not taking into account the trouble Paul and his team were facing - had they known, they should have been less likely to be so critical and "hard" on him
- b. We must not be hard on others because they are unable to encourage us!

- His explanation of the account shows his valuing them versus a "just get over it!" reaction
- Oddly enough, some clarity of a concept is lost when too many details are provided
- The wording is "ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ δύναμιν" exceeding above power/strength
- They were brought to a point where they were preparing to be killed (to die) - such severity should motivate us to pay close attention to what such a man would say regarding comfort and the purpose for such trials
- "... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22
- Those who do not ever truly contemplate their own death will not come to realize the significance of the time and life they currently have
- "How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none." Tozer
- Prayer is to be seen by us as not only an essential part of how we look for things to be done, but also as a significant part of our ministry while here on the Earth - we must not look for things to occur or seek to do things for God without prayer!
- No part of the work of God is insignificant! This is part of the drive in us to desire to be a part of as much of His work as possible, for it is all eternally productive! All else is temporal at best and will perish with time and decay
- c. His beginning of verse 8 is almost as though he is telling them that it took exceptional circumstances to divert him from his plans to be with them - "we do not want you to be unaware brethren" (ἀδελφοί indicating them as family)
- d. He references an "affliction" that "came on them" (γενομένης, aorist middle) when in Asia - there is a great deal written speculating what this is referring to, but this is not necessary to understanding what is being taught - the speculations have focused on the possibility of this being a psychological/emotional struggle, or the pressures of the strained relationships of ministry or the persecutions of their enemies - all three concepts should be included in this discussion for these truths cover **all** aspects of suffering
- e. This "burden" was beyond their strength to handle it - the wording in the Greek picturing a weight too heavy for them to bear - this helps clarify that when we are told that the grace of God will always be sufficient in all trials, that this grace is quite often reached as we are taken beyond our natural ability to cope with such stress
- f. It was so excessive and overwhelming that they "despaired for life" (as in they thought they were going to die) - this is not the despair that turns on God (see 4:8) - this "sentence" was "within them" indicating this was what they concluded themselves; they were facing death as best as they could determine
- g. The positive result (though thrust upon them) was that they would not "trust" themselves (be persuaded, convinced of themselves), but their focus of faith would be on God "who raises the dead" - and such is the focused hope of the believer; that at the worst we can face in this life (death), there is far greater hope to be had (to look forward to) - we are NEVER without hope! - also, as a fine point of theology, God raises "the dead" (so death is necessary (normally) for resurrection) - if we would never die as we are, we would never be "raised to the full newness of life" - vs. 9
- h. "The church at Corinth, like many another since, thought it could bypass affliction on the way to comfort; the theme of the epistle is that this is impossible (cf. Acts xiv.22). Christian discipline means, for an apostle and for the church as a whole, a progressive weakening of man's instinctive self-confidence, and of the self-despair to which this leads, and the growth of radical confidence in God." C.K. Barrett
- i. Paul appears to compare this particular deliverance from death as a type of resurrection from the dead (and such "brushes with death" which typically leads to, at the very least, a new outlook on life) - vs. 10 - and God will continue to deliver them from death (for as long as it will be required - for their death will not depend upon the "will of man" but only upon God's will and timing)
- j. Again, we do not know what account this is referencing, but Paul describes it as "ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου" (out of so **great** (mighty) death) - it was especially horrible in some way that it stood out as significant to one who had many other "brushes with death"
- k. "If many will intercede on our behalf, many will be bringing their thanksgiving to God" - this looks to be the overall intended point of verse 11 - Paul urges them to participate (join him) in helping by means of intercessory prayer (δεήσει) - those that had been praying would understand and would be giving thanks to God for their deliverance - the ongoing practice would continue to add to the number of those literally turning their faces to God for His goodness
- l. This statement could have served as a subtle rebuke to those who not only had not been praying for Paul, and who had been opposing him in their church
- m. Prayer is one of the key ways in which we all are united in any ministry/calling - many are (or have become) independent in their "walk with God" to the exclusion of the church - this was never the intended purpose for any of us!
- n. Paul is about to essentially defend himself to them and make a case for his integrity (in the upcoming verses), warding off any obstacles to their looking to be fellow-workers in the work of God in Corinth
- o. Paul had already described the extreme difficulty he and his team had faced, which should have begun to "soften" them toward him - for whatever reason, many at Corinth had come to dislike Paul and looked on him as discredited

II. Lives of Integrity, Not in “Fleshly Wisdom” but by God’s Grace - 1:12-24

A. “Personal pride” in the best way - vs. 12

1. The word for “proud” is “καύχησις” describing a glorying or boasting in something - “pride” is almost always used in a negative sense, but in this context it is used by Paul to portray what he finds **contentment** (self-satisfaction/fulfillment) in

In such societies “empty pretenders” become the norm - each lives in the fear of being discovered to be “less” than they put forward, so a mutual protection of hypocrisy becomes the “moral”; so the “immoral” are those who live-by and “push” integrity

- a. It seems to be a natural course of life to pursue points of personal “pride” in things that are vain or that one really cannot take any “credit” for
- b. The seemingly odd start to this section is likely in response to what would be expected by many in the Corinthian church - they were looking for him to be ashamed of himself (for their own deduced purposes) - yet he comes at them “proud” of his integrity (by God’s grace) - **such a concept often gets lost in the goals of a facade-building society**

2. How they (Paul and his team) “conducted” themselves “in the world” was key

see also 1 Tim. 1:18-20 - and consciences can become “defiled” (see Titus 1:15); this is the danger and result of fighting conscience (searing conscience as seen in 1 Tim. 4:1-5) - and in this case, it is seared (dead-ened) with self-righteousness

- a. Paul took satisfaction in the witness of a good/clear conscience - this is a rare find because it is typical to get so used-to disregarding conviction (guilt) and the sense of duty (small a great), that it would take a great deal of pressure to get one motivated to change (repent) and responsive to the ongoing “pricks of conscience” to restrain from vanity and be turned to “focus on God-given **responsibility** (purpose)
- b. What was his conscience “testifying” to? His “simplicity” (ἀγιότητα), his singleness of purpose/focus, and that he was genuinely not double-minded - he was not controlled by the distracting influences competing for his time, attention and resources (therefore he did not have multiple motives) in his behavior (in how he conducted himself)
- c. His behavior was also characterized as (driven to be) “Godly sincerity” (that is the sincerity God approves) as in pure, unadulterated (found to be what it “puts itself out to be”) so no masks or half-truths are needed (no “spin” is required) - apparently his presentation of what “Godliness” really was, was looked upon to be a “front” for some other agenda (which is common in much of society) - his conscience bore witness that this was real and no facade - this he could “celebrate” for there is significant freedom in living and facing life when there is **nothing** to hide!
- d. This was done (lived-out) “not in fleshly wisdom” (by means of it) but by God’s grace - his integrity was not caused by “worldly cleverness” or natural instinct (for these will not lead one to genuine integrity of unshakable values) - and Paul was consistent whether “in the world” (with those outside the Church) as well as these believers

ἀγιότητα is translated “holiness” in the NASB and part of true holiness is freedom from “pretence”

Genuine sincerity is difficult to find - many feign it as well act (for instance) in their pursuit of truth that they actually desire to find it - Paul really was focused on true truth and lived as “transparent” as possible

The world does have WYSIWYG people, but what you get is not of lasting/best value - humanity needs Godliness but Godliness cannot have “humanism” and still be “Godly”

B. Don’t “read in between the lines” and understand fully (not partially) - vs. 13-14

1. Paul is looking to essentially say something along the lines of , “Come on! You know me/us!”

Such conflicts arise when priorities revolve around “self” rather than God and His cause/purpose

- a. As stressed previously, the issue of division in churches (amongst believers) leads to many using such divisions, doubts and open conflicts, as a way of disqualifying the message taught/preached - at the very least, such is a distraction to learning and implementing it (**relationship** conflicts can stifle growth, if not confronted)
- b. In this context, Paul was having to deal with those (for whatever reason) who had come to distrust him and his motives, and this was becoming a profound distraction - this is typical with us (left to our own motives and pride), where we get so frustrated with the inconsistencies we see/perceive in others, that we become disenchanted with “Christianity” altogether (though not legitimate)

Even with significant inconsistencies in “Christian” arenas, it does not disqualify Scripture - the unfaithfulness of others will never excuse our unfaithfulness!

2. Yet, Paul clarifies, what he had and was writing, was consistent and something they could understand - there were no “hidden meanings” in what was being/had been written

Plain texts of the Bible become unreasonable and more complex than they need to be, because of the influence of prejudicial biases, where “self” is the final authority and not God’s Word

- a. When distrust affects our listening (in this case, invalid distrust), basic understanding is set aside and what normally would be plain/clear becomes obscure and undecipherable
- b. This response is seen in those who cannot accept the Gospel at face value, because they do not trust the work of God in Christ - as a result, the Gospel texts become cryptic and faith becomes more a work, and received grace becomes a **goal** (versus a gift)
- c. Paul also states that what he wrote they could “understand” (truly know) and his hope for them what that they would continue to “understand” it till “the end” - in other words, that what they had genuinely learned (of Truth), they would not be talked out of (convinced away from) - even the truths about him and his team (and thus, teaching)

Doubt-causers (doubt promoters) cannot be avoided, but they can be fortified-against with proper preparation and anticipation of their tactics

3. Partial understanding of what to be “proud” of - vs. 14

Such “not fully informed opinions” may be caused by impatience, lack of focus or a dislike of parts of what is being taught - this stems for “self” being the final authority of what to believe and submit to

What we “glory in” can be evidenced in our associations - we are to see the predominant relationships to be with those living for the day of the Lord - all others may bring temporary glory but will have long faded when **THE** day has come

Paul was jealous of their devotion, not for his sake, but more for all of theirs - these joint efforts for God here will be what we look back on with the greatest memories

- a. It was apparent to Paul that they were only partially pleased with him and his message (either that they all only were partially convinced or that part of their church liked him)
- b. This found its root in the reality that they only partially understood him, and the full message he was declaring - many negative opinions regarding Scripture stem from the same thing; a partial understanding of it
- c. Paul’s desire was that there would be a realization of the “mutual boasting” they could have of each other at the “day of our Lord Jesus” - this is an indicator that such “glory” will be more in the working relationships we had with each other in the Lord’s work, more than individual “glories” - he desperately desired they could see it this way rather than their apparent desire to keep looking for something/someone better than Paul - this could be related to the issue they had (in I Cor. 1) with being embarrassed with the “preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified”
- d. Notice the perspective the Lord gave His disciples in Mark 10:28-31 (that even in the “present age” there is a **receiving** the precious things we lose for His sake (even family) **back** many times over) - such finds its truest fulfillment when those of the church realize each other as the true family, and our “boasting” (glorying) is sought more in those relationships than even in our earthly families
- e. There is a sense also that much of the rejoicing we will have in that day, will be in the growth and accomplishments (by God’s grace) in others, and our thrill to have been so used in any part of it! This realization helps us stay focused on what we really ought to be hoping to see in each other (growth and thus productivity for the Lord)

C. Though Christ’s servants may seem unfaithful, God is always faithful - vs. 15-22

1. Paul is about to give the reason why he did not fulfill the plans he had written to them in I Cor. 16:5-9 - he was unable to keep to these plans, and now is dealing with some discouragement or disgruntlement it had caused amongst the Corinthian church

Such is not a legitimate case against God’s rightness, but because we deal with people, it must be faced and responded to appropriately

- a. Paul is about to try to ensure that the perceived inconsistency does not affect their perspective of God’s consistency
- b. This is not an unusual problem or issue to face; sadly, it is common for people to “write-off” God because they can point to inconsistencies in His “people”

2. Paul’s defense - vs. 15-16 - he had intended to come to them (as planned) and his plan was such to visit them twice, and so they might “twice receive a blessing”

Being easily hurt by fellow believers is an indication our focus is more on self than it is on others and the Lord - if our “glorying” is in each other (not self), we are less apt to be controlled by the offenses stemming from the feeling of being let-down

- a. Such a “blessing” is likely to have involved their participation in the service to the Christians in Macedonia and then those in Judea
- b. The “confidence” he mentions in verse 15 is along the lines of what he had just been writing - that there was **some** “understanding” of his ministry and message, and so there was also (at least) **some** understanding of the mutual value they were to have in each other - and such assumed value would be expected to protect against offenses that would cause separation or abandonment

3. Paul was not “vacillating” in his inner motive - vs. 17

Our plans and goals with and for each other (when it comes to their encouragement and growth in the Lord) ought always to be made with utmost seriousness - but there must always be an allowance for the intervention of God’s will **over** ours

- a. He was clearly dealing with their frustration with his not fulfilling the plan he had set - and since he will use this to transition into the faithfulness of God, his concern was that they would use their frustration to lower their expectations of God
- b. The word for “vacillating” (NASB & ESV) is “ἐλαφρία,” indicating a “levity” or “fickleness” in his planning (as though he would not be too serious in what he told them, and treated their feelings and plans lightly)
- c. Was it that he really was “fickle” (changing as a normal course of life)? “... or am I guided in my purposes by the flesh, saying, Yes, today, and, No, tomorrow?” BBE
- d. Should they assume that his plans were changed “on a whim” because he just “felt” like it? - it is easy to assume others are unfaithful because they are somehow “carnal/of the flesh” if we ourselves are so inclined
- e. Could they consider him the type that can firmly say “yes” to someone one day and then firmly say “no” the next regarding the same subject? - this would be very serious because if true, then his entire message could be called into question

Truth does not pivot on us, but we can become a strong deterrent to it by our own inconsistencies, or if we never answer criticisms against us - sometimes we must, not for our sake but for God’s

We ought not be those who hold others "to their word" if it becomes clear that they were truly unable

f. It should also be noted, that when we say "yes" or "no" to any commitment, none of us can control all things and that, even though we are purposed, God may work circumstances in such a way as to prohibit us

4. God does not vacillate (regardless of what you think of His messengers) - vs. 18-20

It is likely that there were some in the church using Paul's absence to disqualify what he was teaching - those desperate to write-off certain truths will often resort to pointing out the flaws (perceived or real) of the proclaimer

- a. Paul stresses that God is faithful (trustworthy), and in the same way their "word" to them has not be contradictory or ever-changing - it would be possible (even probable) for some to equate the perceived lack of trustworthiness of messengers (preachers/ teachers) with that of God's faithfulness as well
- b. He was looking to assure them that what was taught was consistent and not subject to change (similar to what Paul warned against in Eph. 4:14)
- c. "Jesus the Son of God is always 'Yes'" (always in the affirmative and not in the speculative and variable) which is why Paul could guarantee that his "word" (message) did not/would not vacillate - his (Paul's) message was not one of his own making, derived from his "opinions" at any given time, and subject to circumstances
- d. This is emphasized (Christ as God's "yes"), because He was the fulfillment of God's promises (**in-full and with precision**) - there is not even the slightest failing with God!
- e. If he dealt with them consistently on so serious a matter (THE most serious), why would they question (or allow it to be questioned) his integrity?
- f. Don't lose perspective on the one we are to keep our focus (as far as needed faithfulness) - the Lord Himself Who will not change (an "anchor" of the soul while the "billows roll")
- g. By mentioning Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, he does at least two things - first, he demonstrates that there was one consistent message among three messengers and, second, to remind them of the beginning (Acts 18:5) when they first heard the Gospel - remember what it was like (before these new distractions came along)
- h. Now, Paul looks to solidify their focus on God's faithfulness by emphasizing that, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him..." - Christ is the focal point between man and God and demonstrates His consistency, so much so that "through Him is our Amen" ("amen meaning "let it be so," being agreement and confirmation of such **complete fulfillment of God's promises**) - and here, it was their unified "amen" with him
- i. The focus of Paul and his team was on the "glory of God" (which would come through them pointing them to Him) - most "false teachers" can be recognized by their pursuit of "glory" to themselves (or making life essentially "about them")

popular or unpopular, the message would not change

As if saying, "Can't you see what's happening? Would you cast aside the pure Gospel over such a trivial thing (in comparison)?"

see also I Cor. 15:8-11 (though many taught, the message was singular)

God was not characterized as making promises and fulfilling only part or none of them - these naysayers in the church were apparently looking to redirect their attention to lesser things (most likely glorifying these "super apostles" over God Himself)

5. The "validator" is God (His "perspective" is above all others) - vs. 21-22

This may seem like a detail of Theology, but it is an important truth, that God not only places us "in Christ," but **together** as well - He gives us the teachers and life-friends we are to have - if we are seeking the influences and friendships apart from this, we are guaranteed to be distracted, disoriented and disillusioned

- a. The One who "establishes us" is God, and this is "in Christ, with you" - He brought us together (not we ourselves, formulating ourselves into "Christian groups" (of our own making/determination)) - the word for "establishes" is "βεβαιῶν", a word used for the confirming (standing by) the validity of a "product" - in this case, the "product" being our place "in Christ" along with each other "in Christ" (we're His team)
- b. He has also "anointed us" (χρῖσας) - as in setting aside for a "royal purpose" - another reminder that we are not self-appointed to His work - it is our privileged position to be set apart for His purposes, and so not to be distracted by attention-grabbing counterfeits or by petty offenses
- c. He has also "sealed" us - on the underlying Greek word, Murray Harris (New International Greek New Testament II Cor.) wrote, "... he means that God (1) has "branded" believers as his property, (2) has attested the reality of their status in Christ, and (3) has guaranteed their "protection in transit" as his permanent and inviolable possession."
- d. And, pulling it all together, He "gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" - once again, a key term is used providing a clear description of what we have - "ἀρραβῶνα" was a term used of a down payment and a guarantee of more to come - in this case, such a "seal" (in our innermost being, who we are, "heart") assures us of the future, especially beyond this life - this "seal" evidenced in the "fruit of the Spirit" in us
- e. These Corinthian Christians were contemplating the disqualifying one of their own "team," and passing their judgment on the wrong things (by the wrong standards) - focusing on the priceless value of what we have in common in God unites us!

"inviolable" - never to be broken

Such a "pledge" (inner assurance) ought to be more treasured than external "stimulants" put in our view or path to lure us away to temporal values

Their unity (their unified "amen") was around these truths more than their personal differences

For such a "pledge" is a guarantee of the inheritance in full

f. The inner presence of God's Spirit guarantees we will be "kept" to the "end" - certain forms of disunity can be a demonstration of the absence of the Holy Spirit in some (for He will certainly keep us "In Christ" and unified around the unchangeable truths Paul just listed) - **these we have, and will truly unite us!**

D. Paul reveals his inner most reason for not coming - vs. 23-24

1. He let them know of his own suffering (which could have been enough reason to have changed plans), but now he shares his personal reason for not coming to them

Paul uses the word "ψυχήν" (soul), demonstrating his accountability before God Who judges the soul - those who truly revere God will never use such a statement without genuineness - only those who do not fear God will use such to add weight to their lies - and they will answer for it to Him

- a. He calls upon God to be a witness (a practice never to be done without the highest caution) to his sincere reason for changing his plans - God would ultimately be the judge on his actions and their underlying reason
- b. Paul did not come right away in order to "spare" them - they had not been responsive to his challenges/exhortations, and he would have had to come and be more forceful
- c. There had been no repentance and it is likely the same issue (attitude) he addressed in I Cor. 4:18-19 remained (and they possibly felt vindicated)

2. We do not "lord it over your faith" - vs. 24

Paul's "power" was ministerial, though he clearly had power "doctrinally", he had no option to force anyone to do as they ought (not being able to force them to fully believe/trust)

This is why believers seek to convince rather than force - compassionate urgency can be used (wrongly) to be overly forceful - a dominant personality can cause external agreement while adversely affecting the "heart" - genuine authority can be forceful but should not look on it as a guaranteed conquerer; time and attention are most often required for this

- a. If he had come with "force" (in a rebuke), it was likely not going to do this group any good (for some he did rebuke and had to) - here, when he references the idea of "lording" it over their faith, part of the idea of this is that he and his team could not make them believe and force them into practical obedience
- b. "...how absurd and wicked is it for uninspired ministers now, for individual ministers, for conferences, conventions, presbyteries, synods, councils, or for the pope, to attempt to establish a spiritual dominion in controlling the faith of people. The great evils in the church have arisen from their attempting to do what Paul would not do; from attempting to establish a dominion which Paul never sought, and which Paul would have abhorred." Barnes
- c. This is an indirect way of also pointing out part of their problem - lacking obedience (and a humble response before God) demonstrates a faith issue, and faith (trust in God and the rightness of His word) are essential to "standing"
- d. And this is an issue because it is by faith we "stand firm"! - if it is coerced, faked and only surface (not who one really is), then they will not "stand" (compare to I Cor. 10:1-12)
- e. The objective is their "joy" (excited contentment) "working together with them" to this end/goal - this joy comes as they are able to "stand in faith" as will be illustrated elsewhere in this letter - assisting each other in "the faith", builds "faith" (personal) and leads to true joy (from acting on faith - discontent comes when we obey ourselves)
- f. Note: many take the last phrase of verse 24 in a positive sense regarding the strength of the Corinthian church - but this does not fit the context, for what was Paul going to have to be harsh with them about if their faith was strong? - "faith issues" are at the heart of our own issues, for if we do not trust, we either "rebel" or speculate ourselves to no definitive direction at all, taking the safe "stand" of "I'm not sure" and thus not acting (growing)

Verses 20-23 are perfect examples of "the Faith" and its part in our joy (lasting satisfaction in life, even with the often drastic variances)

III. Practicing Loving Forgiveness So That Satan is Not Given Any Advantage - 2:1-11

A. One of the greatest challenges we will face in our lifetimes is related to our Christian relationships

- 1. Paul is having to deal with a "rift" that had formed between himself and some in the church at Corinth - he had apparently written a rebuking, strong letter to them before this letter
- 2. He gives an ideal example of dealing with such - he deals with the issue(s) directly, and that without compromising the essentials, yet with a reaffirmation of his love for them

We must not be so myopic that we cannot recognize how our pride or selfish motives are more an attack on God than they are on our perceived enemies

- a. As indicated in the title of this main point, part of the overriding reason is to not allow ourselves to be outwitted by Satan and be used for his purposes
- b. Quite often, though, **our self-serving purposes line-up with those of Satan** - these are areas we must keep "in-check" lest we become fervent promoters of Satan's causes
- 3. These personal conflicts with the "brethren" are crucial for us to deal with and must not be treated lightly, nor should they be neglected for the cause of pseudo-peace - true peace is found when problems are actually addressed thoroughly and properly

B. Paul was working to not have a “painful” visit with them - vs. 1-4

1. Paul “judged within himself” (ἐκρίνα γὰρ ἑμαυτῷ) not to come - this was a way of stating it, to indicate he had given it much thought and did not take it “lightly” - vs. 1-2

He could not change/compro-
mise on these differences (it
would be wrong)

This is a demonstration of the
necessity to deal with some
issues (not “letting them slide”
for the sake of “peace”)

With the focus on the reality
dealt with in 1:14, the expected
joy they would share could, at
the very least, always be based
upon what is coming (and the
joy produced in our joint ef-
forts in “the cause”)

- a. His “thought-through” reasons were, first of all, that he did not desire to have a “painful” visit with them - the **solution** lies with them and their needed changes
- b. It **wasn't** a matter of him getting his emotions under control and that he feared he would overreact, but was more in introducing the idea of the severity - its was more than just a difference of opinions (and competing egos), but more an indication (and opportunity) for them to **repent**
- c. If he would have come, he asks, “who would there be to make me glad?” - he desired (resolutely) to have the time with them be encouraging, heartening - his **letter** would be direct and even harsh, so their meeting could be in unified joy
- d. “To cause them pain would be to experience pain himself, a pain that could be relieved and then converted into gladness only by their repentance (cf. 7:8-10).” Murray Harris
- e. But Paul’s pursuit of joy was not one of avoiding the issue, but of **having it fully dealt with** and the comforting ease there is after the conflict has been resolved (**legitimately**)

2. Joy found in the joy of what they are united around - vs. 3-4

This illustrates that there are
issues that will (and rightfully
so) interfere with our joy with
each other - if we get used to
just avoiding the issues, our
focus with each other will
become too narrow/shallow to
be of any genuine “depth”

The result of God and our eter-
nal “state” no longer being at the
forefront of our thinking

This is a vivid illustration
of true love being “forced”
to tell the one they love the
truth, even though they have
legitimate fears that they will
receive a negative response

- a. Referencing what he had written to them previously, he indicates that this was his objective in the change of plans - it was not to avoid them out of fear or a lack of love for them, but so that “this very thing” would be focused on finding/receiving the **encouraging** fellowship he anticipated
- b. When he wrote “...have sorrow from those who should make me rejoice...” it was not a selfish joy, but a joy he SHOULD be able to expect (as in I Cor. 13: 7, love “...hopes all things...” - true love for others looks to be able to expect the best in them (not in a dictatorial way, but out of “hoping” the best for them)) - the concept of love has been (unfortunately) redefined (re-imagined) to be more-so the expectation (and allowance) for others to do as they desire (versus as they ought)
- c. His confidence (his expectation) was that they would long for maturity in Christ and then find their joy in it and its pursuit with him, “... my joy would be the joy of you all.”
- d. Rather than, as they might have imagined, his writing to them a harsh letter out of spite or vindictiveness, he confronted them with the truth of their situation with “gut-wrenching” pain, out of anguish of heart and with tears - this demonstrates the genuineness of his love (especially) for them, and not his supposed dislike of them
- e. His desire was for them to know that his directness and honesty with them was a demonstration of his love for them - it is “human” to look on someone who **confronts** sin directly as being unloving, when it is likely, if one is a friend, he/she is more loving than all others who look to tell only what they believe “you” desire to hear
- f. The **urgency** of the need outranked the desire to be “liked”

C. Practice a determined forgiveness with the offender - vs. 5-11

1. The pain inflicted was not directed at Paul personally, so he was not injured by it - vs. 5

Some have posited the theory
that this refers to the im-
moral man and that he took
a stand against Paul also, and
against Paul’s instruction to
the Church to discipline him -
either way, what Paul states is
still clear

It’s too easy to get caught
in the vicious loop/habit of
recounting the details of an
offense, to the neglect of the
pursuit of a righteous, humble
and cautious solution

- a. Paul deals with this offense very delicately (as we should all strive to do)
- b. He does not name the offender - we are not sure exactly what incident is being referenced - some place it back in I Cor. 5 and the “incestuous man,” while others believe it is in reference to someone who publicly rallied against Paul
- c. Paul uses similar wording (in the Greek) in both texts, and references Satan in both, which lends to the belief it is the openly immoral man
- d. The pain/grief that was caused, was more-so to those in the local Corinthian church, though again, Paul uses wording to “soften the blow” (“so that I not be burdensome” or “so that I not say too much”) - rehearsing the wrong of another is not healthy; the need is to stay focused on the **right** response (theirs and ours)
- e. Note also, though, that our flagrant (out in the open, bold sins) are detrimental to all in the Church - forgiveness is nice and expected, but it does not erase damage

2. Forgive, comfort and reaffirm your love - vs. 6-8

- a. Having to have faced the “majority” of the church was sufficient “penalty”

This "showing grace" by the Church is in response to repentance (as the desired response in texts such as 1 Cor. 5)

"Discipline" of this sort is always grievous to the Church - ***pride causes it to become a pursued practice rather than a difficult one***

If the "leadership" is not "on-board" there will be a serious issue in following this process - leadership (ministers) must set the right example

So many churches have quite a way to go to come to the aspect of the **true** church that is "family" in the **truest** sense

It was not so much obedience to Paul as it was obedience to what was the right thing to do (from God) - if a human authority becomes the focus, it is easier to reason around obedience than it is if the authority is God - this is another reason we don't want the authority to be in ourselves

We, as receiving the ultimate forgiveness, truly have no right to withhold it from others - Christ did not make it optional for His followers (Mt. 6:12-15); there is no benefit to unforgiveness, and it does not fit in any way the purposes of God - only He can withhold forgiveness - for us, it is never to be seen as optional!

Entrenched bitterness in our hearts makes us more a pawn of the enemy than a soldier of the Cross!

As in working with a magician to allow self to be deceived - playing-along with the "trick"

Unforgiveness is the act of looking on each other as the enemy

- b. Essentially he is telling them not to overdo it - the purpose is restoration (because of repentance) and not zealous condemnation
- c. Rather (on the contrary) "forgive" him - the underlying word here is "χαρίσασθαι," which finds its root in "χάρις" (grace) - be gracious to him and comfort him (παρακαλέσαι - call him "along side" to encourage him)
- d. Vincent on the word for "forgive" noted, "The idea of freeness ... lies in the word forgive, which is forth-give." (to essentially "give-forth" grace)
- e. The reason for this is to avoid inflicting on him "excessive sorrow", "... lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" KJV - first, this indicates the person was in sorrow over their actions (versus being defiant), and second, once repentance is evidenced, there is no **advantage** in withholding grace
- f. It is not love to withhold discipline nor is it to "draw it out" - as with Paul, it is a "gut-wrenching" process - the caution and careful attention is to prevent them from being driven to despair (that they can never get passed this offense) - a "pathway back" needs to be evident to them
- g. This being such a crucial point, Paul "urges" (exhorts) them to "confirm" (reaffirm in a formal way - the underlying word is κυρῶσαι from κυριος (lord, authority) their love for him in a formal way - let it be open and **official** that they are restored!)
- h. Just as a side note, it is sad to realize that the discipline here was a form of "excommunication" (no longer having the "ready fellowship" with their church family) - yet if, as we see much of these days, church members don't love their fellowship, such discipline would be unmotivating (costing them nothing, in their estimation)

3. "Proving yourselves" with an obedient response - vs. 9

- a. Paul also wrote to them (versus coming) to give them the opportunity to prove they were obedient to the instructions they were given
- b. The word for "proof" (δοκιμῆν) is a word used for putting something to the test to be sure of its genuineness (integrity) - in chapter 7 we come to see that they passed
- c. Also, obedience being "in all things" (its **thorough** and not partial - insincerity and hypocrisy are often evidence in partial obedience, the "just enough" approach)

4. Forgive to counter Satan's schemes - vs. 10-11

- a. Forgiveness (showing gracious favor, as in verse 7) is essential in thwarting Satanic strategies against the Church - ungracious treatment and disunity "in the ranks" fits the designs of the ultimate enemy of Christ
- b. Paul made it clear that he was in unity with them in their forgiveness (that he would not "hold a personal grudge") - it is not uncommon for some to withhold forgiveness when the "group" gives it; they inwardly elevate their own importance when doing this (unforgiveness based in **pride**)
- c. His phrasing is interesting to note, though - he indicates he had already forgiven the offender, suffixed with the phrase, "if I have forgiven anything" (as in "if I had to forgive anything"), demonstrating the attitude that should be pursued with wrongs against us - it (the offense) is quickly "out of focus" from lack of **consideration**
- d. Paul also makes it clear, that it is not out of his own "goodness" that he does this, but "for your sakes in the presence of Christ", and more motivated for the good of them all as being ever before Christ (which accountability ought always to be before our life-focus also)
- e. This is very important in ensuring the forgiveness is genuine, realizing the Lord knows our hearts, and hypocrisy is futile before Him (He is not fooled in the least)
- f. Keeping the "greater good" before us is part of the defense against the strategies of Satan, designed to disrupt a unified focus and ministry before God - disunity "in the ranks" is **helpful** to the enemy
- g. Such forgiveness is done to not allow Satan "advantage" (the core word in Greek being πλεονεκτέω, describing an "over-reach", as allowing him to go "out of bounds" and in so doing, "outwit" and "defraud" (trick/deceive))
- h. Forgiveness (actively showing grace) is a deliberate act/practice against Satan's purposes against the work of Christ - he desires to mock and counter Christ at every turn

We in no way want to fall prey to these tactics - in so doing, we would be assisting him in his agendas

- i. "We are not ignorant of his strategies" - the word "νοήματα" indicates thought processes (how one thinks) - we "are not" (should not be) unaware of how he thinks - and one such "thought process" he promotes is that of unforgiveness (either the sinner not believing he/she is forgiven, or the "offended" not offering grace (not sensing the obligation "before Christ") to do so
- j. One more thought on this - If this offender is the one mentioned in I Cor. 5:5, then it demonstrates that even if one is handed over to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh," that there is still to be a looking for repentance and opportunity for gracious restoration

IV. Always Triumphant In Christ - 2:12-17

A. Distracted but not diverted - vs. 12-13

1. Paul goes on to let them know why else he delayed his coming - he had gone to Troas to "preach the Gospel" (and apparently hoped to meet-up with Titus)

It is curious to realize that even though Paul's focus was distracted, God still used him profoundly - God is not demanding us to be "perfect - just obedient

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3:12-13

This, though, does not seem as natural to the text, though it also would be illustrative of how "the ministry" weighs on the soul (as it should)

- a. Upon arriving at Troas, God presented an "open door" for the reception of the "Good News," but even with this, his heart was troubled (over desiring to hear the report from Titus of how the Corinthians had responded)
 - b. Notice that Paul refers to this as a "door of opportunity", which is one of many picturesque terms used to demonstrate such opportunities as being given by God and not instigated by our ingenuity - notice also the door was opened, "in the Lord"
 - c. Even though the circumstances were ideal and naturally encouraging, Paul's concern over the well-being (spiritually) of the Corinthians was predominant - Paul is a good example of where our concerns ought to be also - for the encouragement of others in their maturity in Christ (and concerns of any actual or potential distractions away from it and on to temporal values)
 - d. He could not rest (no relief in his spirit) because Titus was not there - this is not worry as much as it is a genuine sense (realization) of priorities - one does not rest when at work **if the job is not complete** or is behind schedule
2. Paul then moved on to Macedonia (which was part of his original plan - I Cor. 16:5) - there is some thought that it could have been that this was his "door of opportunity" and why he was leaving the area of Troas) - "... and a door to me having been opened in the Lord..." YLT - this may have also have lent to his troubled spirit (desiring to get "at it")

B. Yet, overcoming such "moods" was in the realization of the "triumph in Christ" - vs. 14-16a

1. The truth of victory sustains against the empty gloatings of the already defeated enemy
 - a. "But thanks be to God..." - the word for "thanks" is "χάρις" giving us the flavor of the term as being "Now favor be toward God", and the reason being that He is always leading us in His triumphant parade in Christ
 - b. There are many who look on this picture (θριαμβεύοντι - leading around in a victorious display) as Paul and his team being the captives in such a processional - this would fit with his other uses of the concept of being a "slave" and as "men sentenced to death" in I Cor. 4:9 - this was an illustration pointing back to the Roman parades after military victories (encouraging citizens and disheartening enemies)
 - c. There is certainly merit (and encouragement (in faith)) to be had in displaying that the conquering of God over us (over our wills by means of Christ's work) is something worthy of being paraded before all - it is to our benefit and is to be a steady source of joy in realizing He who knows best does what is right... always!
 - d. But it is in better harmony (as I see it, even with most commentators leaning toward Paul as a captive), that this is a picture of the victor(s), seeing this is "in Christ" ("...who always leads us in triumph in Christ") - then, the "aroma" of victory is "life" to us and "death" to those conquered (those truly the enemies of God/Christ)
- e. With such a picture, the idea is communicated that we are not marching (in Christ) TOWARD victory, but IN victory, and such a processional is to demonstrate it - there will never be an effective counter-attack on Christ, since **the ultimate victory of sin, death, and Satan has already been won!**
- f. Still in following this picture, Paul states that in this parade, we manifest the "sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place"

Even understanding the graciousness of God as "Master" and conqueror, it is difficult to see this as a "thanksgiving" text and providing all-encompassing encouragement - it would seem that joy is found in our being on the winning side more than the gracious conquering of God over us

So, in context, there is amplified gratefulness even when in circumstances of discouragement, realizing such circumstances in light of the actual "big picture"!

"Boos" from onlookers will not alter reality! - and such would not discourage the victor being celebrated

g. In these celebratory parades, the burning of incense (as well as other “smells”) was normal - here, the message is of God Himself and is being spread every place Paul and his team were going (as it should be with all believers)

Again, this is not the picturing of the “smells” of battle, but of those of the victory parade - onlookers and participants would smell this - to some, it was a pleasant odor while to others, it was the smell of death

h. “For we are a fragrance of Christ unto God...” - the burning of incense at these processions was looked upon as being burned so the scent of it would go up to the “gods” - here, though, the “scent of Christ” (His sacrificial death to victory over sin) is, as the sacrifices of the Old Testament were, pleasant to the smell of God (like in texts such as Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18)

i. This is a very unique picture of the presentation of the Gospel of Christ; as it being presented **before God, for God and His purposes (glory)** and the residual affects being life-giving/affirming to some, and the sentence of death to others

Two diametrically opposed groups getting the same message, thus, two differing responses

-j. As made clear in verse 15, this “fragrance of Christ” is **to God** and is spread among those being saved as well as those “perishing”

Whether this is a good “aroma” or a bad one depends on whether or not you are a slave to sin (and therefore a captive condemned to death), or a citizen of Heaven and a victor over sin

k. There are variations of how the next phrases (in verse 16) are translated, though the point is still vivid - the first phrase, “an aroma of death to death,” as if the aroma is the reality of Christ’s death (**for the conquering of sin, against sin**) and is therefore death to those who are still in their sins (who are characterized as being “for sin”) - or it is just using “death”, stated twice (for emphasis)

The presentation will always have an effective result - either in the conversion to life in some, or the condemnation to death in those rejecting (see also John 3:16-21)

l. These are the captives, the enemies traditionally marched in the parade who, at its end, were put to death - so these smells in the air, smells of the victory of their conquerors, had the association of their own condemnation (having been defeated in their fighting against Christ/God)

m. This is one aspect of giving out the Gospel that is easily overlooked - we are not hoping that those hearing will reject, but neither are we compromising it to make it impossible to reject either (for, it will either save or condemn!)

This is at the core of understanding how there is “triumph” - It is found in Christ and not ourselves or our circumstances, which is why it is a steady encouragement to us through all of life’s challenges

-n. To those “being saved” (as captives rescued from the conquered enemy), it is “life to life” (again, either “true life” emphasized, or life from life (the life of Christ bringing life)) - the Gospel is more than just His death and His resurrection (though that is the capstone); it is the **perfect life** He lived before and during this death also

o. Paul, in the midst of discouragement, was able to declare these unchangeable truths - success does not pivot/rest on us - understanding this, we are then freed to bask in the victory of Christ (even while the defeated enemy moves ahead, still thinking they have a chance “to win”)

2. Who is qualified for such a responsibility? - vs. 16b-17

The responsibility of the Truth and Gospel should be intimidating rather than a task some would feel sufficient in themselves to take-on and could do it better than most- that somehow, skill and talent would determine the outcomes of the Gospel

a. What Paul is about to deal with is one of the key points and purposes of this letter - there was “competition” in the ministry who were, apparently, taking on the approach of elevating themselves while “putting down” the Apostle Paul and his team

-b. Yet, really, who is there that is truly qualified to take on the intimidating responsibilities of the Gospel? After all, it will be (as just described) received in positive and negative ways, both with eternal results

c. The word for “adequate” is ικανός, describing capability - Paul does not come at this to indicate that he is adequate, but he does not shun it (as seen in chapter 3) - it is discussed more to reveal that there are those who ought not be taking such a “work” on themselves, because they come about it the wrong way and with the wrong motive

Those so motivated would not be able to resist the temptation to “tweak” the Gospel message, to make it so those “perishing” find a way to “stomach” it

d. After all, if there are some who treat it like a “job” and see their main task as being those who use all means to get people “onboard” with the Gospel, they would be fighting against the reality just mentioned, that there will be some who will hate the Gospel (as they would a bad aroma)

e. And so we have today as in Paul’s day - those “peddling the word of God” - vs. 17

f. The phrase in Greek is “καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ” (marketing the Word of the God) for personal gain - the idea is of a “huckster,” one who is motivated to dishonestly “sell” something to make a living (characterized by distorting the facts to make the sale) - these embellish the Truth for their own gains

g. The Word of God is not for sale - it is not to be used for selfish purposes

And “philosophy” here is more in line with popular thought - it was thought and still is (by many) that if our thought processes make sense to us and harmonize with common (accepted) thinking, then it must not be contradicted by even God’s revelation - so rather than just put forward the unadulterated Word of God, it is mixed with societal trends to make it more salable

- h. Albert Barnes, in looking to explain the processes of such individuals wrote, “(1) It is done by attempting to attach a philosophical explanation to the facts of revelation, and making the theory as important as the fact. (2) By attempting to explain away the offensive points of revelation by the aid of philosophy. (3) By attempting to make the facts of Scripture accord with the prevalent notions of philosophy, and by applying a mode of interpretation to the Bible which would fritter away its meaning, and make it mean anything or nothing at pleasure.”
- i. They (Paul and his team) were those who “speak Christ” in “sincerity” (a word picturing something judged for purity in the bright light of the sun) - they had no self-serving agenda in declaring Christ, so they did so accurately, no hidden agendas, because they did so **“in the sight of God”** and **“as from God”** - which is how all treatment of His Word and ministry is to be treated and revered by its participants - as it was then so we still see today; there are many who will use God’s Word for their own purposes

V. “Since We Have Such a Hope We Are Very Bold” - 3:1-18

A. Do we need to promote ourselves or be promoted by others? - vs. 1-6

1. Paul and his associates were having to deal with “competitors” in Corinth, and his response indicates he is addressing concerns and criticisms - vs. 1

There is nothing innately wrong with bold speech if its source is not self but from and for the cause of Christ - too many confuse sheepishness with humility

In an egotistical society, it becomes an expectation that each will “brag” on themselves at times, and not only is this acceptable, it is necessary - it is sad to see Christian’s play along

- a. As will be stated soon (and in our main point), Paul was characterized as speaking boldly and directly, but, as he will go on to make clear, it was not out of personal pride or personal confidence, nor was it the pursuit of their admiration, but more out of a motivation of the **greatness of the message/ministry they had been granted**
- b. He begins by asking if “we” need to “commend ourselves again”? - included in this is the idea that he would have to recommend (endorse) himself since he did not have letters of endorsement like so many others - the word for “commend” is συνιστάνειν, which at its most basic idea, means to “stand with” (as in “are we at a point where we need to “stand by” ourselves as an endorsement to gain a hearing?”)
- c. There was a normal process in-place in their day where letters of recommendation were provided to validate a person to others who might not know them - this is not necessarily wrong, but that Paul would be required to do so with a group he ministered to personally (for a long time) to provide “letters” should have been seen as absurd!

2. “You are our letter...” - this was far more significant than any hand-held credential - vs. 2

False/embellished or exaggerated “qualifications” are often created because there are no substantive results to demonstrate - attempts and intentions become the content (then) of such résumés .

Any ministry without heart involvement will not last long - it is the inclusion of the “heart” that allows us to see past criticisms and continue on doing what is right without popular support

- a. The church at Corinth, their conversion and growth was better than any letter of recommendation Paul could carry with him (to others, or to present to them as a group of believers)
- b. Anyone could frame a letter/document to be impressive to a reader, but to have the results of a ministry (of the unadulterated Gospel), and that viewable by “all men,” is better than all other “credentials”
- c. Paul then uses an unusual phrase with this metaphor when he indicates this letter is written on “our hearts” - it is more a personal validation/authority, countering as it were, the normal motivation to find security in ministry in the agreements of others - this does not make every sincere-hearted person correct in what they pursue to do for God, but it does illustrate the need to genuineness inwardly
- d. The reference to this being written on the heart seems to also indicate that the key person that such a letter would be presented would be God Himself, Who sees the heart
- e. This is not just in the hidden area of the heart, but they are also (in the place of a letter) viewable by anyone that would look (open before all men, not just a select few) - this is stated with an air of confidence which is how it ought to be with real/actual results
- f. What is seeable is the life - this is true with us today, realizing how we actually live should be more significant (and weighty) than how we look to publicly “frame” ourselves - true growth, true change (from repentance as seen in chapter 7) is our goal

3. Such a “letter” is produced by Christ Himself (it is His work) - vs. 3

As inferred earlier, much of what is put-forward as growth consists of “decisions” to do right but often lacks the actual change from “wrong” to “right”

Another reason to treat it seriously!

- a. What Paul shares next is a vivid reminder of whose work (in which we are involved) it really is - His work and His resources (and so, His credit!)

So, don't be so enamored with the symbols of authenticity or authority as society is - the results of Christ's work in someone's life will be impressive to the right people - those in love with the age in which they live will not be impressed

Such character (results) may be seen immediately, but are proven to the skeptical eye over time and through challenging situations

But, as is soon to be discussed, even the glory that could be seen when Moses encountered God, would fade (as ink does on a page) - we do not seek a fading glory but the "glory that does not fade away" - all other "glories" will certainly fade!

There are aspects of hesitancy that communicate humility, but it is not Godly humility to lack confidence and assurance in Christ (His work and His work in/through us)

This then is the basis for the working and focus to keep our relationship consistent and open with God - misdirection, "burn-out" and quitting (in the work of God) stem from self-sufficiency or the pursuit of "grace" (enablement) from other sources

Compare this truth with Paul's reclassification of his "qualifications" in Php. 3 - these achievements were not at all what equipped him - it was only God's grace

Similar to what Jesus contrasted in His sermon on the mount - there were forms of strict adherence to surface interpretations of the Law that disregarded the entire "spirit" of the Law itself

Ministry is not a competition of personalities or the battle of intellects and subjective opinions and interests - it must be based on THE Truth and the actual work of God's Spirit in hearts

- b. "φανερούμενοι" - it is "being revealed" that you are "a letter of Christ" (of His doing, of His writing/creating) which letter was "διακονηθεῖσα," served-up (could be "delivered") by us - the work of Christ in them (and all the results from it) were the content of this "letter" (viewable by anyone)
- c. And such was not (nor could it be) written in ink (in a fading substance on decaying material) - keeping this in context, this is in contrast to the recommendation letters that were commonly used, none of which could commend itself with such authority
- d. The substance not being ink is infinitely superior in being the "Spirit of the Living God" which is what makes it "viewable by all men" - each is the result (inward and outward) of His working and grace to any that can and will see
- e. And, such is written on the heart (picturing the true self, one's truest character) - not just externally "agreed to" but internally "agreed to"
- f. Then, beginning a unique transition, Paul states that such was not written on "tables of stone", picturing that the heart's substance was changed (no longer hard-hearted), nor was it like the Law given to Moses on tables of stone
- g. Ironically, there was a "draw" back to a legal system (like that under the Mosaic Covenant), possibly because it was seen as "measurable" or could be easier to "fake" (as the Pharisees had done) without ever having to actually follow the heart-intent of the Law in the heart!
- h. And such is the intent and reality of the work of Christ - it is not external, it is internal written on "hearts of flesh" (the inner life of its possessor) - it looks as though this was in contrast to not only what the false (celebrity) teachers were teaching, but in contrast to their lack of such an inward-working work

4. "Sufficiency (adequacy) in Christ" and nowhere else - vs. 4-6

- a. It is likely that verse 4 is the beginning of the answer to what was asked in 2:16, ... "Who is sufficient for these things?" - Who is up to the responsibility? - He has already pointed out (somewhat indirectly) who it could not be, and then the results of a true "result of the Gospel" - now he openly reveals how he and his ministers are qualified
- b. "Πεποιθήσιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ" literally, "confidence/assurance moreover such we have through Christ" and this "before God" (Who sees and knows all!)
- c. It is this particular boldness that appears to be missing from so much of Christianity - what is described here is hard to find; many equate timidity with humble Christianity when the opposite is true - bold and even aggressive stances on the Truth are humble in their realization of **total dependence on Christ and the Spirit of God to work the work**
- d. This is the direct intent of verse 5 - their "sufficiency" (having reached ability, fitness, and worthiness) to the call, was from God - He calls and equips! (He alone is the one we answer to)
- e. Paul makes it clear that he is unqualified (in and of himself) for what he has been given - this is vital for all of us to realize when we are called of God into His work (in any capacity - we are not qualified for it at the start and will remain utterly dependent on Him throughout)
- f. Verse 6 is a transition into a comparison more of ministries (and ministry approaches) than it is a contrasting of the new covenant and the old - the usage of "letter" is not the same as the earlier word used for "letter" in this chapter - that was in reference to the word for "epistle" while this is more in reference to what is written (as in the writing of letters of the alphabet to write words)
- g. So, knowing this (in light of the next part of this chapter), Paul makes it clear that he and his companions are "servants" of a new covenant, though not as his opponents were in their superficial approach to Scripture... mainly an approach that focuses on formal, external practice
- h. As with the Law, just an adherence to it as a logistic of life, without an affect on the heart, would only lend to one's condemnation (even with an apparent strict observance of it) - the Law though, given by God, could not save anyone without God's Spirit's usage of it that leads one to God's mercy and grace (pictured in the sacrificial system)
- i. So, the ministry is only effective (and of lasting value) if the Spirit of God is at work in it; all else is futile in leading anyone to life - such is a serious distinction!

B. The more “glorious” pursuit - vs. 7-13

1. It is normal to pursue after (take better notice) that which is more “glorious” (the word being “δόξη,” describing what stands out above others and is considered better) - the issue here is determining one glory above another - these were tempted to settle with the first “glory” that was seen in the coming of the Law, versus that which comes with the Gospel

The struggle in these verses is more between the “glories of the past” that have long since lost their luster and the new, unending glory of “the Spirit”

2. The “ministry of death” versus the “ministry of righteousness” - vs. 7-9

Part of the appeal of the “letter” may have been its ability to be “measured” and could not only be faked, but could become a point of competition and status

The phrase, “which was being brought to an end” is a present passive - it was, from its inception, already fading away

Is this not a better “glory”? Rather than the pursuit of some external display of greatness, would we not desire something genuine, with internal and eternal results?

- a. This, as it was here, is often caused by ignorance, inattentiveness, or a wrong definition of what is truly “glorious”
- b. In what Paul is describing, he is dealing with those pursuing aspects of the Law that came through Moses (as the significant part of the Old Covenant)
- a. Now, building on the statement “the letter kills” (what was written on paper (the Law)) because it could only point out the issues and point to the solution, while the Gospel (the New Covenant) provides the Spirit of God Himself within (on/in the heart) as the answer
- b. It was true, that the Old Covenant came “with glory” (and may have been one of the arguments used by those countering the pure Gospel message), but that glory was not permanent - plus, it was with fear as well (see Heb. 12:18-29)
- c. The “glory” of the first was seen in the brightness shining from Moses’ face (so that it had to be covered) and they could not look at him - impressive to those there? Yes, but is this the type of “glory” they would *still* like to have? Such events and such a presence produces an awe, but does not provide a relationship
- d. The Law as the “ministry of death” did not cause death (sin did that), but was the courier service (as a doctor giving the diagnosis) delivering the sentence due; death - What would be the greater appeal in having the *indicator* and not the *solution*?
- e. So the Law is the “minister of condemnation” while the “ministry of the Spirit” is the “ministry of righteousness” (that being the second half of the “Good News” - the first half being release from condemnation because it was borne by Christ, and the second being the *receiving in full* (imputation) the righteousness of Christ, evidenced in the presence of the Holy Spirit within us)
- f. Under the Law there were the symbols of the “greater glory” to come, but they could not be as glorious as what was coming!

3. The permanent is better than the temporary - vs. 10-13

The glory that shone from Moses’ face was a result of being in the presence of God - now, we have the indwelling of the Spirit of God, so it is not exclusive (as it was with Moses), but is in all those in Christ

Truly “good works” and “good character” are the result not the means! Lacking good character and good works is also a sign of blindness (calculating their destiny on incorrect information)

As is often the case when dealing with children, there is a common trait among people that desires most what is bad for them and once popular, becomes accepted by a majority as what is “best”

Some elements still exist to this day of the symbols and practices of the “Ceremonial Law”, demonstrating an ignorance of the greater glory of what we have now!

- a. A.T. Robertson, in his “Word Pictures” wrote of these verses, “Christ as the Sun of Righteousness has thrown Moses in the shade.”
- b. As in the comparison of a candle in a dark room (which looks very bright compared to the surrounding darkness), but when high powered lights are turned on, the candle may not even be noticed anymore - playing off of this analogy, we are grateful for the light of the candle, which enabled us to see the light switch to turn on the brighter light
- c. So, don’t settle for a lesser glory (one that has actually gone away and any “light” coming from it now is artificial, and not genuine) - this is what is seen in the “glorious pursuits” of those who base their “salvation” on their keeping “laws and standards” - if their salvation is seen to depend on this in any way, they are *gravely mistaken* and blindly impressed (impressed for temporal or proud reasons)
- d. So, as stated in verse 12, having this kind of hope (full expectation that controls how one calculates values), they (Paul and his team) are bold (free) - they can speak-out with confidence that what they are providing is infinitely better than all else (even if it is not recognized by those being ministered to)
- e. “... we declare the whole counsel of God, hide and conceal nothing that may be profitable to the churches; we are not to be awed by the terror, or drawn by the flatteries of men to cover the truth; we speak it out plainly, clearly, with all evidence and perspicuity.” John Gill
- f. In verse 13, Paul makes a point using the reality that the glory showing on Moses’ face was fading and would go away completely, and this reality could not be seen by the Jews - so it still was the case with many, who still were unaware that the Mosaic covenant was transitory and not permanent

C. Their hearts were blinded and hardened, while we are freed to see and being transformed - vs. 14-18

1. Those Israelites that Paul was using as his example, had their “minds” (νοήματα - thinking processes, systematic thought) hardened (as in being stuck (solidified) in their obstinate position in regards to the realization of the presence of God (which the glory on Moses’ face revealed, and these no longer wanted to see (fearing it)) - vs. 14-16

It is important to be intent on not only listening to the Word of God, but intent on learning (and praying that God in His graciousness will reveal any veil on our minds and hearts and allow us to learn/perceive) Many intelligent people have convinced themselves and others that they know the Truth without knowing they are blinded to it - those under such a condition will often react to the Truth since they are unable to realize they truly “just can’t see it”

The age-old trap of living by the thought that “I’ll just know” when I see error or truth is a very dangerous one - those entrapped by it think they are free and the bonds of their limitations are unseen

Most objections can be generally answered in referencing the equality of persons in the Trinity, though this reference to “spirit” is very specific - this is not a “proof text” that the Holy Spirit is not a “person”

Playing off this illustration, each of us would likely seek out a mirror to see the difference others would indicate they see in us - the revealed Gospel comes with a change in us (once seen, truly seen, we are changed forever!)

This pictures/describes the normal Christian life - it is one of growth, of transformation from what we were to what we truly are

- a. This is a sobering concept - we (as no doubt these did) figure that we can control what we know and perceive, yet these were left to themselves and as a result, became hardened against the truth that could have been seen
- b. To “this very day” the “veil remains un-lifted” and this is most evident when the “old covenant is read” - they are unable in themselves to see what it was all pointing to and that the initial “glory” of it was pointing to a far greater, permanent glory
- c. The Corinthians were dangerously close to such a situation, seen in their seeking out what struck them as more (naturally) interesting and “practical” to their distracted goals
- d. For such a “veil” over the understanding is only lifted in Christ - this is a universal truth regarding Truth - no one will discern THE TRUTH apart from what is provided in Christ (namely the Holy Spirit of God)
- e. So even though Moses was “great” in their eyes (and opinions), when he “is read,” a veil (as a type of what covered the glory of God seen in face of Moses) remains until Christ is “turned to” - and such a “turn” is more than just an acceptance that He existed and the mental consent to His teaching, but a “turn” of faith, comparing everything to Him and His purpose and work (His being the fulfillment of God’s plan/work)
- f. The competitors to the Truth were “peddlers” of God’s Word, considering their own adequacy (capabilities) being *in* themselves and their own mind - this is all mankind is “left with” apart from the veil-removing grace of God in Christ
- g. So, ***their minds were hardened because their hearts were veiled*** (what they loved, lived-for (**the heart**) was corrupted, so even when the “mind” hears the truth, it is deemed contradictory to purpose (it does not fit the life-narrative they have worked out for themselves)

2. Where the Lord’s Spirit is, there is freedom (from slavery) - vs. 17-18

- a. The phrase from this text, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty” is quoted often to support a variety of causes/topics, but usually misses the context altogether
- b. The first phrase in verse 17 has caused a great stir amongst commentators over the years (and understandably so) - but keeping it strictly in context (as much as possible), the “Lord” is typically in reference to Christ Jesus
- c. The usage of the word “spirit” in this context, in keeping with verse 6, the “spirit” can be the ***intent or purpose*** of the Law in what is pointing to - though, this is understood by the Holy Spirit of God, so they are closely linked
- d. So “the Lord” is “the spirit” (not necessarily that He is the Holy Spirit also, but that He is what all aspects of the Law were pointing to (the need for Him as the answer))
- e. And then, wherever this “spirit” (ultimately the Gospel of Christ revealed (unveiled)) is present and recognized (received and trusted), there is release from the slavery of blindness (to the Truth) - this is the truest liberty!
- f. Verse 18 provides a multifaceted picture - we, with no obstructing veil in front of our face to hinder what we see (and to hinder what may be seen of us), are, as it were, looking into a mirror and seeing “the glory of the Lord” - we see it (in the Gospel truth) and, as an encouraging result, we see it *in* ourselves
- g. What is the ongoing effect? We are being “transformed into the same image” (μεταμορφούμεθα - “morphed,” changed in form) - this image, that of Christ as the fulfillment of all of God’s design, is what we are becoming more and more like (a way of describing “progressive sanctification”) - and this “from glory to glory” as in the “glorious” change is steadily increasing
- h. “Just as from the Lord, the Spirit” - “And so the man into whose heart the Light of Christ has entered progresses from one stage of spiritual glory to another, until at last (Rom_8:29) he becomes fully conformed to the image of the Son of God.” Cambridge Bible
- i. The change is in the heart, spiritual (which will inevitably “work its way to the surface”)

VI. Treasures in “Jars of Clay” - 4:1-18

A. Perseverance in ministry - don't “lose heart” in serving, realizing God has given opportunity - vs. 1

1. Paul makes the point that he (as should they) will not yield to fear or discouragement

Yet, once seen in the correct light, we are likely to be motivated to take all His work seriously - as Paul goes on to describe the determination not to lose heart, we can see why so many “callings” of God are abandoned for a more pragmatic approach

“Mercy” is God not giving us what we deserve - God not only mercifully saves us, but gives us items of service to fill our days - this is a high honor (which reality should lend to remaining faithful in it)

- a. Clearly he was suffering with the pressures of competitive influences of how he assessed his “success” in the Lord’s service
- b. It is common for us to not recognize much of what God gives us to do (ministry/service) as truly “official” work for Him, yet the word for “ministry” is “διακονίαν” (where we get our word for “deacon” also) which is **any** service (practical, spiritual)
- c. Recognizing ministry “as we have received mercy” he identifies it for what it really is; it is a privilege because God could have not shown mercy by letting us do and pursue whatever we desired to do (on our own) - one of the most merciful acts of God is when He does not give us over to our natural pursuits (as seen in God “giving over” certain ones to their natural inclinations (sins), which leads to a futile life and an inability to realize the sad situations they are in (Rom. 1:24-32))
- d. Paul was mercifully rescued from his grossly misdirected “religious” pursuits

2. In such ministry we do not yield to fatigue or discouragement

It looks to be clear that Paul was facing resistance to his ministry, which many would see as evidence he should give it up

So much error and futility is found in the results of those who see results dependent upon themselves - results are the Lord’s to create whenever and however He knows best!

The goal is to stay faithful to what God has given, obeying what He has revealed/written, and fight-off the temptation to see ourselves as others as worthy “judges” of effectiveness

- a. The word for “lose heart” is “ἐγκακοῦμεν” picturing someone being so wearied by what they are doing they give-up, cower and run, or plummet into despair
- b. The usual cause of this is a lack of **apparent** “success” in it (either from resistance or impatience on our part, or the wrong understanding of success)
- c. The **bad reaction** to this is to change the measurements of achievement and then build a case against “unsuccessful methodologies” versus “successful methodologies” - there are methodologies and “ministries” that are wrong/futile, but if we are following clear instruction from God’s Word, and are serving faithfully in what He has given to us or sent us to do, then we do it in faith, trusting Him with the results
- d. Discouragement in any ministry responsibility can only be dealt with by focusing on the truth of its source and upon Him which the results depend
- e. The same word is used in Gal. 6:9, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” - there is also the idea of being “timid” and “fearful” and as a result, they “faint”
- f. This also magnifies the importance of an accurate understanding of Scripture - if we do not know it or understand it correctly, our ministries are likely to be found to be in the wrong areas, with the wrong emphases, in the wrong timing, with the wrong results!

B. Refusing “means to an end” that, though the “end” looks right, the “means” are wrong - vs. 2

1. “We have renounced...” - this describes rejecting something available/offered, but because it is deemed wrong, it is rejected - there are numerous such “offers” in pursuing God’s work

If the external “signs” of success are the goal, there are a multitude of ways for this to be done - many churches, discipleship ministries and even parenting that dabble in the “shameful” to get the desired “look”

There is nothing noble in “tricking” someone to Christ (which is not a true conversion anyway) or into some type of religious commitment- this is at the core of why so many seeming “commitments” end up broken (they were not presented the truth)

- a. Just because something appears to work, doesn’t necessarily mean it works - such is the same with any ministry for God - there are results that many (often the majority) categorize as “successful” but, before God are a failure
- b. Paul and his team had rejected (once and for all time) anything that had to be kept hidden to avoid shame (if seen by others/discovered), which in this context either means concealed poor character/behavior, or underhanded methods (forms of manipulation to get a desired result, seen in public ministries in the focus on the emotion and forms of “sensationalism” - their impact is seen as “results”)
- c. The use of “craftiness” is rejected - this can take on many forms since the underlying word pictures “shrewdness, cleverness, trickery” - it is used to describe someone who will do anything to get to the goal - such options are many and can appeal to all **degrees of depravity** to work its “magic”
- d. Even those who mean well and see themselves as sincere can be those who utilize these things because of the influence of pragmatic thought
- e. “Adulterating the word of God” - “δολοῦντες” is a word that pictures an ensnaring (a baiting) with the end result being “corruption” - these use the Word of God, but twist it and corrupt it with what **they add to it and by what they leave out**, all leading to the detriment of those they influence - they bait them with the Word of God and then “infect” them with error

Their apparent results will make them appealing to the masses

f. All of these methods are to be looked upon as unacceptable by us! Described as they are in our text, they look like they'd be obvious, but so many blatant wrongs have been couched in truth to make them acceptable

2. Their approach was clear and simple (yet as useful as "clear and simple" is to most, it is not alluring, because it (the method) is not impressive to popular opinion)

Each recipient is left to contemplate the truth given and their response to it as before God (not how they handle it primarily before other people) - each is accountable to God with what is done with the Truth

- a. "... by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." - as if challenging them to judge for themselves
- b. Plainly put, Paul lays out that they present the Truth, openly, plainly and unadulterated, leaving it (the results) to God (between the person and their conscience before God)
- c. "Drop the idea of God, and the validity of conscience is destroyed. Mere abstract ideas of "right" and "wrong" do not bind the conscience; the idea of God and of his judgment does." Lenski
- d. As anyone seeing themselves serving the Lord, II Cor. 5:10-11 is a sobering text as to what our motive is to be - we will give an account, and knowing our accountability before God, our objective (mission) is to "persuade" others (and that with the Truth and not gimmicks, philosophy, emotionalism or sensationalism)

The Greek root word for "commend" is συνιστάνω, indicating "standing with something openly" - they stand-by what they say and ask that it be considered for what it is before God

C. We proclaim Christ as Lord - vs. 3-6

1. So, how does one explain why so many don't see the "Gospel" for what it is? - vs. 3-4

"Pragmatism" in itself just carries the idea that something is useful, but it's the standards by which one determines usefulness/effectiveness that becomes the issue

- a. Paul concedes the point that there are those who do not respond to the Gospel - this explanation is needed to deal with those who approach the "ministry of the Gospel" from a pragmatic point of view
- b. Another term that can be used in this point is "utilitarian" - this term (philosophically) is used to describe a conclusion that the rightness or wrongness of an action or approach is based upon its outcomes /consequences (as in "does it work?")
- c. Some have said and continue to say that if the Gospel is rejected or ignored by some (or a majority), then the approach or the message itself needs to be adjusted to gain acceptance - so, in this verse, many would conclude that the "veiling of the Gospel" is an unacceptable outcome and that we must do something about it
- d. The sobering truth of the matter is that those not seeing the glory of the Gospel are those who are "perishing" (present tense - they are already perishing) - this should not be taken in a fatalistic way, but should serve as a motivator to more consistently "preach Christ as Lord" to do what can be done in any part we can play in removing the veil
- e. Notice Paul uses the possessive pronoun "our" in reference to the Gospel - this contrasts it to what the others were proclaiming in Corinth (II Cor. 11:4)

We should do what we can to make the Gospel message clear, but this must be done under the realization that the message cannot be changed and must be thoroughly presented

Since the cause is being identified, our response would be dictated by it and not our ingenuity to get a result that looks good

see II Thes. 2:9-12

Why be worshipful of Satan? Unbelieving, sinful humanity finds with him a unity of purpose - self-rule and independence - plus, in harmony with the "reprobate mind" mentioned in Romans 1, these lose their ability to reason themselves to the truth

- f. "The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers..." - this disbelief looks to the precursor of Satan's blinding acts in their blindness - the "god of this age" is the better translation (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος -this "age" in contrast to the one to come; the one that is eternal) - Satan being the "god" **this age chooses** as their "god" - note the part of mankind pictured here in disbelief - there are many concepts it is wise to not believe, but this one is not only condemning, it opens up its participant to the blinding process demonstrated throughout the ages by all other rejectors of God's truth
- g. This actively takes place by his "blinding their minds" (νοήματα - thinking, mental perception and reasoning and all that is associated with it) - **such inability to see will cause them to consider us the blind ones**

Religious, secular, moral or immoral "glories" - it doesn't matter to the deceiver as long as they distract from the greatest glory found in the complete work of Christ

- h. This blinding affect is designed to conceal from its victims "the light of the Gospel" and that being the "glory of Christ" (above all other glories) - we were designed to be creatures that worship, seeking out some type of "glory" to admire and relate ourselves to
- i. Christ must be the focal point of this "good news" since He is the "image of God" - as stated in Hebrews 1:3, He is the "exact representation of His nature" - to see Him for what/who He is, is to come to see and know God (Who is Creator and Designer, the only point in which we will come to know purpose and meaning in life)

2. What is proclaimed/taught is "not ourselves" as all other counterfeits are - vs. 5

These facades can be seen for what they are in how they have allowances for self-glory and self-merit

- a. It is common to miss the point that all other religious systems (and Christian counterfeits) have "self" at the center, though often disguised

Compare this also with Rom. 14:8-9, - not just in death but in life "we are the Lord's"

Being "saved to serve" does not appeal to a society motivated by pride

It is an important distinction to know that when we serve, those we serve are not our "boss" - the Lord is always over us which frees us from those who would exploit this, but also obligates not to discriminate by our own standards and desires (as to who, when and how we will serve)

The "glory of God" is seen (and found) only in "the face of Christ," not in people, institutions or creation - the natural inclination is to look to these sources for "glory" and truth, but is done in vain

This θησαυρὸν (storehouse of treasure) is called such because it is of the highest value - as with many areas, if the value is not known, the "treasure" is missed or treated as common and brings no direct value to the ignorant/blinded

Jim Elliot, martyred missionary to Ecuador wrote of he and the others on his team, that they were a, "bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody."

This is in contrast to the "norms" we create to regulate when we should give-up, be defeated, or not pursue an "opportunity" at all - it's crucial in properly assessing mental/emotional resources

As if also saying that there was an attempt to restrict their freedoms and yet, as they were pressed-in, they were still free to continue- God's power is so "exceeding" that resistance to it only enhances its effectiveness

b. They are not just declaring "Jesus," but "Jesus Christ *as Lord*" - He not just as Savior, but is absolute ruler and authority over their lives - salvation is far more than saving one from eternal judgement; it is also a change of "masters" (with self never really being the actual "boss" either way)

c. Competing philosophies (even Christianized ones) present a self-rule/self-governing message that not only offers and supports an independence, but makes self-authority as a virtuous responsibility (a moral tenant of their "religion") - see II Cor. 5:14-15

d. "Labouring as fervently and as faithfully for your eternal interests as your most trusty slaves can do for your secular welfare. And we do this for Christ's sake; for although we by our labor show ourselves to be your servants, yea, your slaves, δουλους, yet it is a voluntary service; and we are neither employed by you nor receive our wages from you. We belong to Jesus; and are your servants on his account, and by his order." Clarke

e. "This is the upside-down orientation of true Christian leadership. Instead of advancing the kingdom by power, true leaders advance God's kingdom by sacrificial service." Guthrie

3. All this is done because of the "light" given to us - vs. 6

a. True, the Gospel is "veiled" to a majority of the age, but not to us - and the source of this illumination is God, the one Who at the beginning, spoke light (out of the darkness) into being

- b. This "light" is **blindness removed** and it is in our hearts (the essence of who/what we really are) in contrast to the veil over the "minds" (by the "god of this age") - this priceless privilege must not be squandered or allowed to be defamed by its hypocritical competitors (which identify with lesser "glories")

c. This "light" is the "knowledge of the glory of God" in Christ, demonstrating also that the opposite would be that "darkness" is thinking "glory" is somewhere else

D. Demonstrating the "exceeding greatness" of God demonstrated through us - vs. 7-9

1. There are major subjects in this verse - the "treasure", "jars of clay" and the "surpassing greatness of God" - the first two are oddly (as a practice) placed together for the purpose to demonstrate (showcase) the last

a. The "jars of clay" picture not only a "humble" vessel (not worthy of containing a treasure), but also a fragile container, one not known for its strength

- b. This "treasure" is the Gospel itself, the ministry of the Gospel, and the light that it creates in a normally darkened, veiled heart - it is as in Rom. 1:16, the "power of God for salvation to everyone that believes"

c. This analogy of clay pots is to first demonstrate the true significance we possess - it is not at all in and of ourselves (for such pottery was common and it was of little significance what happened to it, because what it contained was typically of greater value) - we should then be motivated more by what we have within us than we are by what we hope to be (or see to be) our individual significance

d. Such realization keeps us focused on where our value really is (being carriers/ possessors of the process Truth of God!)

2. This is so, that the "extraordinary" is God's (and the ordinary, ours)

a. The "ὑπερβολή τῆς δυνάμεως" (the "going beyond " power/might) is God's

b. This is demonstrated in the following verses, but the idea here is that, what by all accounts should cripple a person (emotionally and even physically), is overcome by God's strength and never ours (even mental fortitude, that we are tempted to take credit for, finds its "staying -power" and focus in God, His truth and purposes)

3. "Afflicted in every way, but not crushed" - vs. 8 - this could be stated in a few different ways, such as, "pressed-in, but not crowded", or "cornered but, not restrained"

a. These next phrases picture the external/apparent, versus the actual - just because there are obstacles does not indicate defeat

b. As in this case, Paul describes their circumstances as being one of tribulation, persecution (and the underlying word picturing a crowding-in with intent to stop), and yet Paul indicates he and his team are not "crushed" (hemmed-in so as to have no options)

c. Persecution and opposition was to be expected, and in the light of faith, is seen as an **expected process to the objective**, not a sign of defeat

- d. Notice also this trouble comes from everywhere in every way - often the greatest trial in a trial is that it comes in an unexpected (unanticipated) way, source and time
4. Being “uncertain” but not without direction - vs. 8
- a. The underlying Greek words demonstrate a play on words that’s difficult to translate, “ἀπορούμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔξαπορούμενοι” (literally “without a way” but not “utterly without a way”) - others have restated this phrase as “at our wits’ end, but not out of our wits” or even “pressed, but not oppressed”
- b. The second word translated “despairing” in the NASB is an accurate portrayal of what the word is “driving at” - one who, out of discouragement and being unable to see the sense in what is being faced, is often carried on to “despair” (hopelessness)
- c. Such a life posture is essential because living a life in faith will require times (possibly many) where we are unable to see the “good” in a situation
- d. Look at Gal. 4:12-20 to see how Paul used the same word for “perplexed” as he does here - it is a good illustration of how such situations come out of our dealings with others

Hopelessness is not a Christian characteristic, for it discounts the oversight of God over all things - those without such insight can only see senselessness in hardships and either live in some form of denial or yield to bitter or depressed despair

Many will succumb to emotional fatigue because of a focus on their uncertainty or perplexity and become inactive in service

5. Being persecuted yet fully realizing he was not abandoned - vs. 9

- a. The word translated “persecuted” (διωκόμενοι) pictures one being chased, as in hunting down an enemy - this is far more than being disliked by others, it is more having others so dislike/hate you that they are coming after you to capture, hurt and even kill - Paul became a “cause” of his enemies to remove him
- b. And yet, knowing his true friend, Paul keeps his focus on not being forsaken - his best friend (God Himself) would only permit such treatment in bringing Paul through and to what He has for him to do - see this illustrated in Acts 16:16-34
- c. Even the aggressive hatred and cruelty by enemies should not distract us from the constant presence of the Lord with us, **through** it

Such statements might seem noble to some in our day or maybe even admirable (as if it was a type of mind-trick, positive thinking gimmick) - yet, what is astounding to consider is that it is completely true (firmly grounded in reality!)

6. “Thrown down” yet not destroyed - vs. 9 (at our weakest/vulnerable, yet having not lost)

- a. Even facing a circumstance where he and his team were in a position that had all the look of defeat, he knew **they were not ruined losers, facing their final defeat**
- b. Being “jars of clay” just damage, or destruction would look to be a strong possibility, but because of the contents given them of God, even if smashed, it is not a loss at all (not being abolished) - the persecution of Christians and their deaths have lent a great deal to the spread of Biblical truth throughout history, as others look on and desire such a purpose in life and an enduring, unstoppable hope
- c. One of the conclusions from this reality is that being so spared, they are renewed to take on new challenges, rejoining the “fight” - the statement, “It ain’t over till it’s over” is associated with sports, but its truth is most applicable here - we might justify the phrase clarifying, “You don’t know what might happen”

Even as seen in the first chapter of this epistle (1:8-10) when they had reached what looked to be their end, it ended up not being so because God was not finished with them - He determines the end, not our enemies!

To yield prematurely is to presume we know all things - not that there aren’t times we should yield our stubbornness or pride, but that if doing what is God’s will, we need not stop until death

7. These conclusions (facts) are death-blows to our seemingly justified excuses

- a. Such responses strike us as noble and admirable until they conflict with our personal desire to justify despair, bitterness or yielding the cause - a defeatist attitude may easily find its source and motivation in laziness, not the facts!
- b. Think of the acts of obedience that have been abandoned or neglected altogether because of opposition or the lack of popular support - many are, and have been talked out of pursuing the **BEST** for God because it is frowned upon by those around
- c. The excuse that we are discouraged and feel drained of motivation also demonstrates a perspective not seeing things in faith - it is treated as a legitimate reason to not do what we ought, yet it comes from a disregard of God’s grace and doubting He has supplied enough for what He gives us to do

Persecution and the “crowding out” of what is best in Christian circles stems not necessarily (always) from evil intent, but may come from simply the pursuit of an easier path

Discouragement must be worked-through, not yielded to!

E. A constant “dying” in the work of the ministry - vs. 10-12

1. There are physical and emotional costs in associating with Christ - vs. 10

- a. This “carrying in the body the dying of Jesus” is a way of indicating any and all the costs that take, as it were, a toll on us because of Christ
- b. Such sacrifices depend upon self-denial (death to self) in the service of another (in this case Christ) as He exemplified in His serving the Father
- c. “God transports the treasure of the gospel via clay jars, and the jars become battered in the process.” George Guthrie

Like He suffered in righteousness, so we also will suffer in varying ways, always bearing the “scars” of obedience

The scars and injuries (of any type) that are evident outwardly, are signs of association with Christ and are not to be looked on by ourselves as reasons for discouragement or desertion

Such characteristics should be "alive" in our living

It is easy (and many do) to boast of being ready to give their life for the cause of Christ, yet in the same moment be unwilling to surrender their will or comfort to a far lesser challenge or sacrifice for the "cause of Christ" (**His** cause)

see Rom. 8:31-39

The "costs" of that which is physical/temporal are typically required in some form in the production of eternal results — as Peter indicated, suffering of all sorts is normal in the life of a true believer, not something "strange" - I Pet. 4:12

Even though there will be "push-back," still they will declare Truth because they truly believe it - this is also in contrast to many who speak but don't actually believe what they are saying (and will conform to the times so as to avoid too much opposition)

As seen in the results of salvation in Romans 10:9-10 (the heart believes, the mouth speaks)

- d. This "carrying in the body the death of Jesus" also includes the idea of bearing with the same hatred and persecution that was directed at Him - because of Him, Paul was hated, attacked and others desired him dead - this concept seems lost to much of Christianity today in our nation, as though such hatred and suffering are an oddy
- e. Then the "life of Jesus" is also seen in their "bodies" because of the **evident strength and resolve** in the face of opposition that is also evident (because of His grace)
- f. The qualities of the life of Christ are to be live-out - His selflessness, His love, His patience, His forgiveness, His focus on the will of the Father above His own, His focus on truth and not given to distractions, and His faithfulness unto death - all seen (as indicated in these verses) in Paul's life in some form of suffering
- g. Also, this "life of Jesus" is to be evident as an ongoing reminder of not only victory over death, but over all suffering and opposition (this is that "newness of life") - the "life of Jesus" is in contrast to the "normal" lives of those that see comfort and ease as a sign of being in good standing with God rather than any contradiction to their comfort

2. Constantly delivered over to death - vs. 11-12

- a. "We who live..." - this may be a reference not only to Paul and his group, but also a way of referencing "we who are left" (bringing in the ever-present reality that we won't always be alive here) - what he is about to explain is a part of living on this earth
- b. Part of such a life for Christ is "being constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake" - this is both in a real sense of physical death as well as what is required internally (a constant giving one's self over to the possibility of dying, in death to self in all aspects of life)
- c. This constant threat of death (in both senses) was for the purpose to demonstrate the "life of Christ" at work even in their "mortal flesh" - It's getting harder to imagine a majority of Christianity today that would even begin to accept what Paul references in verses 8-9, and to also **come to the unflinching conclusions Paul did in each**
- d. Even as this "mortal flesh" begins to fail or it seems to work against active obedience to our Lord, we are to be even more resolved not to yield to its natural inclinations, for to do such is to lead to a life where decisions and priorities are based upon the physical and not the spiritual (the temporal over the eternal) - this is addressed more in vs. 16
- e. This "dying" brings life - so many aspects of the Lord's work (personally and for others) involve or are closely associated with the threat of death and actual death - as Paul and his associates faced death, such was used to bring the message of life to these Corinthians - they should also then expect to do the same also see John 12:24-29
- f. It is likely that many of the opponents of Paul showcased their lives of prosperity and ease as if an expected result of following their teaching/ways

F. Having faith, they will continue to speak out the Truth - vs. 13-15

1. They were driven by the "same spirit of faith" as David in Psalm 116 - vs. 13

- a. The "spirit" being more the essence of something, and in this case the results of the essence of faith being what they really were (true believers !)
- b. Paul references this statement in this Psalm (Psalm 116:10) to demonstrate the same perspective of David in the face of extreme and constant opposition - David "believed" when he stated "I am afflicted" (as in making it clear that the opposition was not causing him to doubt) - faith does not deny suffering, it embraces it (because of how it is used, and what it does and does not mean) - Paul quoted from the LXX (where this text is found in Psalm 115:1)
- c. Paul keeps it basic in just identifying with the speaking (the truth of the situation) - we believe so we also speak (**tell it like it really is!**)
- d. Based upon the following verse, this is in answering the reality that they would face the threat of death for what they were "speaking" - we see very little of this in our day (not necessarily because there is freedom of speech, but because the Truth is compromised (as in Paul's day, for the same reasons))
- e. It may seem too simplistic, but another reason true Truth is often neglected and unspoken is that it is not actually believed - true faith cannot remain silent!

2. The spreading of grace, the giving of thanks, the abounding glory of God - vs. 14-15

How one faces the concept of death makes the pivotal difference in how they will live with the threat of death (either in facing it or in compromising because it is feared)

It has also been suggested that Paul is now believing he will not live to the coming of the Lord but considered that his readers might - therefore, if he dies, he still would be "presented" with them (both the living and the dead (in Christ) presented before God)

Essentially saying we do what we do for your sakes for the sake of God's glory - the opposite would be to do what they do for the sake of their own glory (that of the Corinthians)

The competing influencers were motivated by what would benefit themselves, not out for the "sake of others"

- a. Being able to stand firm on the Truth, even in the face of death, is made possible partly by the realization of the assured resurrection - everyone will die (except those at the coming of the Lord that are "in Christ"), but not all will die in harmony with the Truth (reality); and far better to die in its proclamation than in its **denial**!
- b. Notice the use of the name "Jesus" (not "Jesus Christ", or "Lord") as in His humanity (the side we identify with) how He also entrusted His soul/life to the Father - so Paul realized he would be raised in association with Jesus (as Jesus was the "firstfruits" of what was to come) - his focus was **beyond** death to keep his present focus undistracted by painful diversions (or the threat of them)
- c. "...and will present us with you..." - "presenting" as in before God (our Creator) (seen also in Rom. 5:1-2 where, because of Christ we have "peace with God" and have "obtained our introduction")
- d. Death is also faced (along with all its associates) for "your sakes" - Paul and his team may be looked down upon by some in Corinth because they are "in trouble" so often, yet such trouble is faced for the "spreading" of God's grace (favor) to them - and then the foundational motivation for this "spreading to more and more" is to increase the **thanks** to God (gratefulness) which glorifies God
- e. Notice also that such sacrifices were made to point them to God's grace (again, **undeserved** favor) which **only the proud will not appreciate** - the counterfeit teachers would appeal to the proud, putting the Gospel and God in such a way as catering to their vanity, assessing what they desire to hear and making their teachings conform

G. With a steady focus on the eternal, the "decaying outer man" does not cause us to "lose heart" - vs. 16-18

1. Once again, as he began this section so it ends with the fact they he and his fellow believers do not ἐγκακοῦμεν (faint, yield to weariness by **magnifying** it above measure) - vs. 16

Honest, actual, rightly- informed hope makes all the difference in how we live and look at life - distracting doubt causes insecurity and an overbearing drive to hold tight to the present (at the risk of the future)

- a. Here, Paul makes a clear distinction between the "outer man" and the "inner man" - one or the other (in this instance) "calls the shots" - the "outer" representing more the "clay pot" while the "inner", being our soul/spirit and the "treasure" it contains because of the glorious light of the Gospel it now possesses
- b. Having this purpose and clear perspective of how things REALLY are, "we do not give-up" - having such privilege, such favor from Almighty God, and such a treasure within to know and share, why would one ever consider yielding to opposition?
- c. The physical (this **interface** with this world) is most certainly διαφθείρεται (in the ongoing process of decaying (present indicative middle/passive)) - though this is the case (even hurried-on as it were by the physical consequences from the opposition), yet his true self (the spiritual, inner-man) is ἀνακαινοῦται (being renewed, changed to something better, continually/ongoing (also present indicative middle/passive))
- d. That which is physical/temporary cannot "get-at" the inner-man! The enemies of this world (including all of sin's impact) may hasten the end of our bodies, yet the spirit/soul is every-growing in the life of the believer
- e. Note also that the "outer-man" is what others see of us, and though it become less impressive, it is of little consequence if the inner is more invigorated in purpose and perspective!
- f. "In the reprobate also the outward man decays, but without anything to compensate for it"

A shrinking of the soul (lean-ness) or a deadness of the soul are not characteristic of the believer - ongoing "revival" of the soul characterizes the believer all the way through to death

see also Eph. 3:14-21

Calvin

2. Properly assessing the present in light of the future - vs. 17

- a. Being creatures of comparison, how we measure things becomes vital in determining how we will not only deal with them, but how we will **weigh** them (in intensity)
- b. This is what Paul is doing in this verse - the "affliction" he had been and was facing, would have not seemed temporal and "light" - but when compared to eternity, the "momentary" is but a blip on the radar and the "weight of glory" makes the afflictions in our time, on this earth, seem "light"
- c. The worst of persecutions and suffering that can be imagined are still not comparable to what is coming for us in Christ - no one in Heaven and/or on the New Earth would even begin to reconsider what they had suffered as being "not worth it" in comparison to what they now possess!

When this standard of comparison is not seen, not used or is lost, the present weights and afflictions become overbearing, and cause the thoughts to consider (seriously) giving-up

The "material, the "temporal" is all expendable, realizing it will all fade away anyway

When what we are working toward and striving for is calculated to be of immense worth and value to us, we are not deterred by difficulty (we actually come to expect opposition in the procession toward the goal)

Though if one is unwilling to suffer for Christ, it may be an indicator that they are not His resistance and apprehension to suffering is normal, but rejection of it and refusal to face it altogether is indicative of who/what one really is- see Php. 1:29-30

It is vital we stay alert (daily) as to where we are focusing (our purpose, priorities and the "why's" behind them)

Paul will mention in 5:7 that we "walk by faith and not by sight" in reference to being "at home in the body but being away from the Lord" - this is where we are heading, so such a focus keeps its eyes on our lives here as temporal, yet heading in a certain direction (and that direction dictates the values of our lives)

- d. Notice the direct contrasts - "light" is contrasted to "weight", "momentary" is contrasted to "eternal" and "affliction" is contrasted to "glory"
- e. "γὰρ παραυτίκα ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως" (literally, "for the moment, light affliction")
- f. In his book "Evil of Evils", Puritan writer Jeremiah Burroughs stresses throughout how that all types of suffering are to be preferred (in this life) over that of choosing to sin - that afflictions are to be chosen instead of sinning, realizing how evil and detrimental sin actually is - opposing sin quite often leads to persecution (and sin is best opposed with Truth)
- g. The superlative phrase "ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν" means "exceeding unto excess" (full and overflowing and that eternally/unending)! - it has the idea of "...an utterly incomparable degree an eternal load of glory" (Harris)
- h. Interesting also is that such "affliction" is "producing" this "tonnage of glory" - the point isn't so much that suffering earns us glory, as much as it is that the suffering we face (for Him and His cause/purpose) works out in the end to a result which benefits ***infinitely outweighs the greatest of pains we face for Him***
- i. So, suffering for Him, in any degree, is a worthwhile "investment"! (and we need to consider all suffering, ***even that of self-denial*** as investing)

3. The "point of focus" is key - vs. 18

- a. In light of this reality, "we are not focused on that which is seen" - for us, there is a sense in which we come at this as "we must not be focused on what is seen, but on what is not seen (eternal)" - the severity of the moment can shake our focus off the eternal (if we are not alert), and this can result in a steady gaze on the temporal, directly distorting our "values system" and causing us to rework our priorities wrongly
- b. Their focus was not on anything that could be seen by the eye, because what could be seen was temporal versus eternal - even the people that are seen, we only see the physical, though what we do not see about them (their soul/spirit) is eternal - best to be focused on that!
- c. "...it is temporary in regard to us. We must soon leave it to others; and if enjoyed, it will be enjoyed while our bodies are slumbering in the grave, and our souls engaged in the deep solemnities of eternity. How foolish then to make these our portion, and to fix our affections supremely on the things of this life?" Barnes
- d. "Losing heart" can be a sign that focus has drifted to what is temporal (what is literally "rooted in time") - with the spiritual eyes (the inner focus), as set "hope", "... Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil..." - Heb. 6:19

VII. Patiently Enduring Life, In Anticipation of Being With The Lord - 5:1-10

- A. "For we know..." - Being those focused on the eternal (not temporal), we live in light of the reality of what follows death for us - the "dismantling" of the body is part of this process - vs. 1

1. "οἶδαμεν" pictures more a "knowing" as in relation to seeing (tying it back to the previous verse)

Personal and precise "knowing" is key to confident motivation - we do not want to be one of those that looks to have others "sure" for them - this may work to some degree in debates, but not for a life director - this all pivots on faith ***which pivots on the object of our faith***

- a. Such a focus beyond the immediate, the passage of time and then death, automatically produces a confidence ***as well as an anticipation to what is coming***
- b. As in II Peter 1:13-14, this truth motivates to a good use of the time we have
- c. Uncertainty is an odd lure, in that it makes its possessor comfortable when faced with multiple options, competing ideas and opinions - it provides a sense of justification in reaching no absolute conclusion

2. What happens when our "earthly dwelling" is disassembled?

This "tearing down" of the tent, could be in reference to natural means or to deliberate persecution by others

- a. The way Paul phrases this is something like, "We know that if our earthly house, which is a tent is "taken down" (or "comes apart"), we have a "building" (in contrast to a tent) made by God in which we will eternally dwell
- b. The picture is of a tent being disassembled (as when one is moving on) or of it falling apart (even dissolving into its particles)

3. We have home, in a dwelling not man-made, and that is everlasting

- a. It's in the present tense, so ***we possess the "title-deed" now!***
- b. As we live currently in this "tent" temporarily, we will live permanently in a new "house"

In contrast to the clay pots, these will not be fragile

Other texts such as Php. 1:23, Luke 23:43 (the believing thief on the cross) and the presence of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration, and Samuel to Saul, portray a different reality

So we are not directly told what "body" we will possess in Heaven (after death) while awaiting the resurrection of our current bodies

B. Living with what we have while we wait to be "swallowed up of life" - vs. 2-4

1. "Groaning" while we live-out this life and in anticipation of what is coming - vs.2

Even when not facing pain "in the body", we long for what is far better

The regular pains and disappointments of life lend to this anticipation, and as such have a benefit to us in keeping our hearts unbound to this world

The parallel would be our frustration with a house falling apart, knowing we're soon to move into a brand new one

It is interesting to note that "disembodied spirits" are the content of "scary stories" and have been associated by many (even theologians) as the eternal state of the unredeemed - though even these will be in the second resurrection (their bodies resurrected, only now to the "Lake of Fire" (Rev. 20:11-15; Acts 24:15)

"... rather, "in that we desire not to have ourselves unclothed (of our present body), but clothed upon (with our heavenly body)." Clarke

True, we do live in a sin-infected world, but the bodies we have been given, frail and transitory as they are, they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that for His eternal purposes (investments)

The "solution" for death/mortality will not be just enough, but will be overwhelming!

- c. The picture is of living in a temporary structure, anticipating a move to a permanent "building" that's meant to last forever (it will be indestructible!)
- d. In contrast to the tents that Paul was known for making, this God-made structure will not be subject to decay in any way - these bodies will be flawless, without pain
- e. "Not as contrasted with the earthly body, which is also 'not made with hand,' but with other houses which are made with hand." Alford
- f. "...in the heavens.." versus of and on this earth - this does not limit it to "Heaven", just that is its quality being "of the glories of Heaven" as well as a body we will receive at the coming of Christ (in the heavens (in the clouds))
- g. Some try to work in the concept of "soul-sleep" into this and other texts, indicating that since we know in texts such as I Cor. 15:42-57 that we will receive a resurrected body at the coming of Christ, that in the interim, we are not conscious (asleep) - but this is difficult to harmonize with verse 8 of this chapter
- h. The term for "sleep" in the New Testament (describing the death of believers) is picturesque of the body sleeping, **but not of the soul** - as far as the body, it is "done-with" this earth, and the soul that possessed it is no longer conscious of what is happening "under the sun" (as in Ecclesiastes)

2. Our desire is not so much to put off this body as much as it is to put on the new one - vs. 3-4

- a. The "sighing" we express here is not just because of the pains we face (with what is physical), but also because **we must patiently wait** for the glory that is coming!
- b. There will assuredly be frequent times of "groaning," and not just because of our bodies, but because of the surrounding results of a sin-infected creation - we see this dealt with in Rom. 8:18-23, that even the creation groans in anticipation - it's compared to the pain of childbirth; it is a physical pain endured because of anticipation
- c. This groaning is a result of the "ἐπιποθοῦντες" (yearning, straining, stretching for something), to "put on" (as in putting on an overcoat) the "dwelling" (in this case, body) we will have from Heaven - this word picture contrasts the "normal" concept of cringing -back from death altogether - here we have one of the motivations for it!
- d. Such frustration is not in itself wrong, but the response is key - it does not cause one to lean toward despair, but toward the relief coming - till then we endure and sigh
- a. Our spirits will not "be found naked" (without a body) - we are not told directly if there is such a thing as an "intermediate body" but we are assured we will not be "bodiless"
- b. Verse 3 begins with "εἰ γέ" which, rather than giving a "possibility", it is more an expression of confidence (as the NASB has "Inasmuch")
- c. "Having put it on" we will not be "found naked" (unclothed) seeing we will assuredly "have our new body" (never to move-out again!)
- d. And, while we still "live in this tent", we are burdened, yet this burden, this weight and heaviness of enduring life, we are not so burdened as to desire to die (to be unclothed)- not living with a "death-wish" that would lead us to take our own life (or anything associated with it), but burdened with that longing desire for what is best (and that is not anything that can be had this side of eternity) - there does seem to be a hint at Paul's longing to be alive at the return of Christ, and have his current "mortal" covered over with his immortal body
- e. It is similar to the paradox Paul expressed in Php. 1:22-23, a longing desire to "depart"- "Faith does not divest us of all natural feeling, but subordinates it to higher feeling. Scripture gives no sanction to the contempt for the body expressed by philosophers." JFB
- f. The lure is that "what is mortal will be swallowed up of life" - "ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς" literally "in order that the mortal (up into) is devoured by the life"
- g. What a picture! What is mortal of me (subject to death/decay and all that is associated with it) is to be engulfed of immortality (deathlessness)!
- h. This is similar to what Paul wrote them in I Cor. 15:53-54, where he quotes from Isa. 25:8, "He will swallow up death forever..." (no trace of sin and death left!)

C. We “having been prepared” for this also have a “guarantee” - vs. 5

1. The first question often asked with this verse is “prepared for what?”

Even the decay of the “outer man” is God’s work at preparing us for “immortality”

So, in relation to the previous verses dealing with suffering (and the threat of it in all forms), these are all working together – for our good (Rom. 8:28-29) - because He HAS prepared us, these things happen to us (and knowing they have such a glorious purpose, we find comfort in this knowledge)

a. This “very thing” is the mortality being “swallowed up,” and this involves more than just the resurrected body, but also the current process of being “dismantled” (the tent being taken down for the “move”) - this “disassembly” is of God also

b. The past tense “sense” of these phrases points to God’s plan and purposes ahead of time, and that such preparations are not reactionary but strategic!

c. Vincent (in his word studies) wrote of the underlying word for “prepared”, “The compound is significant, indicating an accomplished fact. Through the various operations of His Spirit and the processes of His discipline, God has worked us out (Stanley, worked up) for this change. The process includes the dissolution of what is mortal no less than the renewal. The one is a step to the other.”

2. And as security, we have been given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee!

a. The word for “pledge” is ἀρραβῶνα, and was used of an initial payment serving as a guarantee that the rest would be paid - **it was evidence of a sure investment** by the “payer”

b. Practically, this “pledge” is seen in the inner working and outworking of the Spirit in us - His convicting us, comforting us, reminding us to responsibility, His guiding us in the Truth, and His inner “witness” that we are in Christ, are all evidences of our possessing this “pledge” of what is to follow

The absence of such a working in us is cause for concern and necessary “evaluation” - see II Cor. 13:5

3. So, in summary, He (God) set this all up and equipped us for it with the giving of His Holy Spirit

His inner work within us is not something we want to get good at challenging - His use of Scripture is directly tied to His inner work; many, in their resistance to Him, think they are reasoning correctly because they are uninformed/untaught and contemplate hopelessness because they do not “trust Him”

a. Knowing this, we should be alert not to resist His work (quenching or grieving Him (I Thes. 5:19; Eph. 4:30) - “quenching” is the act of extinguishing something, and in this case, it is the resistance to His working (in us and others) during the times of struggle or temptations to “drift,” and grieving Him occurs when we disregard His “validation” that we are “sealed” in Him (and finding courage (confident hope) in this reality)

b. We have Him with us throughout life, all the way to the end of it (and in facing its end, we are encouraged in it, in that **we do not face it alone!**)

D. “We are of good courage” because we “walk by faith and not by sight” - vs. 6-8

1. “... having courage, then, at all times, and knowing that being at home in the body, we are away from home from the Lord, ...for through faith we walk, not through sight... we have courage...” YLT - the source of this courage is knowing where we are ultimately headed (at all times)

I am “at home” while I live in this body, but with this comes the being apart from the Lord as long as I am “at home” here- both are good, but one is better - compare this again to Php. 1:20-24

a. “Θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε” - courageous/cheerful always - the wording in this sentence is put forward in an intriguing way - Paul basically says “...being always of good courage... we are of good courage” - it is what is between them that establishes the “why” and then the concept is followed by the “what” (as in what then is the obvious result?)

b. “ὅτι ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου” - “while/since at home (in where I live) in the flesh, away from home (out of where I live) apart from the Lord”

c. Such is not written to cause us to develop a “death-wish”, but is more to lay the groundwork for how we look at life (not living in dread of leaving the body, but in the anticipation of it when we are no longer “at home” in our body)

And, interestingly enough, this does lead us to a state of constant cheerful courage

—d. This is, then, the underlying (deep-seated) contentment we have always with us when we are “groaning” (in anticipation (vs. 2)) - this is the source of our patience through life

Hopelessness leads to an unconquerable fatigue and a determination to quit

e. This in no way undermines that Christ is with us always, but this relationship is veiled and not “seen” at this point (we live in light of the unseen reality, and are sure in faith/trust)

2. For “by means of faith” we walk through life - vs. 7

a. Our “περιπατοῦμεν” is our conduct of life (what characterizes us, in the direction in which we are taking in life (in this case, in contrast to most others))

It must be stressed that this is not “blind faith” - it indicates our gaze is focused beyond what can be seen because of what has been revealed to us by God Who sees all!

b. And this “walk” is in the “realm of faith” (trust, and here it is trust in these facts)

—c. It is the living of life (daily) believing/trusting in One we do not see, yet observe the results/end of obedience to Him, not seeing the future, yet trusting His perspective (seeing/knowing the end of all things already)

Special lenses are needed to see at this level, and even with this, interpretation of what is seen is still required (and can be another point of failure)

d. To walk by faith is also to live looking beyond what can be seen - even in nature, we come to realize that there are many things “at work” (in process) behind what we can see - the microscopic level is an example of this (which needs to be studied-out)

- e. Another example is when we see the outward appearance and conduct of others, realizing there is more “behind the scenes” that is dictating what is happening
 - f. The key then in life is to what source/authority will we look to control what we trust and how we see beyond the surface of anything
 - g. Then, to trust that God sees all, still needs the **trust that He is good in it** - if His goodness (the rightness of His character) is doubted, even a belief (mental consent) that He knows and controls all does not mean one will trust He is good in it
 - h. The phrase “οὐ διὰ εἶδους” is usually translated “not by sight” though it references more not the “seeing,” but the “appearance” of something - we live by what we trust versus how something appears (just what is seen)
 - i. “Those who walk by sight walk alone. Walking by sight is just this—”I believe in myself,” whereas walking by faith is, “I believe in God.” Spurgeon
 - j. Note also that this is a statement of fact more than it is a “should-be” scenario - we actually do walk by faith, not by how things look!
 - k. “How do you walk by faith? By claiming the promises of God and obeying the Word of God, in spite of what you see, how you feel, or what may happen.” Wiersbe
3. Cheerfully courageous, anticipating being “with the Lord” - vs. 8
- a. So his source for such courage (unwavering focus in the face of opposition) is his confidence of being with the Lord - and since this takes place as soon as he is “absent from the body”, he is “well-pleased” (εὐδοκοῦμεν) at the thought of this
 - b. Paul does not describe a senseless courage (courage just to be seen as courageous), but it has a grounding in the Truth - he’s bold because of what he knows!
 - c. He has a preference to be with Christ (above all else), and so, the way that must be taken to get there is not disappointing (the seeming obstacle is worth facing because of the “prize”)
 - d. Note John Gill’s take on the intermediate state: “The interval between death, and the resurrection, is a state of absence from the body, during which time the soul is disembodied, and exists in a separate state; not in a state of inactivity and sleep, for that would not be desirable, but of happiness and glory, enjoying the presence of God, and praising of him, believing and waiting for the resurrection of the body, when both will be united together again; and after that there will be no more absence, neither from the body, nor from the Lord...”
 - e. Note; if we are not comforted with the realization of His presence now, then this truth offers no comfort (and then, provides no courage) - it’s likely, that at the heart of the “fear of death” many would discover it is a fear of standing before God to give an account

E. The Judgment Seat of Christ - vs. 9-10

1. “Whether at home or away” we are ambitious! - vs. 9

- a. Paul uses a key word to describe his outlook on life in response to someday being with the Lord - the word is “φιλοτιμούμεθα” which describes that something is being pursued as a point of honor (it is synonymous with “ambition”)
- b. The be “at home” in the body and so “away from the Lord” should not lend itself to being distracted from a life focus to be pleasing to Him
- c. The “aim” is to be pleasing (εὐάρεστοι - well-pleasing) to Him - the “competitors” to this would be a life to please self or others first (or on an equal plane with the Lord)
- d. Such an ambition is the highest that could be pursued in life! It is a wise practice to have regular “checkpoints” throughout life to seriously evaluate what we are truly striving for in life (and how our regular priorities demonstrate it)
- e. See Eph. 5:5-17, “... trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

2. Because we must all be revealed for what we are before Christ’s judgment seat - vs. 10

- a. The simple idea of “appearing” does not express well the underlying word “φανερωθῆναι,” picturing making something visibly clear and in our case, not only openly showing the depth of our dedication to Christ throughout life, but also seeing then ourselves (without distraction) the significance and importance of a life lived for Him
- b. It is “we all” that will be there, each of us - we all should mutually encourage each other in preparation for this day

Our faith involves more than knowing and believing facts about God - it also requires we trust Him for who He is

It describes a “form” that is taken on - our walk is not dictated by the form something has - we realize there is far more to what is seen

It’s the study and discovery of what God’s Word says and living with (implementing) the results

This doesn’t necessarily mean he is “well-pleased” to die; just that, since death comes, this is a desirable result

The significance of Paul’s reference to being “pleased” to be “absent from the body” is another indicator that what he knows is coming, is appealing (not dreadful or disappointing (as the concept of “soul-sleep” would be))

The word for “absent” is ἐκδημησαι which means to “go abroad” - there will be no such absences anymore in eternity!

Some translations add the wording “make it our aim” to help clarify this as not just a fleeting ambition, but one of a life-long focus

Our objective is to be pleasing to Him above all others - if others (including self) conflict with this, they must yield their place in my heart to one of submission to the Lord - this is how true love is shown; priorities are dictated and shifted to please the one we love

We desire such clarity now, while we still have opportunity, rather than when we have finished the course

"Each one" is ἕκαστος, verifying we are not "judged" in groups, but individually

It is a place where the "one in charge" reviews a particular case and reaches a verdict

Romans 14:10-12 also pictures giving an account of service, which is why we don't "judge" one another since we are not the Master

What we do while on this earth will be accounted for - if one is not "in Christ", they come before God on their own and will find only condemnation - to the believer, there is a reckoning of the **value** of what was accomplished

It is common for believers to so misuse the grace of God in their salvation, that they live as though there is no expectation for how such grace is used and invested - His grace also purchased us and our life is one of an endless love debt!

The religious trends of each era do not determine the true difference between these categories of works - the Lord's "standard" will always be found in His word, which "standard" does not vary with the times

Daily consider the moment that we are, as it were, next in line to come before His judgment seat - how can this thought not drive us unless we have cheapened the grace of God in our minds/hearts

- c. Also, realizing "we must all" appear, none of us will avoid it, and each will account for himself (this is not a group accounting, but an individual accounting for each) - this will not be a place where "**blame**" will be of any value
- d. The "judgement seat" is the word "βήματος" describing the place where one appears before a judge to answer for something (it was used of the seat of the judge at a tribunal) - some have compared it to the seat of the judge at an athletic event, though its normal usage is before a legal/authoritative judge - this judge sees all!
- e. Is this a judgment for sins with the possibility of condemnation? It looks to be a different event than the "Great White Throne" judgement of Rev. 20:11 - the context demands that this be a judgement of an accounting, not of condemnation - notice 5:19 ("... not counting their **trespasses** against them...") and 5:21 ("... that in him we might become the righteousness of God.") - see also Rom. 5:8-9; 8:1 (this includes indicatives)
- f. Notice also in Mat. 16:26 and the very last book of the Bible, Rev. 22:12, everyone is "repaid" for what he has done - for the unbeliever, even their "righteous works" will be "worthless" before God, so only those in Christ will have any "good works"
- g. In I John 2:28, we are instructed to "abide in Him" (as in where and how we live our lives), so that we not be "ashamed" when He comes - its not that we are terrified, but embarrassed, because of our **negligence**
- h. The purpose of this time and place is that each one may "receive what is due for what he has done in the body" - there is a clear indication of variations of "reward" (as in I Cor. 4:5, where once the heart behind each work is exposed for what it is, then each will receive his "commendation from God")
- i. The "earning what is due" is done only while "in the body" - our time and resources are limited and need to be looked on as investments - all the "excuses" we create to justify irresponsibility, will not be worth it! Sins will not condemn us, but they assuredly will **distract** and shame us - see Gal. 6:7-8
- j. What is the possible outcome of this judgment? The "recompense" of what is done while on this earth is the determination of whether the actions and overall character is "good" (ἀγαθὸν - of value) or "bad" (φαῦλον - worthless, of no account) - and Christ as the judge is the one determining which of these our works fall into
- k. If we are not judged according to our sins (which would be condemnation for any sin left "uncovered"), then what are the consequences?
 - l. It is easy to realize that His favorable commendation is the highest of rewards (a "well done" from Him), but what is the negative judgment/result? - a life characterized by "worthless" works suffers the loss of **reward** (which is immense) - this is the same concept as dealt with in I Cor. 3:12-15
- m. This is the driving-force for Paul because of his ambition to "be pleasing to Him" - the consideration of this is to be a constant motivator for us throughout life - to not live in the reality of this, will lead to a living for self (our ambition to please ourselves), which produces worthless works (not worthy of the Lord who purchased us)

VIII. As Being "New Creatures", We No Longer Live For Ourselves, Having Been Given a Ministry - 5:11-21

A. Why we strive to persuade (toward Christ) men rather than be persuaded of men otherwise - vs. 11-13

1. What controls what we do and why we do it, is an important fact to know

We must have consistent times of self-scrutiny, looking to reach the truth of what drives us to do what we do, and what causes us to hesitate or alter what we will say or do (with/for others)? Who/what are we considering primarily in the decisions to act that we make?

- a. It does not take much self-inspection to determine what we are doing, but the "why" can be allusive to us, or we may not be **comfortable** with the answer
- b. Paul identifies up-front the controlling factor in **why he does what he does** - the "Therefore" is there because of verse 10 - knowing his soon to come accounting before the Lord, he is out for the Lord's agenda, not his or any other
- c. The common "competitors" for our heart-motive are self and others (pride or popularity, or a mixture of both)

2. So, "Since we know the fear of the Lord", this is the drive and standard by which "persuade" - vs. 11

- a. This "fear" is one of reverence and respect, with a fear of disappointing (not because he would be condemned, but because he does not want to disappoint the One who rescued him)

We definitely do not want to be those who steer others wrongly - some, because of this, withdraw from looking to influence people either way - believers are not supposed to see this as optional

“Those so “manifested” need have no “terror” as to their being “manifested (English Version, ‘appear’) before the judgment-seat” JFB

This is another reason we strive to be “real”, not pretend-ers for Christ, but true slaves of His, living for His cause alone!

Interesting: the word for “commend” (συνιστάνομεν) also carries the idea of discovering/ revealing what something is “made-up of”

It is so important to analyze what we are actually looking to the most - plenty of religious organizations will attract by use of popular methods, and those that are looking for - such will get what they desire, but not what they need - this is immature priorities never out-grown

The definition of “insane” in a society can vary from generations to generation and can pivot off of popular practice, and that those not conforming to the given majority are not in their right mind - faith in Christ has often been viewed as “madness” by many

We don't strive to come across as foolish, but we must be aware that we will sooner or later be looked on as such by those that do not believe (thus they cannot/do not see)

We will likely see the unbelievers as “mad” at times because they do not see and accept the truth - we must not lose sight of the need for God's grace

- b. The word for “persuade” is *πείθομεν*, which indicates an act of causing one to trust or have their confidence in something (its root is the word for “faith”) - it is quite an undertaking to work to redirect someone's confidence to something else!
 - c. “Con-men” (confidence men) have occupied many places throughout history, and are most noted to be hucksters (deceivers) - yet one way or another, we are directed/ inclined to place our confidence in something and this usually directed/influenced by another
 - d. We must, as Paul here, be influencers (with the full spectrum of the Gospel) and **not those influenced by others to some other priority** (religious or not) - see Gal. 1:6-10
3. We live “manifested” before God, so nothing (no motive) is hid - vs. 11-13
- a. What we really are is open and known to God, and Paul “hopes” that such (his heart, inner motive) is also open and known to the Corinthians
 - b. It is likely some accused Paul of trying to convince toward a certain direction (for some nefarious or self-serving purpose) - whether he and his team were believed or not, he knew God could see all (and on that he would “stand or fall”)
 - c. Our motive should be out of an overriding reverence for the Lord, motivating us to direct others either to repentance, or (to believers), to live consecrated for Him, with a focus of our giving account some day - yet, this is only doable (practically) by being able also to persuade/convince others of our genuineness - many can tout their beliefs, but it's far more difficult to live out their effect in our lives, consistently
 - d. There is a desire to be recognized as “genuine” (having integrity), for without it, persuasion of others is made more difficult
 - e. Speaking of integrity, he was not looking to “commend themselves again” (as in building up themselves, which he essentially mocked in 3:1), but was looking to give them something to respond with, against those that “... boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.”
 - f. The basic idea is to give them something to counter the proud hypocrites, with putting forward what are genuine qualities to “boast” about (internal (of the heart) qualities of Christ likeness) - external talents, skills, attractive traits and popular features are likely to be competing influences with what is **right and/or best** in every generation
 - g. To yield to popular opinion (what attracts the most people) at the exclusion of what is actually of value (and true), is truly “worthless works”, having all the appearance of success, results and “rightness” (because of popular support), but of no eternal value
 - h. As seen also in II Cor. 10:7, the Corinthians had a weakness for considering the “outward appearance” more than the heart - to “prove” that something is of the heart usually requires time and some sort of challenges that reveal (under pressure) whether or not what we put-forward as being who/what we are is genuine
 - i. There is another possible handling of boasting in the external as being in reference (also) to those who boast **outwardly**, but it is not **inwardly** real - they are focused on “keeping up appearances,” with no serious consideration whether it is “of the heart”
 - j. Paul and his team were looked on as “beside ourselves” (*ἔξῆσθημεν*, a term used here and in Mark 3:21 of being “out of one's mind”) - His dedication and message were apparently viewed by some as crazy, and it is also noted by some that there were those that thought Paul had lost his mind in the encounter with Christ on his way to Damascus
 - k. No matter what, Paul would consider it a “win win” since he was not motivated by popular opinion, so if he was looked upon as crazy, then his craziness was because of God (for His purposes, as many of God's prophets of old likely faced)
 - l. Paul had already dealt with similar topics in I Cor 1 (the “foolish confounding the wise” and in I Cor. 4:10 where he, in sarcasm, states “We are fools for Christ's sake”) - then those seeing themselves as wise, the “preaching of the cross is foolishness”, as is the dependence upon it and the life dedicated to Christ because of it
 - m. If they are seen and heard as “in their right mind” then it is for their sake (by God's grace) they understand - this reality is often missed by believers, that we recognize and believe the Truth of God's Word by God's grace, and not by our “natural good sense”

B. The love of Christ constrains and compels us! - vs. 14-15

1. This "love of Christ" is not our love for Him (that controls us), but His love of us that controls

a. His love is the source, and our love of Him is but a response - it is when we come to realize what His love did and its comprehensive scope, that this becomes the driving force for the whole of our lives

Paul is giving the Corinthians an explanation as to why he does what he does, and is not "free" to come up with a method or alter the message to achieve a result that he would see for himself as better

- b. Consider the varying uses of the term for "controls" (συνέχει - "συν" (together) and "έχει" (to hold)) - "overmasters", "completely dominates", "overwhelms" and even "leaves us no choice" (as in how Plummer paraphrases it, "restrains us from self-seeking" and "keeps me from selfish motives")

Such a distracted use of these verses causes many to miss the point and the reason Paul is saying what he is saying (why he does what he does and why he does it the way he does it)

c. This being the core idea of these two verses is important to keep in focus to not mis-apply how Paul makes his point - some see in these verses a reference to "universalism" (that everyone (every human being) will ultimately be saved by Christ's work)- interestingly, there is a universal component to what is stated here but not in the sense that is taken by "universalists"

2. He reaches this point realizing ("having concluded") a truth about life, which once understood, dictates how he sees everything (it is a "paradigm shift"!)- vs. 14

a. Once he came to realize this next point, he saw the magnitude of the love of Christ which became **the never-ending governor of his life** (living)

As in Heb. 2:9, Christ did "taste death for everyone"

b. He came to realize that since "one has died for all" then all died - this was their condition, but particularly demonstrated when Christ died (having become one of us)

Again, the point is Paul's realization of the condition of mankind (dead) and that Christ's death to address such a dilemma carries with it an obvious moral obligation of dedication - He was selfless, so how can I be selfish?

c. A parallel text to this concept would be Romans 5:12-21 (and the resulting conclusion to those "in Christ" in Romans 6)

- d. Christ's death was an indicator that all were "dead" and that His death on the cross was "for" ("ὐπὲρ" on the behalf of) all - taken plainly (even in context) there is no issue with taking this as for all mankind, indicating at the very least that the offer of "salvation" is to all

e. Was this written to indicate all are "saved"? - certainly not, as will be distinguished in the next verse - Christ's death can be looked upon as being "for all" but not all are "raised with Him" - such a truth makes the conscious rejection or neglect of Christ's death for us the worst of all evils!

3. "...they who live should no longer live for themselves..." - vs. 15

Based on this text and others, there is a clear sense of Christ dying for all, but not all will be "in Christ" and thus raised to newness of life" (which Paul builds on in 5:17)

a. "ὐπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν", "On behalf of all He died"; **to what end?**

b. "ἵνα οἱ ζῶντες", "in order that the living", **for not all will live**, but those that do, no longer live for themselves

c. This is the point of these verses! This is the "conclusion" Paul could not avoid when he came to realize what Christ had actually done, and for whom (the dead) it was done

d. **What true life purpose could the "dead" have?** Those that are given life (from the dead) because of Christ, owe all their life to him - those not in Christ that are alive (living for themselves) do not truly live (for death is separation, and separation from God's grace/goodness is not life at all!)

see Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 14:7-9; Heb. 13:20-21

e. Having come to conclude this fact, the result is obvious - they who "live" should no longer live for themselves - he is making this point in contrast to the other influences that were trying to counter him and his message (and methodology) for a more "pragmatic" purpose - living for self makes "natural" sense, but when seen in light of Christ's gift, living for self is absurd! Without Him, there is no true life

The scope of "living for Him" is much broader than most seem to interpret and apply it - it is a life entirely devoted to and for Christ - it is that "aim" to be pleasing to Him in EVERYTHING, not at periodic, designated times of "religious devotion and focus"

- f. The "Living," live on behalf of (for the advantage of) Him who died and rose again on behalf of (for the advantage) us - this results in a life of devotion to Him, not one characterized by mediocrity and/or self-aggrandizement

g. His death in our place was more than just death, seeing He took the full wrath of God upon Him, facing the ultimate death/separation from God, followed by the proof of victory and proof of true life (now not under the curse of sin) in His resurrection **for** us

Our picking and choosing when and where we will obey the Lord is evidence of self-rule

h. So, in light of the facts, a life lived for self is a wasted life and is not characterized by the newness of life (real life) dealt with in Romans and in verse 17 of this chapter - a life for self is evidenced in self being on the "throne" (service to God must be approved by self first)

C. We are a new creation; the old has gone the new has come! - vs. 16-17

1. From now on (from this point on), we do not look on anyone in regards to “the flesh” - vs. 16

James 2:1-4 is a good text that demonstrates those in the church that maintain a “fleshly” priorities system of evaluating others - this approach is in contradiction to Christ and is in no way to be a part of how the church conducts itself

- a. To see others and to even see ourselves “in the flesh” speaks of how we evaluate things - in the “natural”, “fleshly” way (with the values used being temporal, subject to the priorities and values of the age in which we live)
- b. In this context, Paul uses it to stress why they don’t participate in the “politics” of the time - each society/age will have its popular, endorsed and encouraged priorities that are expected to be the **social currency** used

2. For them Christ was once “known according to the flesh,” but no longer

“Christianity” has been guilty of looking to society and what it glories in as the key to fulfilling the work of Christ - this is opposite to the truth - light and salt contradict their surroundings, not blend in with them!

- a. Christ is not to be evaluated using the standards of the age (according to the flesh) - He is not to be seen how He will improve our earthly life (though there will likely be improvements, these are not the purpose)
- b. The true Christ of the Bible will never be “world-popular” for who He really is - since He represents the eternal, the “temporal” will resist Him since His message and ways won’t fit in the scope of the imposed priorities of our time
- c. Christ is no longer “regarded” (known, looked upon) in this way (never to be)

3. Because this is the case (therefore), anyone who is “in Christ” is “καινή κτίσις” a new creation

see Rom. 8:1-9; Eph. 1:3-10

It is important to realize that this is not a “should be” scenario but a statement of reality - those “in Christ” are new creations - as in Paul’s time, many are in the Church and in leadership positions that are driven by what should be “old things” and are not constrained by the love of Christ in their drive toward “all things new”

- a. To be “in Christ” refers to any who are raised with Him to “newness of life” and are no longer “in themselves” (being in the sphere of His righteousness, His work)
- b. This is a conditional description; only those in Christ are totally new, having the old things set aside (passed away) - those still characterized with the “old things” are then not in Christ and are seen as such by how well they fit-in and follow the “flesh”
- c. “And “passed away” is correct despite the fact that some of the old things still cling to us in this life. They only cling to the new creation; they are now “old things” and not really any longer a part of us.” Lenski
- d. “ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά”, “Look, the new has come!” - this is to be a remarkable difference, as in it be a dramatic shift from “the old” - it is this stark distinction that helps answer the criticisms of hypocrisy which are said to be what best describes the Church
- e. This concept is a precursor to what will be addressed in II Cor. 6:14-7:1, which is a text often associated with “separation” teachings, which even though they have often been misused by legalistic people, are still truths to the **needed distinctions** we are to have from the world - we are not saved by the pursuit of holiness, but **because we are “saved” (being in Christ) we will be characterized by such holiness**
- f. “In the experience of this new creation the standards and pretensions of this world sink into insignificance.” Philip Hughes

Christ describes this as “being born again” (new birth) - we are not the same person we once were, nor could we ever be again- we cannot un-become who/what we are

D. To what end has all this happened? - vs. 18-21

1. Did this occur to only save us from the wrath to come and secure us a place in Heaven?

- a. If this was the case, why do we continue to live out our lives on this earth? - since we do still remain, there must be another purpose for this work of God in and for us
- b. All of these leading concepts were clarified to layout the ministry of ambassadorship we have been given - we are now “in the service”

2. The first necessary part of this service is a restoration of ourselves to God - vs. 18

There is no reconciliation (peace, reunion) with God apart from Christ - the lost relationship with our Creator is restored in Christ - it is His doing and not ours (the initiation of it and the fulfillment of it)

- a. Paul begins, “All things are from God” (stated literally), so since this is the case, He has a purpose in all the things He oversees Redeemed/ransomed versus reconciled - official versus personal
- b. We are directly brought into the focus of His purpose when we realize God “καταλλάξαντος” (reconciled, bringing two persons together at the exact point) united us again to Himself through Christ - this same word is used in Rom. 5:10
- c. This was not a matter of “man” reconciling God to himself, but was an act of God to restore us back to Him - yet it was not without purpose, and that purpose related to our remaining time in the world as well as into eternity
- d. Paul’s point is not to detail our salvation (reconciliation back to God) as much as it was to indicate that the service we have been given is that with a focus to representing the message of God’s work to reconcile people back to Himself
- e. Christian ministries are often hijacked to “win” people to the ministers and not the Lord

In contrast to the competing “ministerial” factions in Corinth whose objectives contained a motive to draw people to themselves (and not directly to God)

Mankind turned on God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3)- Man cannot restore himself back to God - only God can do this

This purpose is supposed to be in our daily life-focus - is this our greatest concern for those we interact daily?

"For God was in Christ, and made agreement between the world and himself, and imputed not their sins unto them." William Tyndale's translation

God is not currently holding all accountable for **all** their sins ("counting" being in the present tense), and a way has been prepared that could more than accommodate everyone that has ever lived - the way is set, but as illustrated by Christ, few go in that "narrow way" opting for the wide and easy-looking way - see Rom. 2:4-6

Such distractions also take away from the "Word of reconciliation" either in questioning God's plan or in assuming that everyone "will make it" anyway

Our salvation/reconciliation is not just a life addendum, but becomes a part of our identity (affecting how we look on life and others and how our lives are defined)

see Rom. 4:6-8 and Col. 2:13-15 for more detail on this message and how reconciliation was done

The other influences that had crept into the Church at Corinth, were more representing themselves or some other person or philosophy

We must refrain from looking on this as "winning" others to ourselves (by means of compromising the message)

The proud will resist even the most humble presentation of the Gospel, but the truly humble may doubt its authenticity when such a message is delivered by the overtly proud

- f. The order of this statement is key - "reconciliation" is not the restoration of God to man, but man to God - it seems as though (because of the rising influence of humanism in our churches) many religious organizations and members look on God as needy and lonely, and therefore needing to come back into our "good graces"
- g. Being so fortunate in being restored by/to our Creator, we have been given the "τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς," the service, the work to be so used as to communicate this to others so they also can have such restoration - this restoration is to be more our focus than all other peripheral ministries to the lost (since we realize many ministries that use charitable services have come to make the charitable services the sole focus)

3. At the core of the message of reconciliation - vs. 19

- a. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" - there is much discussion as to whether this means God the Father was "in" Christ in the "work of reconciliation" or more along the lines of God was having this done by means of Christ - both handlings work and do not contradict
- b. This text is not teaching "universalism" (that everyone, no matter what, is saved by the work of Christ whether they seek it or not) - first, there are basic terms used as in "κόσμον" (world as in distinction to just Israel) and the word for "sins" / "trespasses" is "παράπτωματα" (a "side-step" as in crossing a line deliberately or by stumbling), and most importantly, there still remains a ministry to reconcile and a command "be reconciled to God" in this chapter
- c. God initiated this work and the offer is universal, the response is not - there are two sides to the salvation process, God's and ours; God's being the key - people are clearly offered the way, and their rejection/neglect of it will lend to their ultimate condemnation - there is always the looming question "what about those who have never been told and have never had a chance?", but to alter our Soteriology to accommodate an acceptable answer (to us) for this, is to presume that we know as much as God in any given situation
- d. The word that's used for sin and the general "tone" of these verses look to possibly be alluding to Paul's conversion (Acts 9) while he was very active in fighting against the cause of Christ - and now this amazing act of "reconciliation" to an enemy (Paul) is made available to the entire world
- e. And now, God has "θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν" (put/lodged in us) the "word of the reconciliation" such a message (good news) not just being something they pick-up and read, but something placed within them (**it became part of who they were**) - so it is a message that is not just known, it is lived!
- f. At the heart of this message of reconciliation is the means by which this is done; "not counting their trespasses against them" which is a permanent standing when one is "in Christ" - such a forgiveness of debt, at such a price is a profound message (life-altering) when received by the penitent (versus the self-righteous proud)

4. Ambassadors for Christ - vs. 20

- a. Having the official message from God (creator of the universe), they (Paul and his team) are serving as "ambassadors for Christ" - and as such, are dictated by His purposes and His message - they are not "free" to add to or take away from the message nor to misrepresent any aspect of it in any way
- b. The "appeal" (παρακαλοῦντος - calling someone to themselves) is from God not from Paul - even (especially when) we get emotionally involved in our service in this capacity, we cannot assume we are more merciful or gracious than the One we represent! - many are "won-over" to the messenger but not to the Sovereign who sent them
- c. We are not (to the same degree) as authoritative in our position as that of the Apostles, but the one we serve is still the same one they served, so there is no reason not to look upon these verses as applicable to us and defining our calling
- d. So the "call" we proclaim is to others for restoration back to God - and as indicated in this verse, such a "ministerial cry" is directed at those within the Church - the reason to look for indicators of such a relationship is not for "spiritual superiority" but out of love and duty ("fear of the Lord" versus fear of man)

Urgency and discernment need to work hand-in-hand in such a call - we do not want to be so urgent we offend or "scare-off" by our approach, yet neither do we desire to be crippled by being overly cautious

This message is the fundamental message that needs to be proclaimed - it will provoke many questions such as "Who is God?" and "Why do I need reconciliation?" - till they come to see their "lostness" they will see no need for being "found" again

God's message to mankind is not just one of many choices; it is the only answer/solution to our eternal dilemma - a cure that has been adulterated with poison is no longer a cure! So Christian variations invented to appeal to differing groups are not any better a solution (they are likely more dangerous)

The animal sacrifices throughout the Old Testament were all illustrative of this happening - the sacrifice must have no blemish to be qualified

Again, Rom. 4:6-8 - God would not hold our sin to our account, not because it was "overlooked" but because it was paid for!

We could not accomplish either of the two requirements: to live a perfect/sinless life and to pay for (make-up for) the debt of our sin - both were unimaginable impossibilities!

- e. "...we beg you on behalf of Christ..." - the word for "beg" is δεόμεθα, communicating far more than a basic request; it is one of urgency - and since this is on behalf of Christ, the urgency is His also (not out of any type of panic or vulnerability on His part, but out of the importance such a thing is to us - it is urgently communicated so we become urgent in our response)
- f. The appeal is "be reconciled to God" (Robertson - "'Get reconciled to God,' and do it now." as being the sense in the underlying Greek) - "The great mischief of the lost is that they procrastinate. It is not that they resolve to be damned but that they resolve to be saved tomorrow. It is not that they reject Christ forever, but they reject Christ today.. Still others claim they do not feel prepared to make a decision at this time, as if living another month in sin would make them more prepared to believe..." Spurgeon
- g. This was stated to the Corinthians, making it appear that there were some that still were not in a state of being reconciled/restored to God - some see this as what the message is to be (as ambassadors), being "Be reconciled to God!"

5. How was reconciliation made possible? - vs. 21

- a. This is an essential question to have answered, in contrast to all the other religious and spiritual ideologies that offer their own answer - the answer here is in stark contrast to all other religious systems ever constructed by man (that involve man's efforts to save or promote himself)
- b. Notice (in the original language) how this answer is started; "τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν" ("the one having never known sin (experientially), on the behalf of us, sin was made" (and in this case, was "made so" by God)) - such a concept was introduced in Isaiah 53:9-12 and reiterated in I Pet. 2:22-24
- c. All sin must be judged (face the sentence of God's wrath) - this work of God in Christ provided the away to deal with sin by having a "vessel" that had no impurities whatsoever of its own, and pouring our sin into it so that the sin would be rightfully condemned - none of us could have done this, seeing we already had sin of our own that needed a solution outside ourselves
- d. The reason for this is astounding (and is the great contrast to all other religious systems) - two transferences needed to take place; our sin on Him and His righteousness (the perfect life) transferred to us (our account)
- e. What a plan! We rebel against God (on our own). God provides Jesus Christ as the perfect life, the "without blemish" sacrifice, applies our sin on Him, crushes Him and imputes His righteous life to our now clear (of debts) account - and all this done to reconcile us back to Himself; there exists no greater demonstration of love than this!
- f. Yet, as will be dealt with in the next chapter, such grace can be worthless to the one failing to consider it because of some other temporal and impotent "glory" - also, since we are "made the righteousness of God," our lives will reflect such a distinctions - this is one of the concepts Paul will also deal with in the next chapter ("coming out from among them and be separate")

IX. "Proven Slaves" of God So as Not To Discredit the Message and Ministry - 6:1-13

A. "Receive not the grace of God in vain" - vs. 1-2

- 1. Realize that we, as those literally working together with God in this ministry of reconciliation, that the grace that has been given not return empty

Not that we are being "saved" over and over again, but that the grace of God has life-long affects and will be outwardly demonstrated as such

It is likely that Paul competitors were focusing on natural talents or other developed gifts and the opportunities to showcase them/self - but God's grace is to showcase His work and power

- a. The resulting grace at our salvation is not a "once in time" result as much as it is an ongoing result (effects of the result)
- b. This point is not casual, it is urgent! - realize that this is fundamental to our life-purpose, do not "δέξασθαι" (welcome, receive, accept) the grace that God provides to an empty conclusion (with no true results)
- c. Such was either likely to happen or already happening with some in the church - they stood with "believers" but their lives were not demonstrating the results of God's grace (as lives lived in light of God's saving grace and His ongoing enablement (also grace) to live lives pleasing to Him and for His purposes)

d. This is not the “grace” of regeneration, but the “grace” of ministry - realizing the magnitude and magnificence of what has been given, don’t squander it with a focus on self or on another “gospel” that might be more naturally appealing, yet with error

2. Now is the best time to act! - vs. 2 (*carpe diem* - “seize the day!”)

This point being made, not so much to describe the Gospel as much as it is to show it was God’s work and “aided” in its outworking by God, so then it will be with all the challenges and “pains” that will come in being ambassadors for Christ with His message

- a. The first statement, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” is taken from Isaiah 49:8, and is a statement from God to the Messiah
- b. At “the right time” Jesus was heard in His time leading up to the crucifixion, and “in the day of salvation” (in this case, the day salvation was “won” by the Lord), the Messiah (Christ) was helped (it being a joint work as now we are privileged to do in our lifetime)
- c. We, since we are “in Christ,” should expect the same assistance in carrying out our responsibilities as they have been given to us (and since this help is assured, we need not fear or react in such a way to as to change the message or come up with a method that is not in harmony with the tasks we have been assigned)
- d. Since this is all true (and has been proven by Christ), “ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος” (take notice (imperative), right now *is the* time/season to be well received (as in there is no better time than now)) - we need not wait for “ideal circumstances” to do what we have been instructed to do
- e. “Why” is now the ideal time to be ambassadors for Christ in all we do? - because “ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας” (take notice (imperative), right now is the day (not yesterday, not tomorrow) of salvation (the work is complete and we can now point to the completed solution)) - all other concepts/philosophies cannot offer this!
- f. He uses the word for “day” and not season/era, because we cannot do anything about yesterday and we are not guaranteed we will have tomorrow to seize the opportunities we’re given “today”
- g. So use what God has given and don’t waste His grace by any type of neglect or misuse

It is this concept that can hinder obedience (since, knowing what we are to do, we excuse inaction because we’re waiting for better opportunities (as we define them)

And, our message is one of reconciliation, one that we will continually use, even with fellow believers (reminding them of their reconciled state and the need to utilize it)

B. The demonstrations (indicators) of true ministry - vs. 3-10

1. As (apparently) Paul was facing, there were those that claimed to also be servants/slaves of the Lord, doing His work, and yet differed with Paul (and likely question his legitimacy and integrity)

Quite often this is seen in the pursuit of what will be widely accepted (even if only in certain “circles”) which can evidence (subtly) it is done with a drive to be accepted/commended by those around us

- a. In his defense, he lays out some of the evidences of legitimate service, and they are not similar to what amounts to self-service
- b. Many that claim to be ministering (in any capacity for the Lord) do so out of a selfish or self-exalting purpose
- c. The “commending” of themselves was to show who they serve (and it is seen in what they are to (and have) face in the service of the Lord)

2. One primary goal is to not be a cause of stumbling for those being ministered to - vs. 3

Seeing that each day is filled with opportunity to seize, he did not want to let down his guard and allow himself to be used as a legitimate criticism of the ministry

- a. If our own inconsistencies hinder “the work”, we are working against it - there is to be (as with Paul) a focus to not be the hindrance to the ministry ourselves
- b. “Giving no cause for offense in anything” is also translated “We put no obstacle in anyone’s way” and the word for “offense” (obstacle) is a picture of something that causes someone to stumble/be tripped-up
- c. Whether we think it fair to not, our personal consistency with the message and Lord we represent, is very important - people in Paul’s time as well as ours are looking for something they can use to excuse themselves from heeding all that is associated with the “word of reconciliation” - this will not excuse them before God, but we certainly don’t want to lend to their “argument”

People often cannot see around the contradictions of the messenger so as to see the message

As is about to be demonstrated, much of the “proof” of legitimacy is shown in and through suffering in the association, teaching/proclaiming and doing of what is right

It is common for some to appease their conscience by seeing others “fall”

- d. Paul and his team were representatives of not only the Lord, but also of His word/truth
- e. With this prominent in his focus, he purposed that no fault would be found “with our ministry” (or that the “ministry not be discredited”) - and this discrediting would not be along the lines of it not harmonizing with the popular thought of the day, but in his and his team not “practicing what they preach” - sceptics will often react to a message they don’t like and then will test whether or not the messenger will live by it themselves
- f. It would likely be painful to find out how many people over the years, have used us (our inconsistencies) to excuse themselves from some point of obedience - better to be used to convict the conscience with truth than to ease it away from the truth!

3. Instead, the objective is “In everything” that they do they demonstrate themselves as God’s “διδάκονοι” (servants busy doing the master’s work (with the word picture of “kicking up the dust” as we hurry to the work)) - and such demonstrations will come in a wide variety of ways

Sometimes the stress is not so much the amount as much as it is the length of time (a little pain over a long period of time can become immense)

Many points of resistance are not signs that we are doing the wrong thing, but the right

As God revealed to Israel in Deut. 8, He allowed them to hunger to demonstrate that they live by means of His word

In chapter 11:23-24 Paul references being whipped 5 times and 3 times beaten with rods (all by the Jews)

Such a “criminal stigma” does not deter the working of God - here, Paul uses such opposition from the enemy as proof of his genuineness

Distracting disturbances like these are often deployed as a diversion away from the truth - the underlying word pictures an unsettledness, typically because of politics

Fatigue in general is discouraging and far more challenging when mixed with resistance

It is also possible and probable that Paul went without food out of grief or being “burdened” (and having no appetite)

These are not characterized by the “vices” of their day - those that are and that claim to be the Lord’s servants, are typically looking for wider acceptance

Or it is full of “practical” ideas without the moral, authoritative framework of Scripture

- a. “In much endurance” (έν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ, in “staying under much” (much in quantity and in time) - this describes a steadfastness while under pressure, the opposite being an unwillingness to face resistance at all or not for very long - it also would contain the idea of bearing with others (as in patient, long-suffering with others) - a key indicator of being God’s servant is putting-up with much from others while trying to help them
- b. “in affliction” (έν θλίψεσιν, in being “pressed in”) - the concept is that of the pressure/persecution that is inflicted to get someone to change/conform - the “opposition” desires us to fear being alone, outcast, or harmed because of nonconformity
- c. “in hardships” (έν ἀνάγκαις, in having urgent needs) - this refers to situations where immediacy of a need is the focus (ones that could not have been planned or prepared for) - Believers are to be characterized by not panicking when faced with needs, and when there is no apparent way they will be met - trust in the Lord’s provision (in all situations with all needs) is to characterize His true servants - it has become common for ministers and ministries to look to others rather than God to have their needs met
- d. “in distresses” (έν στενοχωρίαις, being “narrowed-in” as in being cornered and options/freedoms severely limited) - in such situations, surrendering to circumstances (to the neglect of responsibility) is not an option, and God’s ministers are to expect to be resourceful with what options are left open to them
- e. “in beatings” (έν πληγαῖς, in reference to the scourgings, blows they had received and being physically wounded) - and these were not deterred by such expressions of hatred and condemnation, yet many, then and now, refuse to suffer even deriding commentary against themselves
- f. “in imprisonments” (έν φυλακαῖς, as in being guarded/watched, with freedoms to move about taken away) - this is another treatment typically given a criminal, which they were so deemed because of the disorder that seemed to follow them
- g. “in riots” (έν ἀκαταστασίαις, describing an “out of control” situation or environment) - this often happens when the truth is being countered and onlookers often “buy into” the intended appearance that such “commotions” disqualify it - history demonstrates that overzealous responses (for and against a cause) often occur, but do not necessarily demonstrate (rightly) the quality of the “cause” - the undue fear of “reactions” often silences those who ought to speak
- h. “in labors” (έν κόποις, extreme fatigue from intense work accompanied with trouble) - this would have been the work of the ministry (things were not “coming easy”) and any labor to support himself and his team in day-to-day expenses/needs - the endurance (as this section began) through such, was some of the proof of their genuineness
- i. “in sleeplessness” (έν ἀγρυπνίαις, sleepless nights because of stresses or responsibilities) - the word carries the idea of “watching” either as in watching through the night because of an enemy, or out of anticipation of the coming day
- j. “in hunger” (έν νηστείαις, a word often used of fasting, yet in this context has the idea of going without food, likely because there was none to be had) - fear of lacking basic needs (such as food) is often at the heart of the hypocrites who feign faith, yet will compromise quickly to ensure their “needs” are met
- k. “in purity” (έν ἀγνότητι, which essentially described “holy living”) - the true “slave” of the Lord is evidenced also in their “separated” lives (the underlying word indicating a separation from the norm), and such is supposed to be expected for those who are not “secular” (as in its original meaning “of the age”) - they are “exceptional!
- l. “in knowledge” (έν γνώσει, which is a standard word for knowledge and so, understanding) - in this context it most likely just refers to imparting actual truth, and in the process, training others by doing so - much that exists as spiritual/religious “truth” or “training” is a hodgepodge of ideas, opinions, catchy anecdotes and popular trends with little to no lasting value

In the old English this word is typically translated "long suffering"

Such are conscious to work towards not being personally offensive - they strive to be considerate

But if the source and purpose of what we do is wrong, it cannot possibly end "holy"

The same wording is used in Romans 12:9, where it is linked with "abhorring evil and clinging to what is good"

As referenced in the previous point, giving the truth is at the core of ministry - else, it would be a facade based on insincere cliches and popular trends, intending to "tickle the ears"

pseudo ministers rarely (if ever) show dependence on God

As in Romans 6, these "weapons" are not to be yielded over to anything related to the causes of unrighteousness - plus, the usage of military terms is a reminder that this is warfare, and not a time for ease

Being appreciated for what we do is not to be a prerequisite for what we do!

Dependence on compliments and praise is wrong - see I Cor. 4:9-16 for Paul's example to be imitated

Praise can also be flattery which if loved, will ensnare its recipient - even true praise may be short-lived and must not be addictive

"A man, especially a minister, who is constantly endeavoring to vindicate his own reputation, usually has a reputation which is not worth vindicating." Barnes

- m. "in patience" (έν μακροθυμία, which is a forbearance with others or circumstances, with the intent to hold-off personal anger) - the opposite would be "rights seeking" versus "rights yielding" for the good of others - thus a true minister of the Lord does not look to make situations "about themselves," but will defer their anger so the message and ministry is not hindered - such a quality does not allow itself to be provoked or to seek out revenge/retaliation
- n. "in kindness" (έν χρηστότητι, describing graciousness, considering the feelings and life situations of others in the process of ministering to them) - "...a sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain..." Plummer
- o. "in the Holy Spirit" (έν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ, what is to be done is done by means of the Holy Spirit and His "gracing" (gifting) to get it done) - this is in contrast to the natural spirit of man, where self-glory, self-effort and natural talents/inclinations are looked to as a means to do what needs to be done - this (here) takes away any self-credit, acknowledging that we are led to do what we ought (what is right) by His work, and are empowered to do so by His gifting (graces) - the contrast would be those who credit their talents, drive and ingenuity for what they see as being "good" that gets done
- p. "in genuine love" (έν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ, in selfless affection that is not faked) - some of the indicators of genuine love are patience (over an extended amount of time), giving the truth (versus providing only what ones desires to hear), gracious and kind to those interacted with and considering the other as more important - it is not possible to perform the fullest of ministries without actually caring for those served - this is often not the case, because of its required vulnerability and that there is an expectation of reciprocation (and if not given, "ministry is abandoned")
- q. "in the word of truth" (έν λόγῳ ἀληθείας, providing truth drawn from the source of truth, the Word of God) - at its most literal sense this is actually stating "in/by word of truth" and in speaking the truth versus what is not true, or adjusted away from full truth (sometimes by not just what is said, but by what is not said)
- r. "in the power of God" (έν δυνάμει Θεοῦ, in/by means of the power from God versus that of man) - the changes and results of true ministry are not attributable to the will and ability of mankind, so is looking to the popular solutions of our age for temporal, surface fixes - a true minister of Christ is characterized by dependence on Him
- s. "by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left" (διὰ τῶν ὀπλῶν τῆς δικαιοσύνης, through (by means of) the instruments/tools of what God deems as right) in contrast to the tools/methods not endorsed/sanctioned by God - with reference to the "right hand and on the left" it indicates offensive and defensive "weapons" - see Romans 6:13 regarding the control of these "instruments" - note also that the reference to "right and left side" pictures the "war" all around, requiring constant alertness to everything impacting/affecting our lives
- t. "through honor and dishonor" (διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀτιμίας, faithful in glory and when without honor) - the service done for the Lord is not conditional, facing respect from those being served and disrespect, yet the consistency of service remains - so, if shown honor, it did not "go to their heads," and if despised, it did not defeat them
- u. "by evil report and good report" (διὰ δυσφημίας καὶ εὐφημίας, through defamation and commendation) - love (even obsession) of praise or fear and loathing of criticism or public condemnation, would not dictate their faithful service - the "evil report" being an accusation of being wrong and even criminal in the service of the Lord, yet as Barnes wrote, "... it gives him the inexpressible privilege of being like Christ - like him in his suffering and in the moral excellence of character. A man should be willing to be anything if it will make him like the Redeemer - whether it be in suffering or in glory"
- v. "regarded as deceivers and yet true" (ὡς πλάνοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς, like imposters trying to mislead, yet unconcealed) - as is so often the case when standing with the Truth, others (deceivers or the deceived) accuse of deceit, trying to use labels like this to act as a deterrent to others as well as to attempt to quickly discredit - yet, as Paul indicated, they were not trying to conceal anything and were open to scrutiny

The point being that people need not come to know us as much as they need to come to know their creator (being reconciled to Him is our core objective)

The threat of death or its inevitability does not serve as a distraction from why we are still alive to live another day. To what end (we should ask) have we been granted to live another day?

Such are not "correctable" if it involves compromising the message, though such attempts by the opposition of the "age" will assuredly come in every era, and those that are not truly Christ's will yield/conform (stand corrected by the world, not the Lord)

Grief will come naturally, but true joy (deep seated contentment) will be the result of a focus of faith (seeing beyond circumstances (and even time) to God's controlling purpose)

A true minister of the Lord is characterized not by seeking personal profit, but by generously sharing the wealth of the truth of God's truth

The "cares of this life" become a focal point to those that are not Christ's servants, seeking security and significance in what they possess (not believing Rom. 8:31-32)

w. "as unknown yet well-known" (ὡς ἀγνοούμενοι καὶ ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι, as ignored or unrecognized (by some/many) and fully known/recognized by others) - being "nobodies" in the eyes of many does not mean we cannot be used to minister to them, for even though obscure in the eyes of the majority, the One that knows us best is God - fame can easily become a distraction - being "notable" is not needed for ministry

x. "as dying, and behold, we live" (ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν, as those in the process of dying or being put to death, and look ("behold", we live!) - even though what seemed to be sure death (many times), they were still alive to live another day - many yield the fight once a seeming sentence of death is upon them (or the threat of it), yet true ministers serve until the last!

y. "as punished yet not put to death" (ὡς παιδευόμενοι καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι, as disciplined (corrected (severely) and not killed by it) - we have a similar phrase when we say (threatening) "I'll teach you a lesson" and in Paul's case, they were beaten, imprisoned and threatened, yet they had not been put to death - there is also the probable meaning in reference to Psalm 118:18, "The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death." acknowledging that hardships and contradictions to us as being the designs of God to teach and direct us through others (even if the "others" are vindictive) - There is a freedom that comes when even our "enemies" are seen as being tools of God for the good - see also Heb. 12:4-13

z. "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (ὡς λυπούμενοι ἀεὶ δὲ χαίροντες, as deeply grieved but all the time, glad (thriving)) - life will be filled with occasions where crying and grieving are appropriate, yet it would be wrong to stay in that condition - the exhortation elsewhere in the writings of Paul make "rejoicing" something that is essentially volitional (as in Romans 12:12)

aa. "as poor, yet making many rich" (ὡς πτωχοὶ πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτίζοντες, as being destitute (having nothing of your own) but many are enriched) - being truly content and not aspiring to be wealthy, he was freed from that distraction, to be used to provide a wealth to others that was immeasurable (read Eph. 3:6-13) - the πτωχοὶ are those who having nothing but what is given to them, and so are we to realize we are, so as not to be stingy with anything God has given us (especially our time and energies)

ab. "as having nothing, yet possessing everything" (ὡς μηδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες, as nothing holding and (yet) everything holding fast) - not having (or needing) to possess anything this side of eternity, realizing all there is to be had is already ours in Christ - **the things of this world are not alluring to the one focused on why they are here** - knowing that "my God will supply all your needs," we can be confident we will always have what we need at the time

C. The problem of restrained/guarded affections - vs. 11-13

1. As with any relationship, one of the most intimidating points that is reached, is reached when our "heart" becomes fully engaged in it

It is true that the heart should not be "given away" too quickly (indiscriminately), but it is also true that it typically needs to be more engaged than it normally is

a. It is intimidating because of the vulnerability that comes with it - many have "scars" (emotional scars on their "hearts") because they have been let-down (hurt) by someone that they opened their heart to

b. Yet relationships remain superficial (shallow) when the heart is not committed to it

c. As Paul was facing, so we are also facing; there is a lack of true heart-felt affection and concern for our fellow believers, resulting in a lack of genuine encouragement, concern and challenge to each other (as Paul is about to do with the Corinthians)

2. Paul makes it clear, that on his part, he was open with them - vs. 11

a. He has no pretense with them - he is being honest/frank with them - such sincere "directness" may not find acceptance if those it is directed to do not truly care

b. His mouth has "spoken openly" to them because his heart has been wide open to them

-c. Paul admits he truly cares for them and that is at the heart of why he is saying and responding to them as he is

3. Their restrained affections were restraining their open/honest response - vs. 12-13

a. "We are not holding you back" in this relationship and in your growth!

If we are able to demonstrate that we sincerely care for someone, the likelihood of having them listen to us and even be challenged by us is higher

Relationships (that are good) need to work both ways - Paul was pleading with them to "open-up" and determine to love him - make this mutual

Any true relationship is established/built on communication first, then trust then love

To "close-up" and become unapproachable/uncorrectable is truly childish

- b. Instead, the Corinthians were "στενοχωρεῖσθε" (restrained) in their affections toward Paul and his team - we're not told why they were this way, but regardless, Paul was seeking their openness (as he had been with them) in their heart and in their honesty (questions, struggles, frustrations, etc.)
- c. There is often a hesitancy to open one's heart to another because of the vulnerability it allows (we are opening ourselves to be cared for and then to care, which involves commitment, and the possibility of being hurt)
- d. So, "in return", "enlarge yourselves" (making room for loving us, and all that it entails), for he is their "spiritual father" which is why he speaks to them "as children" - there is also the identifying of their immaturity in this as well

X. "Come Out From Among Them and Be Separate" - 6:14-7:1

A. Do not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers - vs. 14-18

1. It looks as though a major change in topics has occurred, unless it is considered that what is being instructed is how the Corinthian believers can "be enlarged" (open/widen their hearts to Paul)

Being "born again" new creations, it should be obvious that we will have very little in common with those that are not, and that what we do have in common, is very basic and shallow

- a. One of the most painful and unloving things that can be done to a parent (and in this case, spiritual parent or leader), is to disregard counsel and become united more in purpose and goals with unbelievers than with believers
- b. Paul uses terms such as "agreement" (or "harmony") and "partnership" and "fellowship" as concepts involved in being "unequally yoked"

2. To be "unequally yoked" is a picture of two different kinds of animals that have been yoked together for a task or purpose

This is a good verse to use to discourage mixed marriages (believers and unbelievers) especially considering they are "yoked" together for life - one's faith is fundamental and marriage should require unity on the fundamentals before being initiated

- a. The underlying word comes from "ἕτεροζυγέω" (literally "another of a different kind (hetero) joined together in a single plow") (as forbidden in Deut 22:10)
- b. Here it is two types of people joined together for a cause/purpose that is more than a short-term (unimportant) task (which encompasses most of life) - this phrase also has been translated "Stop being in incompatible relationships with unbelievers." Guthrie
- c. This verse has traditionally been used to forbid/discourage marriage of a believer with an unbeliever, and this fits, but the scope that Paul is addressing is much larger
- d. Regarding marrying wrongly someone wrote, "A man who is truly pious, marrying with an unconverted woman, will either draw back to perdition, or have a cross during life."
- e. As referenced in verse 12, a major part of the problem was their "affections" - what they loved was controlling them (wrongly), and what should be influencing them rightly, was shut-off from their affections

They were "open hearted" to the wrong people because they were attracted to the wrong things

3. What could the "link" be that would cause you to be harnessed together with an unbeliever?

Yet how could one who reveres God's Law then embrace that which disregards or mocks it?

- a. These contrasts are to show how incompatible they are to be: if the "positive" traits are true of them (then how possibly could the negative be in harmony at the same time?)
- b. What do righteousness and lawlessness have in common? How do you take these two opposite ideals and unify them in purpose? - the answer/conclusion would have to end in the compromise of righteousness if a compatibility is seen
- c. There are those who come to embrace certain aspects of "unrighteousness" by mishandling Biblical concepts such as "liberty in Christ" to then legitimize (ironically) lawlessness (a "no law needed for me" mind set and lifestyle) - see Php. 3:17-21
- d. How would it be possible for light (spiritual light/insight) to mix with darkness (spiritual darkness/blindness) since the one (light) would automatically dispel the other (if it was truly light)? - "A city set on a hill CANNOT be hid" Mt. 5:14
- e. What "συμφωνησις" (harmony, as in two working together for the same sound) agreement does Christ have with "Belial" (a term used of the Devil, finding its etymology in a concept meaning "worthless" (because it is evil/vile)) - the cause of Christ and that of Satan are opposites, so neither could/would truly compromise with the other (though "devilish" thinking works to make a case that it is so inclusive of philosophies. that it tolerates everything (except, of course, the Truth)) - how could a Christian form a union with Satan and his followers to perform anything truly good? - Even when working with unbelievers (as we must while "in the world"), we never see ourselves as truly united with them in our life focus/purpose

Affections are misdirected and misinformed, so the priorities and actions follow

One with actual sight should easily recognize one who is blind (unless they are blind themselves to their own blindness - such are the self-righteous religious)

One example of this is the idea of "intentionality" replacing or being consider synonymous with being and doing what is right (as in if one means to be/do right they are right and have done right)

This doesn't mean we will never have unbelieving friends, just that they could never be close friends because they do not have the core/fundamentals of life in common

This is one of the reasons why so many believers are unduly fatigued in the "Christian walk", because they are striving for what is not in harmony with their purpose—"focus drift" is at the source of stumbling

We need to analyze what "has our heart" the most. There will be competing entities for our heart (and attention), but if we realize what we have because of Christ, then all other comparisons will fail

Anything can become an "idol" when it receives the focused faith (dependence) of its followers, supporters and publicists - a false "god" is someone or something that is put in the place of God to provide only what He can provide

Moral causes, vocations, friends, possessions (or desired possessions) and more, can all be idols

Even the closest relationships we have now are not nearly this intimate (where He dwells within us, knowing us completely) - even the most private among us would crave this if they knew better the love God has

Many are "led astray" because they are seeking friendship and belonging, only to have ventured into the wrong crowd

It is too common to see the lines of separation blurred so as to cause professing believers to see little to no distinction, and lose sight of the value of what they have

Certain things become unclean (impure) to certain people because such things were in opposition to the One they serve

f. For "what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?" - it is also asked "what in common does a believer have with an unbeliever?" - this might be a fearful question to ask in our churches today, realizing many could come up with quite a list of what we do have in common and "should"(as they try to justify) have in common

g. Note: when such unions and associations become doable in our churches and families, it will be because unbelievers are the guide and the professing Christians have compromised/yielded, so as to be "compatible"

f. We do not have the same priorities and purposes for life as those not in Christ, so to be unrighteously obligated (tethered) with unbelievers will hinder (at best) our productivity, life focus, priorities and "drive"

g. For "ἢ τίς μερίς πιστῷ μετὰ ἀπίστου" what thing/portion does one who trusts (the Lord) have with one who does not trust or look to Him? - this is a core part of our identity (who we really are), so how could it be compatible? So, we will find that we cannot "take part" in most of what "the world" does because we will scrutinize it for whether or not it "lends to purpose"

4. What agreement does the "temple of God" have with idols? - vs. 16

a. Regarding the word for "agreement", "Lit., a putting down or depositing along with one. Hence of voting the same way with another, and so agreeing." Vincent

b. As reiterated in this verse, we are the "temple of the Lord" (because of the indwelling Holy Spirit) and so the question is more directed at a believer's interactions and unified causes with anything truly idolatrous

c. An "idol" is a "false god" which then, in reality, is no "god" at all - its influence is derived from the imagined power its worshippers ascribe it - so how can a believer in the one true God, "put in with" that which looks to replace Him? An "idol" (practically seen) is that which one respects/reveres the most, and even what is feared the most - in this context though, it is likely there were still some in the church that were participating in events and feasts that glorified/worshipped actual idols - see also I Thes. 1:9-10

d. We may often see our leanings in this direction when we misuse the word "need" when it comes to what we determine is needed to obey Him, or in our overall assessments of what we see as needed for our life (self is looked to for authoritative conclusions)

e. It is the "living God" Who indwells us, in contrast to all external (non-living/non-conscious) things that become "all-consuming" to others

f. For this was God's design all along (even after the fall in Eden) where the Lord said in Lev. 26:11-12 and Ezk. 37:26-27 that He would make "His dwelling among them" and that He would "walk among them," because He would "be their God, and they will be My people" - this would be the closest possible relationship - people instinctively look for such closeness in their relationships, only to sense unfulfillment (fulfillment can only be had with such a relationship with our Creator!) - see also John 17:21-23

5. Seeing we have no common life purpose and focus, do not be "one of them" - vs. 17-18

a. "διὸ ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν", literally "for this reason (because of) go out from the middle of them" (as in being fully "in the crowd"), and this, not with the intention to be a "loner," but because there is a better relationship to embrace

b. This is taken from Isaiah 52:11 in which the preceding verses (Isa. 52:1-10) deal with God's final deliverance and restoration of Israel (which will literally be fulfilled), which is seen in its first phase (in the new covenant) with the salvation and restoration of those that are "in Christ" (already being delivered/redeemed/reconciled)

c. The reason we are to "go out from among them" is so that we can be "separated" from them (ἀφορίσθητε picturing a "railing/fencing off" so as to remain separated from something, and to make distinct boundaries so our "place" is clearly seen by us versus their "place") - the lines of difference need to remain clear!

d. "Separation" from the life priorities and purposes are crucial in avoiding unnecessary distractions throughout our walk through life

e. So, while separating, do not "touch the unclean thing" (which was a reference back to the priests not defiling themselves because of their consecrated purpose)

There are numerous things we do not want to come in contact with or be exposed to, and should look to consciously avoid them or separate from them

In contrast to being a slave/servant, we are welcomed as sons and daughters are welcomed by their father

"The greatness of the promise enhances the greatness of the promises." JFB

Knowing who and what we are and what we now have, what family/people we are a part of and who our father is,,

The proposed motive, clues us into the underlying allurements of sin - they put forward their own promises of welcome, comfort and acceptance (all of which are found false)

Sin is deceitful, filling/spreading throughout what it comes in contact with, and as such, needs a powerful and consistent disinfectant to counter its contaminating affects

We need to know what uncleanness is, to know what needs to be cleansed (removed) - resistance to clearly defined "rights and wrongs" is a plague upon a person or people

"Not merely negative goodness (cleansing), but aggressive and progressive (present tense of epiteleō) holiness, not a sudden attainment of complete holiness, but a continuous process." RWP

Sin, in the life of a believer, is an oddity, abnormal because of who we are - this is why there is an inner-awkwardness when sin occurs

f. To "touch" is to come in close proximity and then to come in contact with it - as Israel was not to touch something that was deemed "unclean" in the Law, so those who are to be characterized by their being "In Christ" are to avoid such associations with all forms of idolatry (that which is looked to and honored over God) - it could be phrased as "be distinctly pure" (in lifestyle, behavior, speech, aspirations)

g. "...and **I** will welcome you" (says the Lord), in contrast to seeking to be welcomed by society ("the world") - the benefit of this is that He, Himself, will be "a Father to you" (a father being a protector, guide, provider and friend, and the one from whom the inheritance will come)

h. And, to top it off, this is Κύριος Παντοκράτωρ (the Ruler of the Universe) - in this context, it is **the ultimate of comparisons** - come OUT from among THEM to come to the LORD ALMIGHTY! (the Sovereign Master)

i. "... the most humble in rank, the most poor and ignorant of his friends on earth, the most despised among people, may reflect that they are the children of the ever-living God, and have the Maker of the heavens and the earth as their Father and their eternal Friend. How poor are all the honors of the world compared with this!" Barnes

6. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" - 7:1

a. Having then such promises ("I will welcome you", "I will be a father to you", "you will be my sons and daughters") "ἀγαπητοί" ("dearly loved ones", spoken from the heart to those Paul cared for as his friends), "**let us cleans ourselves**"

b. The reasonable response is to "clean-up" ourselves (not others, not society, but ourselves) from "all defilements" (ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ, from every kind of pollutant/stain (all of them)) - such "dirt" is not *who* and *what* we are, and is not appropriate for our position as children of God - such purifying pursuits are not for the purpose to "save" or redeem us, but because impurities do not characterize our newness of life (our new position)

c. And such pollutions are either "of flesh" or "of spirit" (of that which caters to the senses or of the "inner self" (thoughts, emotions, aspirations, inclinations)) - both types of defiling influences are a part of every society in all its "classes" - these infectious contagions are focus-distracting and purpose-blinding influences, that become a part of our physical desires and habits, as well as our mental and emotional dependencies (making one believe they cannot continue or be happy/content without them)

d. Such, needs to be clearly defined in our lives, so as not to pollute our hearts and practices with that which stains (attracts undo attention away from where attention should be) - and God's Word, His Law, and the multitudes of examples and lessons, help to identify even the most deceptive of influences

e. The objective being "bringing holiness to completion" (as in living out what we are in Christ) - "holiness" is ἀγιωσύνην, which is a separation to God from sinfulness, pursuing His likeness in our inward and outward person (as seen in "come out from among them and be separate" (holy)) - this is not with the idea of achieving a state of perfection, but is ongoing throughout life (it is a present participle, "be bringing holiness to its rightful conclusion in your living")

f. And this is done **by means of "the fear of God"** - the reverential awe and respect for God as our father, and His continuous presence (being His temple and He living among us) should dictate how we look at and consider all aspects of our lives - this is in contrast to the reverential awe of society's celebrities, and the controlling intimidation of godless and Christless influences living amongst us

7. This is in harmony with Romans 6:1-11

a. This text identifies why we don't do (serve) sin, because it is not who/what we are - having been crucified with Christ, we are then raised with Him and are no longer enslaved to sin

b. The emphasis at the beginning ("How shall we who are dead to sin...") is along the lines of "We, being who we are, dead to sin, how could we conceive of a life of sin!?"

c. The key idea being for us to then "live-out" who we are

XI. The Results of Genuine Repentance - 7:2-16

A. This begins a unique section of this epistle where Paul challenges the Corinthians to make room in their hearts for him and his team, and then goes on to express his confidence in them and why he is confident

1. He sincerely only desires their spiritual growth and protection - if this is not understood, it is likely there would continue to be resistance and having possible a severing of communications

Cynicism has been legitimized even in Christian circles because there are so many deceivers among us - such leads some to separate from "church" or to find only those that keep things at a surface level (not too invasive)

a. When we are convinced that someone truly cares for us, we are open to even the harshest of "treatments" because we trust them and what they are doing
— b. Paul did not want them to become unsure and sceptical of his motives - the presence and work of the false teachers had led to such speculation

c. Paul's seeming defensiveness at the start of this section is not with the purpose to "condemn" them, but for the purpose to trust his confidence in them - he will write of his boldness with them, ironically because of his "pride" in them

2. "Make room in your hearts for us", considering what was actually done and not done - vs. 2-3

It is not that unusual to desire someone to give us room in their heart for their own protection (as parents desire with their children)

a. They were clearly already in Paul's heart, and so **that they might be further protected**, make room in their hearts (not to be loved themselves, as though Paul had a selfish, or self-focused need to be met), but so that they would truly care about what Paul was teaching and challenging them with, so they would not be drawn away to false teachers (because the false teachers and teaching had been entrenched in their hearts/affections)

b. Our hearts have "limited space" and if occupied/filled with what is blind, misdirected, in error or selfish, the "issues of life" will follow after them - Paul definitely did not want them to make room for the counterfeits that had infiltrated their ranks!

Many wrong relationships take on these characteristics of being harshly controlling, manipulative, corrupting and one of exploitation, and all under some guise of "religion" or "spirituality" and even just "friendship"

c. In contrast to either these bad influences or in contrast to what some in the Corinthian church may have thought, Paul and his team had not "wronged" (ἡδικήσαμεν - inflicting undeserved hurt, as in being overly harsh) anyone, they had not "corrupted" (ἐφθείραμεν - to ruin, spoil by bringing to moral deterioration) anyone, nor had they "taken advantage" (ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν - exploit for personal gain because one covets what another has and looks to get it from them) of anyone

d. Paul was not writing these to "condemn" them (most likely because he was contrasting himself and his influence to that of these infiltrators) - they needed to see these "from without" influences as damaging and dangerous

Generally, he was making it clear they were with each other to death, and till then, in living - their lives were now intertwined from here on out

e. Paul uses an unusual phrase (though it may have been common then), when he says that they are in his heart (as he had made clear before to them) so as to die with them (actually, more past tense, as having died with them) and so as to "live together with them" (present tense)

No matter how this is translated, the idea is that we are bound together throughout this life with an eternal commonality, purpose and cause

f. In stark contrast to harming them, they were closest of friends - it looks fitting to see that the reason "die" is put first, is to indicate they all have a commonality of having died with Christ, and as a result, now live (in Him and for Him), and in this have the greatest familial bond that could be had

B. The comfort and encouragement brought on by news of their attitude - vs. 4-7

1. Paul had been concerned with their response to his openness/directness to them

The thrill of a correct response from one who has been directly challenged/confronted is very strong (because so many respond poorly, resisting challenge and correction)

a. True friends often experience this, when they must be direct for the good of their friend, but fear that the response will be negative and that they will be "cut off"

— b. He literally states "much is my boldness/openness with you" - I have not held-back what you needed to hear and be taught, and in turn, he could also say that "much/great is his boasting of them" (they "took it" and responded well) - this was something he could and would share with others

c. This was so, because he was "encouraged" by "the comfort" (the Greek article is present, referencing a particular point of encouragement)

Most of life's trials and pressures are actually best dealt with by the joy of seeing growth in others - the stresses we face in doing what is right are more than worth it when those we are looking to influence for the right, change and grow

d. This was so exceptional, Paul goes on to say he was "overflowing with (the) joy" (the underlying word for "overflowing" only used one other time in Rom. 5:20 ("where sin **abounded**, grace **abounded** more") which was key, because this was in contrast (countering) his "affliction") - it is worded "ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν" (against every kind of pressure/trouble of me)

e. One of the benefits of disappointments is found in how they magnify these moments!

2. The encouragement that comes from knowing you're truly loved - vs. 5-7

His "anxiety" regarding their response was warranted - a majority of people react to being corrected rather than respond in repentance to a life correction

Yet with all this, we do not see the formulation of a decision to quit, but a timely encouragement of the results of his obedience to the Lord to not compromise in his dealings with them

Friendships that are not shallow (they are formed around what is of highest value) find effective rejuvenation - others are left with inner emptiness

Php. 1:29 clarifies that suffering is a normal part of God's will for us

This is a good example of why continuing fellowship and communication is so valuable - it sustains (practically) the cycle of encouragement

Yet there seems to be an attraction to shallow relationships built upon the superficial

The greatest of love is not seen in pulling others to ourselves, but in "pushing" them on in their closeness with God

One of the most difficult aspects of doing and saying the right thing is the inability to control the response of the other - a true friend is willing to pay the "high price"

see also Psalm 141:4-5

This is true in the case of many parents with their children and with friends, with those they should be true friends to

The grief the Corinthians faced was "only for a while" - better this than the alternative

- a. As will be discussed in the upcoming verses, Paul had been "hard" on the Corinthian Christians and was clearly troubled that they might have not received it well
- b. In II Cor. 11:20-28 Paul lists several pressures, part of this being the "daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." - he had to be direct in countering the false teachers and bad influences that had come among them
- c. We don't know the details of the opposition they faced while in Macedonia, but the inclusion of the word "even" seems to show his situation compounded with relentless pressures from without and within - he described it as 1. Their "flesh had no rest" (they were physically fatigued) 2. They were "afflicted in every way" (persecuted, cornered by opposition from all around) and 3. They had fighting without along with fears/nervousness within (regarding how his letter to them had been received)
- d. Yet, in the midst of all this, comforting came from the One Who comforts the humble (those who acknowledge their dependence on Him), and this encouragement came in the arrival of Titus (with good news) - Titus was a friend and co-laborer with Paul in the work of the Lord, and just having him there was encouraging
- e. The opposite idea would be that those that are proud (self-reliant) are not comforted this way - all other relationships are shallow in comparison and can find their "depth" only in mutual emotions and experiences, but not those that "step into" the eternal.
- f. God comforts those in such situations (which, interesting, are needed to provide (learn) of such comfort as in II Cor. 1:3-7) - discouragement is part of all our "callings" in the Lord's work, but never with the purpose that we remain in such a state - true encouragement will ALWAYS be provided in the right time!
- g. Notice the flow of encouragement - Paul encouraged the Corinthians, Titus went to encourage the Corinthians and they in turn encouraged Titus who then returns to encourage the discouraged Paul
- h. He told of their "longing" (ἐπιπόθησις, eager desire) as in to do what is right, getting back "on-track", their "mourning" (ὄδυρμόν, grief, lamentation) over their inconsistencies and distractions, and their "zeal for me", in wanting to restore what was lost and truly have mutual support (support of which Paul had always been offering)- **these are the relationships we definitely do not want to walk/drift away from!**
- i. This was a tremendous encouragement to Paul, not selfishly, but out of a genuine care that they do and "think" what is right

C. What "Godly Sorrow to Repentance" actually "looks like" - vs. 8-11

1. Though grief had to be caused, there are no regrets - vs. 8

- a. Paul acknowledges that some of his writings to them had caused grief/sorrow, but he also had to admit that he (now) does not regret having written what he wrote
- b. He also admitted that he did struggle with a bout of regret (for a while) because he knew it would discourage them and sadden them, **but it had to be said**
- c. This is what a true leader and true friend will do - they will exhibit the faithful "wounding" of a friend (Prov. 27:6) while an "enemy" shows affection, only to get what they desire (they hide their true feelings or the Truth itself for selfish reasons)
- d. "The mistake made by many a preacher is the endeavor to induce a painless, griefless repentance. Such repentance does not exist. Peter had to weep bitterly. A broken and contrite heart is not a pleasant sensation... The peaceable fruit of righteousness grows from the pain of chastisement (Heb. 12:11)" Lenski
- e. Repentance (μετάνοια) is a change of thinking/mind leading to a change of life and life direction - this is done with considerable "pain" and struggle, but once yielded to, produces true life/living!
- f. If enough pressure can be applied to someone trying to do the right thing (to get then to compromise and not do it) then wrong life directions will persist to the detriment of all!

2. Sorrow leading to a change in purpose - vs. 9-10

- a. Paul was delightfully encouraged, not because of the pains that were caused, but the result of the pains/grief - the method was necessary, but not joy-provoking

Pseudo-repentance is caused by sadness that leads to temporary change, but the heart is left unchanged - this characterizes much of what is seen as repentance in the church

Most shed tears because they suffer the penalty of their sin, not because of the sin itself - see Heb. 12:15-17

Emotion may accompany it but does not have to. This contradicts the idea many have of what "repentance" must look like

A bad response to grief is dangerous in that it leads us the wrong directions.

The world/age offers many "decision points" to change one's life, but all of them lead to some form of regret (all certainly after death!)

"Doubt and reflection take the place of spontaneous obedience. The grown-up man with his freedom of conscience vaunts his superiority over the child of obedience. But he has acquired the freedom to enjoy moral difficulties only at the cost of renouncing obedience. In short, it is a retreat from the reality of God to the speculations of men, from faith to doubt" Bonhoeffer

"...a sort of feeling between indignation and disgust at themselves for having been 'puffed up,' and not having 'rather mourned that he that had done this deed had not been taken away from among them.' 1Co. 5:2." Cambridge Bible Notes

Repentance includes the inner desire to be genuine, and the dread of being "fake"

Life was now full of opportunities and not the work of trying to fight off the conviction of the Truth

- b. The concept of true repentance is very important, seeing there is more often seen a pseudo-repentance showing-up in lives that becomes confusing and diverting
- c. Paul was thrilled, not because they had been saddened by what they needed to hear, but because it led to an actual change of thinking and purpose
- d. Judas grieved deeply as well as Esau, yet there was only regret with no actual pursuit of fundamental (inner) change - sorrow over negative circumstances does not mean someone has changed; it just indicates they wished the circumstances could be different (but would be unwilling to actually change themselves) - it is too easy to just retreat to "I just can't change", as though it will serve as some excuse or blame-shifting
- e. False repentance would have the consequences changed rather than their heart
- f. Paul's joy was not in their being grieved just to be grieved, but that they were motivated by it to "repenting" and "It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the Greek word translated repentance... contains neither the idea of sorrow nor of penitential discipline. The word means change of mind or purpose. Sorrow may or may not accompany it." Cambridge Bible Notes
- g. The grief that led to it was "Godly grief" because it was in accordance with His purpose/ways, and that they did not experience actual "loss" (they were not hurt or damaged because of it, to a point of becoming entrenched in stubborn resistance) - it is painful to have others attempt to use us as blame for their wrong decisions - better to have hurt feelings than an "off-course" life
- h. Such motivating sorrow, and such a right response to it, leads to a repentance (change of life purpose and focus) that ends in "salvation" (this is the end-product (indicator) of a "revolutionized" life) and is such a "change of heart" it will never be regretted - this repentance is **one that affects all of life** and not only is associated with salvation after death, but being also "saved" from the results of wrong reactions to life's situations and other contradictory philosophical challenges

3. The "produce" of actual repentance - vs. 11

- a. "Behold" (take careful notice) so you know what is happening and why - often, the working of God in our lives can be mistaken for our natural inclination, not realizing what the actual "cause and effects" are - the cause was God and the means of producing these results is the "godly sorrow" (pain, grief motivating to positive change)
- b. The first evidence is "earnestness" (σπουδήν, swiftness, hurried- out of urgency) - there was no delay in getting to what needed to be done - many delay their response to conviction and soon the "feeling wears off" (which sadly becomes a habit for some) - it can be too easy to justify inactivity because one decides to take time to scrutinize and think-through something that should be evident immediately - many utilize terms such as "I'll pray about it" to delay
- c. The second evidence is "vindication" (ἀπολογία, a well-reasoned defense, a clearing one's self) and here, it was the Corinthians doing all they could to show themselves genuine, in pursuing and doing what was right (as they had been instructed) - their response demonstrated their drive to prove themselves faithful (versus excuses)
- d. The third evidence is "indignation" (ἀγανάκτησις, anger, frustration) and here it was their anger at the wrong done and likely their irresponsible handling of it - they were not "gracious" to themselves in dealing with their inconsistencies
- e. The fourth evidence is "fear" (φόβος, reverence, terror) being reverent of God that they would fear repeating what they had done or in growing lazy - there is a respectable fear of falling back into undisciplined/unfocused (distracted) lives
- f. The fifth evidence being "longing" (ἐπιπόθησις, strong affection, "vehement desire") here it is their driving desire to change, putting this behind them and truly becoming what they ought to be in their Christian walk
- g. The sixth evidence is "zeal" (ζήλον, excitement, fervor (being "all-in")) and here it would be in line with their genuine excitement about the change (indicating their being inwardly convinced and thus realizing the value of what they now know and have the opportunity to do)

Aggressively working to make things right

True character is proven in the response/actions and not just a verbal reply (or consent) - many will "side" with righteousness, but fail to defend and support it

We may take on an independent spirit while in a church, but we are not able to control the consequences that influence others, from our bad choices

Too often, those behaving badly and those injured draw too much attention to themselves, and all lose sight of the priority of keeping the "team" pure and right before God, remembering our purpose as a team that God has formed

With a main focus on the "spiritual" care for each other

Seeing (personally) the truths of God's Word not only believed, but lived-out, will be one of life's strongest, positive affects

See II Cor. 1:4 - the reciprocal comfort

Bad reactions to correction are common, so to anticipate a submissive, obedient response was remarkable - most would rather react than change

Titus was following the instruction given in Titus 1:5-9

Note that his "boasting" of them and joy in their proven character, did not end his ongoing challenges to them - past victories do not negate future responsibility

h. The seventh evidence is "avenging of the wrong" (ἐκδίκησις, literally meaning "out of justice" with the idea of bringing complete judgement on someone or something, countering the evil done, completely) - **it is as if "getting back" at the sin by using righteousness to punish it thoroughly**

i. And, with these seven "proofs," they had proven themselves to be of true character in thoroughly dealing with the matter of sin in their midst - Paul uses the word for "pure" when describing his estimate of them, in how they have handled the issues he had addressed in his letter to them - it is commonly believed that this was in reference to the immoral man mentioned in I Corinthians

D. The joy that comes from "complete confidence" in fellow believers - vs. 12-16

1. Paul clarifies that he has written what he has written, not for the sake of the one who had "offended", nor was it for the one who had been "offended," but for all of them as a whole - vs. 12

a. Paul's focus was on them as a unit (a church) - it is common for even churches to focus on offenses and offenders without recognition as to its affects on their group as a whole

b. We are less likely to be eager or proud at the failings of our brothers and sisters, when we remember we are in this race together, as a unit - one's failings will affect the others

c. It is interesting the way all this is worded - we see a hint at the idea that when offended/hurt, we ought not turn our focus inward, looking to draw exclusive attention our way, but to keep in mind those around us and their well being (for instance, the necessity of a good response (in faith), setting a good example for others whose feelings, opinions, and scruples might get hurt)

d. Paul was looking to keep the "unit" intact (correctly, not just unity for unity's sake), but for all of them to deal with sin effectively and consistently, as well as to forgive and seek out repentance of those that do wrong

e. The last phrase of verse 12 is difficult to interpret as to whether their care for Paul or his care for them is "manifested before the sight of God" - either is fine, since the key idea is that a right response demonstrates a right heart (genuineness) before God's every-watchful sight (especially in sincere, mutual care for each other)

2. Contagious joy! - vs. 13

a. Paul was generally encouraged at the news of their response, but was particularly encouraged by the joy that was brought to Titus by their response and treatment of him

b. It is not unusual to find some of the greatest joys we will ever face, in seeing others brought to joy - such truly can be contagious! This is an excellent contagion!

c. They had "refreshed" the weary Titus and did not add to his current load - being surrounded only by needy people can be extremely draining, so to have others "take on the load" with you, renews strength and resolve - such joy encouraged Paul

3. Confidence proven true, and its results - vs. 14-16

a. Paul admits that he had "boasted" to Titus regarding the Corinthians, and that what he had boasted proved to be true - we are unsure what exactly he said to Titus, but judging by the response, it had to be along the lines of not their being without fault, but that they would respond well to the correction that had been directed to them

b. Paul uses the opportunity to stress that what he had shared with them regarding Truth, was exemplified in their proving Paul true again in his positive assessment of how they would respond (so his discernment could be trusted)

c. Titus' "affection" for them had increased, but notice why - it was not because they had treated him so well (which they had), but because of their obedience (submission) to what they were to do (versus resistance/rebellion), and because of their "fear and trembling" (their genuine respect and reverence for what they were to do)

d. They revered Titus, **not for himself, but for what he represented**

e. Paul stresses that he has "παντὶ θαρρῶν" (complete (the whole of) confidence, boldness and courage regarding them) - This particularly brought him joy; that they were dependable (proven) and they were teachable and sincere in their pursuit of obedience

f. To find reliable, spiritual, genuinely obedient friends in the faith is a rare find! Once had, we should be diligent not to lose such friends!

XII. The Source and Motivation of True Generosity - 8:1-15

A. A supreme example of the grace of God at work in His churches - vs. 1-5

1. God is still the source of all provision and grace to do what should be done - vs 1

Gratefulness is properly ascribed, and pride is averted when the fact of God's grace being at work, is continuously acknowledged

Money cannot purchase joy, and without joy, money can become an antagonizing, false hope to pursued contentment

- a. Paul begins to tell the Corinthians about the profound generosity demonstrated by the churches in Macedonia (Thessalonians and the Philippians, and probably the Bereans)
- b. As will be seen, it was exceptional, which in our day would often result in the glorifying of the people involved, credit and praise directed their way, with a subtle, honorable mention of God - here, Paul focuses on God and His grace being the source of the generosity, for without it, it would not have happened
- c. It's interesting to consider that God was "gifting" them to give a gift, and that without the normal means to accumulate such a gift - generosity among many poor, can easily "out give" the richest of this world (for many of the wealthy have not been gifted with the spirit of generosity, leaving them "poor" in this valuable quality)

2. God's mathematics - severe affliction + true joy + poverty = wealth of generosity - vs. 2-3

"The greater was the depth of their poverty, the greater was the abundance of their joy. A delightful contrast in terms, and triumph, in fact, of spirit over flesh." JFB

God will often let us observe or learn of those who are faithful in His work (even when their circumstances are far worse than what we face)- this helps us better measure our pressures correctly

As one overcome with covetousness will spend beyond their means, these were covetous of being used of God to meet the needs of others that had come to their attention

- a. These churches were in a "great ordeal of affliction" (literally multiple tests of tribulation/trouble, and that in abundance) - they were under great stress (which is often used by many to excuse bad behavior as well as neglect of responsibility)
- b. They had with this, "extreme poverty" - someone translated 'deep poverty' as the "poverty which had consumed them even to the very bottom."
- c. With all this, they had "abundance of joy" (overflowing with joyous contentment, and the thrill to help meet a need) - this is a clear indicator that their joy was not based on their circumstances, but on God's calling, and their part in the outworking of His will
- d. This remarkable, seemingly contradictory equation, results in their (the Macedonians) "wealth of liberality" (which the underlying word, ἀπλότητος, pictures a singleness/purity of purpose and focus, which is needed, so as not to be distracted by the apparent "negative" things happening all around)
- e. This would have been an incredible group of people to be with! It is rare in our day to see exhibitions of such character, let alone in a large group, united
- f. These gave up to what they had (this was the "limiter" of their generosity) and even in this they were able to go "beyond their means" and this was done willingly (they did not need to be prodded or "guilted" into it)

3. **Be-ging** to participate in the work - vs. 4

When we realize God's grace will always provide, we are less "tied" to our resources

Ministries and charities (many) have become outlets for self-service or self-promotion or even guilt appeasers

- a. Their pleading was motivated by the "favor" (received privilege) as well as the participation (literally the "fellowship" as in being with these others in their common lives for the Lord together)
- b. The practical result of this being their monetary gift intended for those of even greater need in Jerusalem/Judea
- c. Where has such a spirit of incessant desire to serve the Lord even out of our "lack" gone? - it seems as though most must be "bribed" into service, and will only remain as long as their "demands" are met - their hearts are not "in it"

4. Belonging to the Lord, they offered themselves however they could be used - vs. 5

Oh to have such Christians that exceed expectations, versus an environment that keeps lower expectations to make **every-one** seem more "spiritual"!

See Romans 6:13; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20

- a. These exceeded the expectations of Paul - they were a surprise because they were exceptional in their behavior in every way
- b. This all happened because they first "gave themselves to the Lord" - so before they gave anything, they gave what was most precious first, themselves - then anything else associated with "themselves" was already the Lord's to do with as He pleased
- c. This is a crucial point! God does not seek out our possessions, He seeks out **us**, our hearts, goals, ambitions (all of which, if they are not His, will compete for our resources, in competition against Him and His will)
- d. When resisting God's will or trust in His control, we demonstrate our recognition of self-ownership (self-governance) - if we are truly surrendered, we are at peace (focused upon His sovereign control in all things)
- e. These, seeing that Paul was doing the "will of God", they offered themselves then to those in the service of their "Master"

B. Now, follow the example of the Macedonians and Christ, and complete the work you had begun - vs. 6-15

see also I Cor. 16:1-4 as the initiation of the "collection"

1. Paul deals with a challenge that we all face at times in our lives - starting a good task/goal with enthusiasm, and yet slacking-off as enthusiasm wanes or other matters take priority and become other motivating interests - vs. 6-8

The opportunity is in acting as the Lord - "grace" being the bestowal of favor on one not necessarily deserving it - here it (grace) would be a group serving another group they do not know and have not met

It is not uncommon for some to rest in their strengths, using such to avoid dealing with weakness

This list could also be called their "pursuit of excellence" versus a settling for the mediocre/average - the quality of striving for "excellence" in what is right is an enviable quality - reaching "excellence" must be seen in light of its source - see I Cor. 1:5 and 4:7

see Malachi 1:6-14 as an example of what God thinks when what is offered to Him in His honor is less than best, and is "cheap"

We realize there are many acts of "grace" done for public display and done out of some obligation to appear to be sincere - these are of no value to the person themselves

There really ought to be an eagerness in us to discover the needs of others and to have any part in meeting them, getting to be a source of encouragement

The example is one of extremes - He was "rich" and became "poor" (as one in poverty because He has given all to/for another)

Stinginess in all its forms comes from underestimating how well-off we actually are as well as a fear (lack of faith) of not having our needs met

- a. Paul informs that he has "urged" Titus to complete the "gracious" work he had started among them (this being their contribution to the "gift" and opportunity that had so excited the Macedonian Christians as well)
- b. The phrase could also be translated "this act of grace" - such "works" are two-sided in their affect - encouraging the receiver and encouraging the giver
- c. He commends them on their quality of "excelling" in what they set out to do (a good trait, unless pride becomes involved and work is avoided where one cannot "excel") - they had clearly evidenced themselves as a "driven" (self-motivated) group - Paul utilizes this to have them exhibit the same in an area that looks to be lacking
- d. They excel at "everything" (as in everything they set out to do) - here Paul lists some very positive qualities - they had proven to be diligent in their "faith" (trust of God, taking Him at His word and thus acting on it (many will talk "faith" but will not live it)); their "speech" (utterance), not just eloquence but also in careful, responsible, well-thought-thru wording (communicating with clarity and purpose versus idle chatter); their "knowledge" (learning/study of what they truly ought to know); their "earnestness" (diligence from understanding urgency) so they were not lax in what they undertook; the love that had abounded in them, that had been "inspired" (motivated by) Paul, likely by his introduction to Christ, and so their love of Christ overflowed to a love of His "brethren" (their brothers and sisters)
- e. With such characteristics, make sure this other area of gracious generosity is also pursued with excellence - it may seem unreasonable to try to do the "best" at everything, but it **is not unreasonable to do so with anything related to what is done for the Lord** - why would we consider anything done for our God to be subject to less than our best? - the Lord is often given the "dregs" rather than the "first fruits"
- f. This is not being written as a "command" - there was a desire this be of their heart (sincere/genuine love) - to lend to this goal, Paul admits he uses the "earnestness" (eagerness) of others (the Macedonian church) that they also would be genuinely motivated by such a display of generous grace
- g. **Genuine love is motivated by the urgency of the need in others** - the opposite would be the demonstration of down-playing urgency to excuse non-participation or responsibility in/for the needs of others (practical, emotional and spiritual needs)
- h. The example had been presented - a poor group of believers eagerly and generously (both) participated in the collection - the objective wasn't the money nor was it the final amount; it was about the meeting of needs and the drive to encourage other believers in their struggles

2. The supreme example of our namesake (Who we ought to emulate) - vs. 9

- a. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..." - since they knew the Gospel, they had to know its core, its focal point in what the Lord actually did - it was not just done to be admired/appreciated; it was done to be mimicked
- b. He, being infinitely rich, "became poor" (and that, "for your sake") - He is the example to follow in giving what one has for the benefit of another - and this is to be at the core of our focus, looking to give of ourselves so others can be truly "enriched"
- c. This was not a gift to relieve a conscience (out of guilt/obligation), but one out of love
- d. Generosity can be motivated by the examples of others as well as a recognition of personal wealth (true wealth, not just monetary) - having been given so much, and realizing the scope of our inheritance, we can afford to be generous with our resources
- e. Notice the "wealth" terms used in texts such as Eph_1:6-8, 2:7, 3:8 - though He was rich, He "for your sake became poor" - **doing what is done for the best for others is the example set by Christ** - so we are to focus upon in our daily living - how can I be used, how can I utilize the resources God has given me, for the betterment of those He brings across my path?

3. Finish what you started, and do it right - vs. 10-15

A similar idea is seen in Paul's instruction to Timothy in I Tim. 6:17-19- those "rich in this present world" ought to be "rich in good works" and "ready to share" and ultimately "to take hold of what is life indeed"

A competitive atmosphere in ministry is destructive- God gives ability not only for opportunity, but even for "measure" (how much to do) - God is perfect in His allocating of opportunity in line with His gifting to do it

If we take "measurements" out of ministry, ministry opportunities become endless rather than scarce!

The significance of the gifts from the Macedonians was not the amount, and not even their giving beyond their "measure" - it was their eagerness in the work, evidenced in such

The goal is "inter-ministering" and not where some do all the ministering and others do all the receiving - God "spreads" all His gifts around to be shared

In such a design we can see the priority of God - not in what we come to have, but in what we have been given that we share

The pursuit and goal of having excess has contributed to a more selfish society - we come to see ourselves as incapable of helping others, not because we don't have enough, but because we don't have enough excess

The gifting of God upon us is to be seen as responsibility for investment of the gifts, not for ourselves, but for generous sharing

- a. Paul offers his advice (opinion) in their continuing in the collecting of the gift - they had begun it a year previous, and had "desired" to do so - to pick this back up would be "beneficial" to them ("good for you" to do) - consistency is important, realizing we can become ***defeated*** in our thinking when we fall behind on a goal
- b. The idea of this also being "fitting" for them to do, is included in the idea of the underlying word for "advantage" - it is ***right*** that they should complete what they had been stirred to do regarding this gift
- c. Don't be of those who openly commit to do "good" only to fizzle-out - this can become habit-forming, where ***endurance*** is not a key factor in what is purposed - this leads to a life full of ***unfinished*** pursuits for God
- d. Their "readiness to desire to do it" rightfully should end in their finishing it within their ability - this last concept of ability, demonstrates it was not focused upon the amount and was most certainly ***not meant to be a competition***
- e. For if there is a willingness, then act on it, rather than constructing an artificial guide (possibly even a "goal") that will divert the focus away from the purpose - it's not the "number", it's the "work" as assigned/provided - ***Our "goal"*** may be more or less than what God has designed (we do not want to "box" God or each other in, or set overbearing standards that discourage some, and ***puff***-up others)
- f. Desire and "readiness of will" were core to the point Paul is driving at - if some had little, ***still give*** (without thought in how it compares to what others give or could give) - in our time, large gifts that are showcased become deterrents to many "lesser" gifts (which by man are not as appreciated, and yet before God are of enormous value, since He is not focused on the amount, but on the ***heart***)
- g. Giving of what one HAS ***now*** is also important in demonstrating ***an ever-present state of ministry*** rather than a perspective that there must be ongoing preparations to begin ministering - there are aspects of ministry that require preparation, but to not be ministering while preparing is counter-productive, and contradicts our calling to be redeeming the time (while we still have it)
- h. When it comes to ministry to others (services of any kind, including giving to meet practical needs), the objective is not that one "in need" comes to have an abundance and those giving, come to be in true poverty - the standard is "equality" (where you abound, share where others lack) - this is truly a Biblical standard! We ***expect*** there is an "evenness" in what God has distributed, and He has ***graced*** us with the opportunity to participate in the outpouring of His resources with each other (and this is far more than monetary!)
- i. Part of this is in the anticipation that one will have opportunity to meet the need of one who lacks, so that when they themselves come to a point of lacking, those they assisted can do the same for them
- j. Paul references a text from Exodus 16 (16:18) which dealt with the amounts of manna gathered by the Israelites - even though some gathered more and some less, when they measured how much they had taken, each had just enough - such an example contradicts much of the counsel/advice to never get to a point where you live "paycheck to paycheck", yet this was the "norm" God had for Israel, when taking care of them directly
- k. God will give more to some than others; some will be more "driven" than others, more talented/clever and will accumulate more - such are to see it as a means to do the work of the Lord, in aiding in the meeting of the needs of those around - these can be monetary, physical, practical, emotional and intellectual needs
- l. We will never be punished for being too generous! We will likely face consequences for self-indulgence, but it is not irresponsible to be generous with the brothers and sisters we have in Christ
- k. So, do not look on such circumstances as less than what they are - service for our Lord - to belittle them or excuse them is to belittle the One who gave them to us!

XIII. Faithful Stewards, the "Glory of Christ" - 8:16 - 9:5

A. In this section, Paul is commending Titus and two other "brothers" as they are sent to the Corinthian Church to aid in the collecting of the gift - how they are commended not only shows their quality, but demonstrates to us examples to follow, and priorities to pursue

1. A genuine burden for the spiritual maturity and consistency of others - vs. 16-17

- a. The "care" (earnestness) that Titus had for these believers was put into his heart by God - ***genuine burdens find their source in God and are not our own creation***
- b. Once again, Paul redirects what would normally be praise for the "instrument" (Titus) and directs it to the source - "...these good motions in the heart of Titus were not merely natural, or the effects of human power and free will, but were of God, as every good thing is." John Gill
- c. This "earnest care" is not necessarily what we would call "compassion" as much as it was urgency - urgency is another effective motivator, in that it functions off of the importance of the need (and in this case, the need was spiritual focus)
- d. We know this was the case, because it was the same concern Paul had (and we can see his response throughout this epistle)
- e. The source of this burden was also proved in that Titus did not need to be asked or prodded to do this - he did it "of his own accord" - and this for a situation that would be more challenging (not likely to have been looked upon as an enviable task)

Acknowledging the working of God in someone's life is the correct way of encouragement (versus praise, as if they were responsible themselves)

Much of what is seen as compassion can sometimes be misinformed - it is often found to just be "pity" or a form of guilt and looks to excuse rather than exhort

2. The "brother" who was known for his enthusiastic association with the Gospel - vs. 18-19

- a. The phrase "whose fame in the things of the Gospel throughout all the churches" can either have the idea that this person was "famous" because of his identifying (or even preaching) of the Gospel, or it could have the idea that his "praise" was in the Gospel (he was known for glorying in it, above all else)
- b. Much speculation has produced many names (of whom Luke, Barnabas and Silas (and more) have all been considered), but it was obviously not necessary to name him - his reputation was the focal point of this sentence - we do not want to get in the way of any form of Christ-likeness by putting ourselves forward (as though we are the ones deserving recognition)
- c. The term "brother" looks to be used in an official capacity, as there seems to be a special usage of this term to identify one appointed a travelling companion and minister with those whom the Church has sent - he was so noted as one "appointed by the churches" as part of this responsibility - this and other texts lend to church traditions, such as "ordinations" where churches endorse individuals for responsibilities - such accountability is foreign to an age that sees scrutinizing of character in the Lord's (public) work as being "judgmental"
- d. This undertaking was described as "this gracious work" (or "act of grace"), keeping the focus on the participation in the outpouring of God's grace, and its demonstration being "for the glory of the Lord Himself" - its purpose is to bring about glorying in God's goodness and not in His instruments (His "delivery boys")
- e. This was also done (secondarily) to "show our own readiness" (willingness) in meeting the needs of those in Jerusalem - this was a "united front" of many believers giving of themselves in so many ways and means, showing unity in the work

Either way is fine, since the core reputation of this man was his focus and eagerness with the Gospel message

"The phrase means, "whose worth is praised wherever the glad tidings are preached." Pulpit Commentary - this would be in harmony with Rom. 10:15

As is often the case, where who we are is not as important as what we are - some qualities outrank ourselves/name

As the Lord instructed in Mt. 5:16, to "let your light so shine, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven" - we dare not consider stealing any of such glory for ourselves!

A united front is more likely to draw others in, than in each doing ministry how they "see" it

B. Maintaining accountability and proof of character - vs. 20-24

1. Establishing an accountable course of action, with proven/tested men - vs. 20-21

- a. The first word of verse 20 is "στελλόμενοι," describing a careful, pre-planned arrangement - giving thought not just to what should be done, but how it is to be done - the "end" does not "justify the means"!
- b. They would take precautions so as to avoid any accusations of wrong doing (since they would be transporting money) - some (in our day) might resent any possible notion that they would be looked upon with suspicion - but humility/meekness considers possible obstacles and prepares to avoid them (as much as is possible)
- c. We must realize it's not just our name/reputation we risk when we are shortsighted - we represent the Lord, and He is often belittled by others ***because of us***

There are wrong ways to do the right things!

Various means of keeping ourselves accountable in our dealings with each other and especially in our service to the Lord are worthy of the Lord's name/reputation first, more than even our own

As instructed in Col. 3:23 - all we do in our work, we are to do it "heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men."

- d. For "we think ahead" to what is the most honorable way to do what should be done (as in striving to be above reproach), but to do so in the sight of the Lord (realizing all that is done and the motives in them are exposed to His all-seeing eyes)
- e. But since this work is also done in the sight of others and for others, their "sight" is also to be considered, to think ahead to provide a method that maintains unquestionable integrity - we do not do what we do **for** the eyes of others, but we often must do what we do in front of others, and should look to be considerate as to what we do so as not to cause a **distraction** (because we lacked discernment)

2. Tested and found reliable - vs. 22

Desire for ministry is a good thing, but it does not automatically qualify one to it - there is typically learning and "testing" that will come before most aspects of true service for the Lord

- a. Paul mentions "our brother" (versus "the brother") that is also being sent to them - with this unnamed person, Paul describes that he has been "proven" (tested) many times - again, a **credential** for his trustworthiness in this ministry is given
- b. He was proven to be "σπουδαῖον" (earnest/diligent) many times and in many ways - this is used to describe someone focused and disciplined (versus easily distracted and lazy) in the challenges that come our way
- c. Paul also makes a point to clarify that he (this brother) is even more motivated because he heard of the good news regarding the Corinthian Christians - diligence and sensitivity to our responsibility to the Lord becomes **contagious**!
- d. It would appear that his eagerness was to participate with others that were seen to be eager (or at least had been), and then to top it all off, it would be exciting to be a part of a group presenting the means to a great need in a time of discouragement (the Jerusalem Christians) - it was likely motivating also to know that someone else was excited over serving with them (something they had begun)

If we need help with our motivation, it is good to envision the potential encouragement brought to others when given the opportunity (grace) from God to meet a need (of any sort)

3. Prove your character to these other servants of the Lord - vs. 23-24

True love is proven over time and not in the professions (even passionate professions) of its existence! - see 1 John 3:16-19

- a. It can be uplifting to have someone speak of our qualities, but reputations should be **continually** proven in the present, and not dependent just upon past "successes"
- b. Paul desires these Corinthian believers to show "proof of their love" - don't just declare love, **prove it exists** (ongoing, and not sporadic/inconsistent)
- c. Titus is called by Paul his "partner" in the work for them - this was a united effort between them for their good - such is true love demonstrated (not to just come and make them feel good, but to challenge them in the opportunities God had given (so as not to miss out on opportunities of eternal worth))
- d. The other brothers being sent were "ἀπόστολοι" (delegates, message bearers of the churches, on a mission from churches to churches (ἐκκλησιῶν - called out ones), sent to **stand** with a church in what they are "called-out" to do)
- e. All such are the "glory of Christ," being the "trophies" of His grace, and so are living demonstrations of the glory associated with Christ (their lives pointing others to Him, not themselves) - what a privileged title to be called! - when we consider this, do we see ourselves as those whose life and behavior is used to impress those around us with Christ's greatness (do they think the better of Him because of us?)
- f. With such godly character being sent to you, "prove your love" and prove that the confidence placed in you is warranted - the motive is "not to be honored in the sight of others", but to not be detractors from the honor rightfully do Christ - it is human to shamefully represent the name of Christ, but truly of God to be used to bring honor to Him
- g. Being around Godly people has a way of motivating us to our responsibility, yet being around the opposite also has a way of causing us to forget or excuse ourselves from it

These were "apostles" (sent out ones) not THE apostles - such a work still exists when some are sent out from a church to believers in encouraging them in their consistent "walk"

We are not looking for spotlights to shine on us, but instead to be image bearers (picture-holders) of Christ and His significance

Our aim ought to be to seek out opportunities to prove the genuineness of our Godly character all throughout our lives

C. Get to the work now, and have it ready/done - 9:1-5

- 1. Paul stresses that he knows it would be redundant to write more regarding this "ministry to the saints" since they were already inclined/resolved to do it - yet commitment without lasting action (to completion) is not **actual** commitment - vs. 1-2

As seen here, God often uses the zeal of others to remind us of the zeal we once had and should have "stirred" again in us to action/completion

- a. Paul had already used their professed commitment (that of all Achaia of which Corinth was the capital) that had taken place a year earlier - the Macedonians had heard of it, but had acted on it faster
- b. Delay can often be a sign of distraction (considering not following through)

Paul did this elsewhere as also seen in I Thes. 4:9-10 - they were "doing" and he was pushing them to do more

If the "cause" is right, feelings need not be present to "drive it" - it is too human to live by our senses (often equated to the "heart"), yet we are commanded to walk/live in obedience, not by how naturally motivated we see ourselves to be

Paul had openly exhibited trust in these believers, using that information as a means to keep them motivated in the right direction - having confidence in the spiritual maturity of another, if proven wrong, is very painful!

A true discipler puts responsibility on themselves (as if assuming some risk in who they invest their time and efforts into)

It is not wrong to be "moved along" in our Christian walk - it is actually to be expected - God gifts others to grow and help us as He will gift us to grow and help (encourage) others - to resist is to be proud (since God has not made any of us self-sufficient)

This is a core point to all of life - being a true blessing (benefit) to others is a blessing (benefit) to us - we cannot but be helped as we help others!

- c. Paul begins this part of the discussion making it clear that he realizes he has (essentially) said enough on the topic, but he needs to clarify more of why he is sending them others to help them along
- d. His "boast" of their eagerness to this ministry was motivating to others, and because of this, he needed to make sure they would not be unprepared (because of losing interest or some other distraction) when the time came
- e. This is very common (we must admit) - motivation/consistency is frequently lost, not because the need goes away, or that the "cause" is found to be wanting, but because "feelings" wane, other things become more interesting - such demonstrates a natural "shallowness" in us, that would leave what is best/true/right, for the pursuit of what is most interesting (at that time) - so much of righteous living involves "self-forcing" because we are not naturally motivated toward truly righteous endeavors - we find ourselves bored or fatigued in doing what is right - *see Gal. 6:6-10*

2. Avoid the shame of being unprepared (not ready) - vs. 3-5

- a. Whether they liked it or not (or thought they needed it), Paul was sending these brothers to "so that you may be prepared"
- b. There is a positive sense in which being "boasted about" can motivate (not flattery (false/manufactured boasting)), but genuine praise - such is very powerful and should be used only with exactness and be well-studied (so as not to motivate others to vanity or to lesser/temporal aspirations that garner temporal "glory" and not everlasting good before God) - the goal is to honestly praise/endorse true Godliness in others
- c. If they were unprepared (had left-off what they were to be doing, what they had committed to do), Paul would share the shame in it with them (taking responsibility in their weakness rather than just saddling them with all the blame (as so many in leadership/service look to do - they are above the "fray" and not in it))
- d. This is quite an example of true leadership - Paul was "in it" with them, their successes and their failures - it is common to have people striving to minister from a distance, not shouldering the load with those God has placed around them to "work along side of"
- e. Since this was so important (not the gift, but their willing participation in it), Paul was sending "the brothers" to them ahead of time, so that everything would be ready when the rest of them arrived
"as a blessing and not as covetous"
- f. The phrase Paul uses at the end of verse 5 is "ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν" where he refers to the "gift" (εὐλογία - "blessing"), and that the collecting and organizing and giving of it would be their "blessing" (the blessing to others would be their blessing) and that not out of covetous (either that of Paul and his team looking for personal gain, or that of the Corinthians being so influenced by it that they are stingy (in time or money)) - it was a "blessing" to do, not to gain

3. So *Christ is glorified as we live like He did, by His priorities, motivations and actions*

XIV. Sowing And Reaping - 9:6-15

A. The heart, and its relationship to what is sown, and how much - vs. 6-7

1. There are varying reasons why anyone gives of what they have - looking at the facts apart from personal bias has a way of producing proper motives

see Prov. 11:24-25

- a. If one is to give of whatever they have, it is best to give "from the heart" (sincerely)
- b. This not only affects how much one gives, but the longevity (how long they give)

2. The principle: if you "sow abundantly, you will reap abundantly" - vs. 6

It doesn't take a lot of true investment to get a substantially larger return - yet, if it's not seen as a "return" why would they invest time and effort?

- a. This is using the concept/illustration of seeds (as in farming) - with seeds, you typically get back far more than you put in - one seed can produce substantially more than its original "size"
- b. The two are directly related - many do not receive much because they do not give much of themselves and what they have (been given)
- c. The literal idea is that "he that sows of what he has been blessed (according to how he has been blessed), will blessings receive" - we give of what we have been "blessed" with, and if we realize we have been so "blessed" (with whatever we have) we are generous

One who sees what they have as earned (or just "lucky") are not typically generous

3. Give “from the heart” - this is where all real giving finds its source - vs. 7

It should be seen for what it is... a privilege/opportunity- if internally resistant, one needs to discover why

It is common for others (or ourselves with ourselves) to seek to motivate strictly by command - here, the **value** is demonstrated, the investor has now been persuaded, therefore they are thrilled for all opportunities to invest in that which promises such an impressive return!

Givers in our day are reluctant to give in faith and toward faith

Campaigns for money in ministries illustrate this as common - they seek to “push” givers, finding a need to showcase the urgency

- a. The contrasts to proper giving are “reluctance” (grudgingly) and “compulsion”
- b. Giving of anything we have/posses to another is dictated by something - the goal is to be sincere givers, one who gives because it has been internally decided upon (as Titus was going to Corinth “of his own accord”) - this also indicates that any type of giving is never to be “for **show**”
- c. For “God loves a cheerful giver” - it describes one who is “ἡλαρόν”, already predisposed to act because they are **already inwardly convinced and decided** - this is at the core of such a person (having already been “won-over” inwardly to what is of greatest value, and therefore, it is what they **excitedly** seek to invest any of their resources in
- d. It is important to understand that we are not guaranteed that we will see the results (the “fruit”) for ourselves - the seed may sprout sometime later and the resulting produce may be far greater than we could have anticipated - it makes sense that one of the reasons God “loves” such a disposition is that it requires faith - we invest per His guidance and provided opportunities, and we then leave the **results** (the harvest) to Him (the timing and quantity)
- e. A “grudging” giver will soon stop giving (since they regret giving), while one that does so because they are convinced (to the heart), will always give of themselves cheerfully- **it is interesting to realize, that in all this discussion, Paul is not mentioning the need in Jerusalem; just the opportunity that lies before them**

B. The “payoff” for such investments - vs. 8-11

1. There is a form of “prosperity” that comes with faithful service/submission to what God has for us to do - but it is not based upon the “cheap”, temporal blessings of the age in which we live - it is based upon the **eternal**, opportunities of the best possible investments of our resources (such as our time, and thus the best possible way to “redeem it” (Eph. 5:16))

Many will work for praise, recognition, promotion, self-satisfaction, guilt relief, to be part of a group or for money, but people will not normally work for more work... unless there is a supernatural/eternal motive to do so

- a. A temporal values system hinders wise investments! Such investments of eternal value are all around us, but if we are seeking immediate “payoffs”, we will pass them by in search of our “living for the now” (this life) value assessments
- b. “Outwardly the seed may be small and insignificant, but inwardly its potential is immense, the seed which God supplies must be scattered, it must be sown beneath the ground, that is, it must become to all appearances lost, before its full potential can be realized and the manifold blessing of a harvest be enjoyed.” Philip Hughes

2. God is “powerful to make all grace abound toward you...” - vs. 8

His provision in supply and strength and even in time/timing is without fault

- a. This verse, plainly put states, God has the power to provide (grace you with) more than you need to sufficiently (in everything you do and in all the time of you doing it) do what He gives you to do, with the purpose for you to abound in every “good work” He **provides** to be done
- b. The phrase is “πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεῦσαι” (the whole of every kind of grace will be in excess (of the need)) - this truth contradicts the times when the Corinthians (or we) are tempted to see ourselves deficient to fulfill what God has given - though, if His supply does not seem enough, **we must trust** it was more than enough
- c. The purpose for such assurance of abundance is for the abundance of “good works”
- d. So the “**payoff**” is more work (aka opportunity)

If God does not give more, then we can be certain, more is not needed! Else, this statement by Paul is a lie

see Titus 2:11-15

3. God will amply supply “seed for sowing” for an increased “harvest of righteousness” - vs. 9-11

It is stating that such a harvest is the “offspring/fruit” of doing what is right - we are responsible to seize the moment, and God produces the results

- a. Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9 - this Psalm describes the blessings upon a righteous man, one who “Fears the Lord” - reverence for God above all else - such a one has lasting profits from his investments
- b. So being “righteously covetous” of such opportunities, realize that the same God Who provides for the one that sows and “bread for food” (allowing the sower to produce bread in abundance), is the same who will provide “seed” to sow for a “harvest of your righteousness” (participation in the outworking of God’s will)
- c. So realize, “In every way you will be enriched (made wealthy)” with the purpose to be “generous in every way” - we are given more to give more!
- d. The result will be others thanking God - there could be no higher purpose/goal!!

Such is "sowing righteousness" - it is the "what" (righteousness) and not the "how much" (quality over quantity)- compare to Hos. 10:12

- e. The focus should be upon God as the provider - we do not desire to get the recognition and thanksgiving for the meeting of another's need (we may be thanked, but **the objective (the motive) is for God to be seen as the provider**)
- f. There is infinitely more "power" in doing what is "right" than there is in the power of money - the sought after "**profits**" are not financial, but of truly an objective the glorify (elevate) God in the hearts/minds of those He brings our way to serve

C. Filling up a need that then spills over into rightful gratitude - vs. 12-15

1. God provides through the Corinthians, benefitting all involved - vs. 12

What a demonstration of how God uses all things in varying ways to make the most out of how He dispenses His grace!

- a. Back in 8:14, Paul revealed that God had given the Corinthians an abundance, then in 9:10-11, God gives them this to "sow" (so they could then "reap righteousness") - this then not only is used to meet the practical needs of the suffering Christians in Jerusalem, but causes them to **overflow** with thankfulness to God (Who was the source of it all)
- b. Paul uses the phrase "ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας" (the service of this public ministry) pulling together the formal with the practical (the organization of the ministry and the outworking of the "plan"), **both needed aspects** resulting in God being thanked for it (which is where the focus is supposed to go)
- c. Paul also uses interesting words, "προσαναπληροῦσα" (filling-up) and "περισσεύουσα" (spilling over); as the needs are filled they spill over into expressed gratitude to God

This helps to understand the times when God allows us to be emptied, so as to be the one that fills us to overflow-ing praise for Him

2. A "real" working of God proven to be so - vs. 13

These Christians who were doing well, would demonstrate God's grace to those not doing well and who were being despised

- a. This would essentially be "proof" to the Jewish believers that these believers were genuine in their **submission** to the Gospel of Christ - such faithfulness was useful to **demonstrate the reality of a confessed faith** - it can be easy to declare what one believes, but rarer to find one that actually lives by it
- b. This work would be a demonstration of their standing with the persecuted Christians in association with Christ and His good news (versus the "good news" of the age) - **there is no elitism in true Christianity!**
- c. Paul also used an interesting phrase when he wrote "ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας" (genuine (pure) generosity of fellowship (standing with and for them))

Support of all types is a way to stand with each other and to truly "fellowship"

3. The benefits of a lived-out faith (faithfulness) - vs. 14

It would be a high honor to be in the prayers of others we have been used to meet needs, whose burden/affection for us was based upon their affection to the grace of God at work in us

- a. Paul offers one more incentive - these whose needs are met through them, would "yearn for you" (a sincere, heart-felt affection) resulting in the same type of prayers for them as well
- b. Their affection stirs them to pray for the Corinthians, all based upon the "surpassing grace of God in you" - not just the grace seen in getting the Corinthians through their own "hard times", but **more than enough** that is then **shared** with others
- c. This demonstrates another concept in God's working - He doesn't free us from our pressures so we can minister/give, He keeps us in our struggles so we can give in the midst of them, outwardly proving God's **excessive** (more than enough) grace

Over attention to personal pressures distracts us from the opportunities to bear the load of others' pressures as well

4. Keeping proper motivation by holding to the proper standard - vs. 15

Thankfulness and generosity of all sorts are related - a grateful person is generous with what they have because they realize how generous God has been to them

- a. No matter how we approach these opportunities and their benefits, along with the struggles to do them, is the ever-present awareness of God's inexpressible gift (one of such greatness, words fail to describe it)
- b. Having so much (unmeasurable) to work from, how could we hold back? All believers must be in constant awareness that they live by means of an infinite benefactor! Such an **awareness** fights down any notion of stinginess

5. The need to evaluate why we do what we do (motive)

Motive is directly linked to our attitude

- a. There can be several factors as to why we are reluctant to give, serve and minister - one of the greatest influences on our decisions is related to why we do what we do
- b. Consistency and longevity in our commitments suffers greatly, if we serve for personal praise, to relieve guilt, or because we feel "pressed" into it by those around us
- c. Paul was demonstrating the right "heart" in ministry of any type - our goal is to be that God be honored in it, and that His kindness, generosity, power, knowledge is the source to all needs being met (and in the "when" and "how" they are met)
- d. God is glorified also when others see us submitting to what He has given us to do

see also Eph. 3:14-21

XV. Bringing Every Thought to the Obedience of Christ - 10:1-18

A. This begins a pivotal point in his letter - Paul now addresses accusations, and even the mockery of those who were openly opposing him - his defense and response is founded upon the reality of the situation in which he/we find ourselves (warfare) and not just day to day living (“walking in the flesh”)

1. Paul begins with a plea to not have to be forceful when he comes - vs. 1

see Mat. 11:28-30 - the Lord instructs to “learn of Me” because He is “meek and lowly” - this is ideal, not a disadvantage

a. His plea is more an admonition than it is a request (παρακαλῶ) - it is a giving of a strong “piece of advice” (not a threat, a warning based in responsibility (what he would be forced to do if their response was not “obedient”))

— b. He appeals to the example of Christ, as Jesus was “meek and gentle” so they should be, and as he was also striving to be in all his responses - meekness is a posture of the heart (pursuing right with a gentle intent) and so producing gentleness (as was possible, for Jesus was gentle with the sheep and hard on the enemies (wolves))

The accusation being that he is a coward in their presence and only bold when he is at a safe distance - so meekness is often confused with cowardice

— c. It looks as though he is quoting a criticism of himself when he uses the phrase “I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away” - he is facing the idea that he comes across as “humble” when in person, but that he comes across as bold when he writes - this is looked on by some as inconsistent

It is common for many, trying to avoid a debate of substance, to resort to shallow/base concepts to criticize

d. It is speculated by many that Paul’s reference to “meek/lowly when face to face with you” is speaking of his small, uncomely stature and appearance - it might be, but even if he were tall and good looking, he was still despised for what he taught (and how he lived by it) more than anything else

2. “Please, don’t force a confrontation against me where I will have to exhibit boldness” - vs 2

It is always preferable to gently lead than it is to boldly confront - meekness seeks this until left with no other option (confrontation is not the first choice)

— a. He begs them that when he is present with them that he not have to demonstrate “the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some,” for he would have to boldly face them (not a battle of the wills, but that of Truth versus error)

b. Paul will be referencing “some” among them, which appear to have gained influence - such confrontational, bold false teachers and bad influences, would need to be confronted boldly (and even openly) if they would not submit

The Truth is not ours to define according to our own authority - we are obligated to keep it accurate, clear and pure - false teachers are often seen as legitimate because they have what are seen as the best of intentions

— c. Paul had brought them the unadulterated Truth, and these outside infiltrators were seeking to sway these Christians away from what had been taught - such is a battle not only worth having, but one of necessity (if there is a love for them and as a steward of the Lord’s flock)

d. Such were “regarding” Paul and his team as “walking according to the flesh” (as though his motives were dictated by fleshly motives (convenience, self-serving and proud ambitions, versus actually being dictated by obedience to Christ and His Word))

e. This accusation may have been in regards to his not being “bold” with them in person, as though he was timid because he was afraid of things not working out as he planned it

B. The weapons of the war we fight are not “of the flesh” - vs. 3-6

1. Paul immediately makes the distinction - we “walk in the flesh” (because we live in this world of flesh), but we are not here to “live” but to “war”! - vs. 3-4

“To walk after the flesh is to neglect the dictates of the higher spiritual nature, and to live as though the desires of the body were the only ones that needed satisfying.”
Cambridge Bible Notes

a. Life is not the pursuit of a causal stroll through our allotted days; we are born into a world at war, though the war is spiritual (and so philosophical) and not physical

b. Since this is so, “weapons” used in such a warfare cannot be “according to the flesh”

c. If the basic sense of the age in which we live (its overriding “practical sensibilities”) directs our lives, we will become so blind we would fail to see the war surrounding us, becoming casualties (out of gross neglect of duty)!

d. Infiltrators utilize proficiently the weapons of the flesh, looking to make a life of faith (complete trust in God’s gracious control) look as though foolish

“Natural means” will be ineffective against this, yet is instinctively sought (turned to) if not taught properly

— e. Instead, the “weapons of our warfare” are spiritual, with the design/purpose to destroy “fortresses” (strongholds) - and such is in the “spiritual”

f. These are “mighty in the sight God” (δυνατὰ τῷ Θεῷ, powerful before God) - He sees them as they are, “what is made possible because of the power (ability) exerted by the subject” which is God Himself

g. The picture presented is a tearing down (brick by brick if necessary) fortifications - such are described as “imaginings” (reasonings/philosophies)

2. Overthrowing counter-arguments, and arrogant challenges - vs. 5-6

These are not defensive terms; they are more offensive, as in taking the "fight" to the enemy

This is any idea/philosophy/line of thought that would seek to elevate itself as superior to the revealed knowledge of God in His Word

As philosophies are often more revered than Scripture

This leaves no room for "allowable" thoughts that could still offer resistance to Christ and are allowed to remain as constant "protestors"

The power of thoughts and ideas and their potential dangers, are illustrated with concepts of warfare because one ideology or another will win-out - error and falsehood must be fought against and seen as the threat it is (even when it comes with terms for peace, while demanding compromise to meet it half way - such is a common tactic to make Truth appear to be the extremist)

- a. Rather than yielding to the popular pressure of some of the opposing influences in the Corinthian church, they were **focused** on overthrowing (literally a forceful yanking down) these contradictory "speculations" or "reasonings" that were in opposition to the "knowledge of God" (the opposite being the knowledge/reasonings of man)
- b. This charge was focused on overthrowing (also) anything that exalts itself against true knowledge of God (God as sovereign ruler in contrast to man's ideas of self-determined destiny and control) - **pride** is at the core of such opposition to the true Truth
- c. This phrase pictures any idea/concept that would elevate itself so as to appear more lofty and intimidating **over that of God's Word**
- d. The result of such destructive conquests (as the fortresses are brought down), there are captives (prisoners) taken - these captives make up the "πᾶν νόημα" (the whole of the thought processes) to be submissive to Christ - we see no "**fairness** doctrine" where opposing ideas to the Truth of God and Christ are allowed to continually challenge, as if to have equal opportunity - such seems unreasonable and possibly intellectually dishonest to some, yet **these opposing ideas will not tolerate the truth of Christ** themselves (only an edited version, deemed acceptable to popular thought)
- e. This does not describe converts to Christ as prisoners, for the enemy is not the people, it's the ideas and thought processes that have a controlling factor over them
- f. This is what is then dealt with in verse 6 - Paul and those with him were poised and ready to put down any remaining opposition (just as after a victory in war, ongoing factions of resistance to the victors would remain and would need to be "put away" (punished, **justice** being served on it)
- g. This would need to take place once "sides" had been chosen - once their "obedience is complete," then those still opposing would most assuredly be reigned-in!
- h. So, rather than utilizing such ideas as though they could be useful for Christ, or as if they might be better than that of God, they are to be **conquered** and not embraced

C. Take care to see "below the surface" and not be enamored with outward appearances - vs. 7-11

1. "Equal" servants before the Lord - each answers to Him, not to each other - vs. 7

Being "in Christ" (one of His), there is no point of competition or true ranking of ourselves before Him - we are either His or not His!

So at the very least, they are on equal footing at the start; but if Paul has been given authority, then that must be considered as well

- a. Paul now points out that they are not to be focused on the "surface" - there is more to the measure of a person than what is just seeable before their physical/mental eyes
- b. If each is estimated by what others can see, then that becomes the standard each aspires to - this is truly "shallow," as it motivates to just "look good/real" versus actually **being** good/real
- c. Since being Christ's is the ultimate criteria, then if a critic is confident in himself that he is Christ's, then he must begin his critical thinking with the realization that Paul also is one of Christ's - it is when this is missed that each begins to elevate themselves in comparison to each other, and **partisanship infiltrates the Church**

2. "I will not be put to shame" - vs. 8-9

The use of authority carries with it strict accountability in its usage - it is not given for the advantage of the possessor, but for the edifying of those "under" him

Pride and any form of self-service in what we do for the Lord is always dangerous, for it is at the core of mishandling tasks He gives us to do

- a. Paul clarifies that even if he would boast (utilize for leverage) about the authority he has been given, he would not be found a liar or imposter, and thus put to shame
- b. The authority he had been given, which he may have to use, was only for the purpose to "build them up" (οἰκοδομῆν - constructing a house/building) and was never intended for their destruction (tearing them down (deconstruction))
- c. Paul is defending why he was cautious and gracious with them in person, and yet harder on them in writing to them - **harshness** was not what he looked to use first
- d. Paul was focused on living by integrity before the Lord primarily, and was driven not to be shamed by irresponsibility (which explained his caution)
- e. If there is not obedient submission to what he has instructed them to do, he wanted to make it clear that he did not want it to appear that he was looking to frighten them (fearful motivation) by his letter only, but that he would be compelled (by necessity) to deliver on what might have seemed as threats to them
- f. His motivation not to be "ashamed" was before the Lord, he was not motivated by any sense of shame he might have before them (mainly his opponents)

This is why it is key we realize who it is we actually are serving

3. Paul was no manipulator/game-player - vs. 10-11

Even if this description could be taken as possibly positive, it was still intended as a criticism since they use his appearance as a means to disregard him and what he wrote and taught

A disqualified messenger does not necessarily disqualify the message, and finding faults in those standing with the Truth does not excuse our ignoring/disregarding it

compare to Gal. 4:13-14

The opponents of Biblical Truth will always have accusations of it being too "mean" and without compromise (intolerant), while they personify their very accusations - their goal is not fairness or to reach truth, just to suppress truth by any means necessary

We are never to do what we do in the service of the Lord for admiration - there are too many examples of those not being appreciated while they lived, yet profoundly used

- a. Paul now quotes something said of him and responds - the conclusion reached by Paul's opponents was that his letters were truly "weighty" (heavy) and "strong" - this appears to be a criticism as well as the next line, since these were not offering true compliments
- b. The same is often said in our day regarding the direct interpretations of what Paul was used to teach, and we still see the same complaints (it's too heavy and forceful), which when challenged with the truth of what our purpose is to be and how we are to look on life, it produces such a discomfort in some (the guilt/conviction to submit) that they disqualify it by other means/standards
- c. In contrast to "one set of adjectives", they describe Paul as being unimpressive (ἀσθενής, weak and sickly looking) and his speech was "contemptible" (such as should be despised and ignored) - Paul mentioned in verse 7 that they were not to put emphasis/weight upon the surface appearance - ***the goal is not the messenger but the message!*** - many even in our day will write-off content because they are unimpressed with the presenter or his/her appearance, though many deceivers will come across as attractive in a variety of ways
- d. Paul (as we should) did not yield to the attempted distractions from what was to be the substance of their focus - he assures them that he is the same person in-person that he is by letter (and that he will be outspoken, bold, heavy and strong in his response, if there is resistance) - this does not picture a battle of wills but a battle of truth and error/lies (which MUST be confronted as a means of protection, not antagonistic competition)
- e. There has been much written on Paul's appearance, but none of it can be solidly substantiated - we do know that these critics were unimpressed with his appearance - tradition has it that he was "crooked" in his stature (bent over), bald, and feeble-looking - yet if all true, takes nothing away from how he was used of God to pen so much of the New Testament

D. "Let the one that boasts, boast in the Lord!" - vs. 12-18

1. The word behind "boast" is "καυχώμενος" with the idea of "glorying" in and because of something (in that it, compared to other things, is above them and outshines them) - vs. 12

When one allows themselves a high estimate of themselves, they welcome such competitions because they will never lose (because it is their estimation that determines the winner!)

Once an artificial confidence is established (because of their self-promoting standards), such feel emboldened to disregard the "true standard of comparison" in Scripture - such are true fools who will never heed instruction (for how can one who as "arrived" be challenged to go further!?)

This explains how so many can claim their standard of comparison to be the Bible, and yet be so far from what it actually states

And, sadly, there will always be those who will follow, admiring the confidence they themselves wish they had

- a. Paul admits readily that he and his team were not bold enough in an area; that of joining in to their competitive comparisons among themselves - this was one competition Paul bowed-out of, even if it was looked upon as cowardly
- b. Their "standards of comparison" by which they measured themselves and how "glorious" each would be ranked, was themselves.. ***they were the standard!***
- c. This is where commonly accepted opinions and "mutual respect" are the "rule" by which even "truth" is determined, and how to discover then who is acceptable and respectable in their midst
- d. Essentially they are "self-promoters" (commending themselves) - this is in contrast to our comparing ourselves to the standard revealed in God's Word - Christ (Who is the true standard of what actual "glory" is!)
- e. So when they "measure" themselves among themselves (they are their own standard of measurement), they then use the results of this comparison to compare themselves among themselves to see who "wins"
- f. It should be noted that some try to get around this by concocting a subjective interpretation of Scripture (they comparing the Scripture to themselves, and not themselves to the objective truth of Scripture)
- g. Those that practice such things are "without understanding" (the word is "συνιάσιον" picturing one who is unable to accurately put two things (thoughts) together correctly)
- h. Those in such a condition are unable (without outside intervention) to discern their own situation - not only are they truly clueless, they are confident in it, seeking to win others over to themselves

2. Boasting (glorying) based in reality and for the right reasons - vs. 13-16

- a. Paul would not "boast" (hold his head up high) regarding something he had not actually done or participated in (in contrast to his antagonists)

In Prov. 25:14 it reads, "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give." - and this describes well the "opposition" - they build themselves up and what they have to offer without offering anything of actual lasting substance

Many seek (and many measure) "success" by external growth (size, numbers and a rapid pace) - the **quality** of such growth is left out since it is not the "aim"

The overriding point is that it was not about Paul - it was about God's greatness and the focus to do what He gave to do so as to have glory go to Him and not the tools He used

The greatest satisfaction is seeing those God uses us to help grow, then grow to a point of faith-building, God-honoring influences to those we could never have reached

There was absolutely no desire on Paul's part to claim the work of another as his own - this was not his agenda, therefore was not something he would do

False humility is actually so proud, it would rather not acknowledge progress so as not to limit it to God's grace - it resents giving God glory unless it can be shared with self

There is endless boasting in the world but is of no real, lasting substance, and its points of glorying need to be propped-up continually, and its followers need to be "worked-up" to maintain their level of "excitement"

As he mentioned in verse 12, those using themselves as the standards of comparisons are "without understanding" - many understand much, but if the "much" is flawed (in its ultimate aim), adding more to it will not make it right

One who "commends themselves" is not "proven" (δόκιμος, tested and found genuine)

- b. Paul and those with him had a standard by which to be measured - one way this might be handled is with the idea of a "track-record;" the Corinthians could see what had actually been done, and that without needed exaggerations to make it seem more impressive than it really was
- c. This is also along the lines of describing an external standard by which one can be measured (an objective standard to see what was actual and what was inflated)
- d. It appears by these counterpoints of Paul, that these false teachers would follow after him, and as a part of their tactics, would claim credit for growth that was already in place, as though this was proof of their "rightness" over than of Paul
- e. Paul, in contrast, is limited to the "scope" of ministry (and even the results) of what God had given (he was not the standard to be compared to others; the standard was what God had sent them to do and the genuine Godly results) - they were to be faithful
- f. Like many false teachers and opportunists in our day, those standing against Paul did "overextend" themselves (reaching beyond what should have been a limit, and that just for the sake of "growing" in their sphere of influence)
- g. Paul was not reaching beyond what God had clearly given, even as far as Corinth (where Paul and his associates were the first to preach the Gospel) - this was the truth, even if some among them had forgotten how God had brought them to the Truth - and in all this, they did not compromise the message or skip God-given responsibilities to get to them (as though they were a "trophy" to Paul's pride)
- h. The desire for greater influence is so that those whose faith is increased would become message-bearers (disciple makers) themselves - vs. 15-16 - they were not out to exploit the work of others, but that as others matured, the "sphere of influence" would also increase in the building-up of the faith of others beyond them
- i. It has nothing to do with our legacy, but it is all about THE legacy (God's), and all of it dependent on His grace, plan, and timing and not ours - ***we must never pursue personal glory in any aspect of ministry!***
- j. Paul appears to be looking for them to grow to a point of a "partnership" in the ministry - that the Corinthians need not be as needy children but as co-laborers in the work
- k. Stubborn resistance not only hinders one's own growth, but the potential growth of others elsewhere (not in just bogging-down our spiritual mentors, but in not being readied ourselves to build-up others in the Faith)

3. Do what you do for the Lord, His greatness (not self's) and His commendations (not man's) - vs. 17-18

- a. There is nothing wrong (actually, it is everything right) to boast about what has happened (as Christ's work) - there needs to be an open acknowledgment of what has happened (assessing true progress/success), but keeping it within the proper parameters of God's grace at work in it
- b. So, the one "glorying" is to be doing so in the Lord (his glory is in the Lord versus self) - it is not a shared glory that we "share" with him (out of the condescension of our heart!) - there will be boasting (there actually needs to be points of boasting (since we are creatures designed to glory in something)), but it needs to be properly directed, else we glory in what has no innate glory in itself
- c. It is enlightening to realize that we desire to be "glorified" but our pursuit of it in any other way/association with the Lord proves to disappoint and brings shame (Rom. 5:5)
- d. It is clear that Paul is borrowing the bulk of this from Jer. 9:23-24 - in that text, if there is to be boasting, the "wise" (smart) must not boast in their "smarts", and as the "strong" and wealthy should not glory in their prosperity and power - boasting is to be directed to "understanding and knowing" (relational) the Lord and His consistent love, justice, and righteousness in the earth
- e. No amount of self-confidence and self-exaltation will make it real, for the source of Truth is the only one that can truly "approve" anything (be the final judge of what is genuine and of actual value/worth)
- f. So all legitimate boasting is so because it is directed (genuinely) toward God - it is His "commending" we actually desire (not that of mankind)

XVI. Don't Be Deceived By Righteous-Looking Imposters! - 11:1-15

A. The focus - "sincere and pure devotion to Christ" - vs. 1-3

1. Paul asks and then insists that they bear with him in a "little foolishness" - vs. 1

It's like him saying don't write-off what at first will appear to be silly - "consider it and hear me out" - mature responses are not reactionary

Compared to the wrong thing, even Truth will seem senseless

- a. The "foolishness" he refers to references what others might consider as "without sense"
- b. Yet, even though it may seem simplistic or even absurd to their sensibilities, just bear with the example and the urgency behind it (hear him out, don't react)
- c. They need to see his motive (in contrast to the "super-apostles") so as to better understand why he does what he does - some of what God teaches us will often seem foolish at first glance, but studied-out for what it is will make our "view" of things clearer (error, presented logically can make truth look to be in error)

2. Jealousy for the bridegroom because of the bride's flirtation with dangerous infatuations - vs. 2-3

As a husband or wife might feel if their spouse indicated a fascination with another potential "love"

Jealousy is a feeling we can all identify with - it is the driving desire to have the focus, admiration and love of someone to one's self - it is borne out of deep affection and cannot stand the thought that loyalties and affections would drift elsewhere

Such alluring distractions prove to be in opposition to what is the right thing to do (but out of selfishness, "right" must yield to feeling/passion)

In Genesis 3:1-7 we see the account detailed in its progressive steps to questioning God to allow focus on self - to decide for one's self became the greatest allurements

"Complicated" because of what has been introduced into the relationship (wrong thoughts/ideas, competing attractions)

- a. Paul uses the word "ζηλω" which shows jealousy pictured as boiling water - it is a concept of **extreme affection** for someone that provokes extreme emotions - but this is not a self-focused jealousy; it is "Godly" (therefore it is righteous)
- b. True "Godly jealousy" is such because of its focus on the best for the other - some of the strongest feelings we will ever face will be those of profound concern for another that flirts with ungodly influences (designed to impress them **away from** what is God's and toward what is "self-fulfilling")
- c. He was not jealous for himself (as though he wanted followers just to have followers) - he actually cared deeply for these and their welfare, and bad influences would lead them to wrong motives, thinking and therefore, wrong directions
- d. The concept here is that of "betrothal" (as in an engagement), and a father doing all he can to keep his daughter pure in body and (especially) in mind/heart - it would be to his horror if after the "espousing" was finalized, his daughter was enamoured with another man
- e. Paul uses the word "φοβοῦμαι" (I am afraid, terrified) that they would be "ἐξηπάτησεν" (totally taken-in, therefore completely deceived to an irreversible conclusion) - just as the serpent "beguiled" Eve - this was done by getting her to question the particulars, meaning and intent of what God had actually said, and then to make what was in opposition to His word appealing, and self-fulfilling
- f. It must be remembered, the serpent did this out of "his subtlety" (his pre-planned, strategic argument against God) - it was not intended to be obvious as to what was being done - the objective was to look as though Eve's best interests were at the core of the dialog
- g. The danger is their "minds" (thought processes, thinking) would be led the wrong direction and thus "spoiled" (corrupted, decomposition) by wondering off from the "simplicity" and purity to Christ - "simplicity" is essentially describing single-hearted devotion versus a "complicated" (adulterous) relationship - the core idea of "impurity" is that of being mixed with what does not belong or fit

B. Another Christ, and so another spirit and gospel - vs. 4

1. Paul is warning (even with sarcasm) of what these false teachers are bringing - these are first described as "one who comes" which could be in contrast to that of "Apostle" which means one who is sent - these were truly coming on their own, commending themselves and inter-validating one another with no true authority from the Lord

2. These "proclaim **another** Jesus", a "different spirit" leading into "another gospel"

He was presented with similarities yet with key distinctions (likely additions, subtractions and under emphasis and over emphasis on varying details)

- a. Paul's concern was summed up in their acceptance (bearing with) another (ἄλλον - typically another of the same kind) Jesus
- b. This could have (we do not know the exact content) contained ideas of His Jewishness and the need to duplicate that, or it could have been a focus on the "human" Jesus with a down-playing His deity - it also (likely) was a Jesus who was only exalted and all shameful/humble aspects were left out (Jesus as crucified - see I Cor. 2:2)
- c. Another Jesus would not then send the Holy Spirit, but would include a different (ἕτερον - of another of a different kind) spirit - not one pointing to follow what Christ actually taught, but a spirit compatible with the age, that allows the marriage of humanistic and Christian ideas to be compatible (and so, an **impure** spirit)

We already know from the first letter that the Corinthians were struggling with a humble, crucified Lord, and were inclined to displays of measurable, outward "greatness"

In our day it is also seen as acceptable and normal that "Jesus" will be preached differently and it will be determined by "where someone is coming from"; yet forgetting the real danger of getting anything associated with Him wrong

Mankind (naturally) desires to be saved from consequences, to live as independent of God for as long as possible, holding to pride (and it being encouraged and defended)

Even using the standards of comparisons his opponents were using, he was not coming-up short - exaggeration for one's self and against another is characteristic of worldly-minded position seekers

As even in ministries today - homiletics is less important than hermeneutics (actual knowledge of the subject matter and overall accuracy)

Even in conservative Christian circles we can see on the rise more excitement over personalities than in substantive, Biblical Truth

It is "ἡ ἁμαρτία" (the sin, the "missing the mark" - his gross failing was not demanding support

- d. So a "new and improved Jesus, and a new and improved spirit" will seem to bring with it "a new and improved gospel" - we are not given the details of this other "gospel" but can assume it would be one more naturally appealing to the "flesh" or to pride (likely, both)
- e. This describes a very serious scenario - if you get Jesus wrong, you get the wrong "spirit" (which then leaves one unguided to the Truth and without "illumination" to what is the right way, leading then to a "good news" that is founded on the temporary and not the eternal (one that is severely short-sighted!)
- f. If there could be conceived of a truly "better" Jesus, Spirit and Gospel, then it would make sense they would go along so readily with it - yet if they are actually accepting such teaching, such messengers, they bear with it (such error) "beautifully" (versus bearing with him in verse 1)
- g. "...Paul says that such an approach to ministry constitutes more than merely preaching the same Jesus another way; it constitutes preaching another Jesus, the receiving of a different spirit other than the Holy Spirit, and embracing different gospel than the true gospel." Guthrie
- h. There is an inevitable chain reaction to the introduction of error (in all its forms) into the Gospel, and even though many will be well-intentioned or a result of attempts to be more relevant, the dangerous results cannot be mitigated
- i. At the core of the Gospel is the direct handling of our natural condition (helpless/hopeless in our sin) in full need of a Savior - all other counterfeits will take away from a direct diagnosis of our "deadness in sin," and will also downplay the absolute need for an absolute saving by a singular, absolute Savior
- j. Remarking on the idea of their tolerance of these false teachers, Harris wrote, "But behind the irony is profound disquiet - distress that the Corinthians so readily accepted novelty and elevated form over content, manner over matter."

C. The "super apostles" versus the Apostle Paul - vs. 5-10

1. The first criticism - Paul was not a professional public speaker - vs. 5-6

- a. Paul, honestly assessing himself in comparison to these self-commending "apostles" does not see himself any less in anything compared to them ("μηδὲν ὑστερηκένα" in anything falling behind or lacking)
- b. The term Paul uses (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων) describes not just those calling themselves "the apostles", but as "better" (beyond) the apostles - this would be appealing to an audience that wanted to be sure they had "the best" (though how "best" was defined was at the core of the problem)
- c. There is some discussion in commentaries that this could be in reference to Peter, John and possibly James, though this is highly unlikely in light of the context being false teachers and those putting forward petty criticisms against Paul
- d. So, "even if an amateur" (ἰδιώτης, unskilled, inexperienced) in speaking (public speaking likely), that would not be the point to place emphasis - if one is a good speaker but does not speak-forth what is right, that is a far greater deficiency! Paul was in no way less than these in "knowledge"
- e. This is a common tactic when one cannot counter substance; they attack on lesser things (appearance, charisma, social standing and popularity) - yet such criteria should never be the priority when the Truth is the objective!
- f. His knowledge of the Gospel and everything associated with it was proven to them when he was with them (and that in multiple ways) - it is sad to see genuine knowledge of Scripture being less a priority while people-skills, organizational talent, being "driven" and communication skills being placed as the higher priorities
- g. Paul does not necessarily admit he is unskilled in speaking, though he may have been yielding the point to demonstrate that even if it were the case, it would have no bearing on these others being "better"

2. The second criticism - Paul "preached for free" - vs. 7-9

- a. Paul uses a seemingly extreme word ("sin") in dealing with this - he calls it a "sin" possibly because this was how it was treated by the "super apostles"

Many are still embarrassed by the actual Jesus Christ of the Bible and the unvarnished truth that is taught - popular "Christianity" wants to remain just that.. popular

Popular sentiment and methodology should not be used to determine truth/reliability - the "argument" still should lie in the content

This, of course, was not true robbery since it was given willingly by the churches in Macedonia (ones that were likely less wealthy... probably poor)

We only know that Paul chose not to exercise his right to be supported by the Corinthians so as to "put no hindrance to the Gospel of Christ" - see I Cor. 9:9-19

So if something of eternal value was to happen amongst them, money would not be able to get any of the "credit"- plus, those who give their money often look on it as a point of control (which in ministry, is not acceptable)

It is disappointing to hear of ministers of any type who will act like task masters over those to whom they are to serve

We steward what God gives us, we do not own any of it!

Stubborn defiance in error is deplorable, but determined obedience and defense of the truth (before God) must not yield (even though there will come criticisms because we do not compromise as is expected of everyone else)

Clearly, Paul was not in pursuit of popularity, nor was he controlled to be widely accepted

We must be considerate of others' thoughts, perspectives and feelings, but cannot exclusively use them to determine the best course of action

The enemy would have us compromise not to appear legitimate, but so they can look to be legitimate

- b. In their culture, it would have been even embarrassing that a travelling public speaker would not demand to be paid, or to come already having a wealthy benefactor to support him - it was looked upon as one of the needed credentials
- c. And, to make matters worse, Paul even stooped to manual labor at times to support himself - this may not seem out of the ordinary today, but this would have been too humble for many (especially if you want to compare (competitively) your "speaker" (teacher, minister) with others) - you would want "your man" to outshine the others
- d. Paul did this to "exalt" them (to treat them in high esteem for their own good) - he did not desire his need of support to interfere with what he was sent to do - yet this selfless deed (which should have been evidence of his integrity) was turned in such a way so as to make it appear as if a "sin"
- e. If wrong was to be determined, it would have been more directed at his "robbing" other churches so as not to take from them - he uses the terminology of theft because of the way it worked out - he took from churches that he was not (at the time) ministering to - they were giving without getting anything back from him
- f. Paul jumped to extreme wording (as it were) to make money a non-issue (it was normally very high in priority in the workings of the false apostles) - these false teachers appear to have made it essentially virtuous to demand payment for their services - so if someone could not make a living off their own teaching, it was then a sign that they were not legitimate
- g. It appears as though the church at Corinth could have supported Paul and his team, but for some reason, Paul chose not to exercise this right and chose to put no other burden on them (except to listen, learn and obey) - since this was not the norm, it is clear that Paul sacrificed for their good, and God used some (like those in Philippi) to assist him (Php. 4:14-16) - there is also a theory that the support of the Corinthians may have carried with it exclusivity to them (while the church at Philippi supported his endeavors wherever the Lord sent him)
- h. So, when he had "need" he did not "burden" anyone (the word being "κατενάρκησα" (where we get our word for "narcotic" (meaning to "benumb" and so to paralyze))- this may have also been an indication that he was determined to not be "dead-weight" amongst them, but (practically) would "carry his own weight"
- i. So, in all things "ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ" (in everything not a weight/burden) to them - such ought to be the determination of us all with each other - when called to "exalt" (and build up) our fellow Christians, our aim is to not become an obstacle to them ourselves - so, in our service for the Lord, we must not allow ourselves to become our own objective

3. The third (likely) criticism - Paul would not relent in his message and method - vs. 10-11

- a. It is not uncommon to receive criticism and to recognize need for change - but not all disagreements should end in change of the one being "corrected" - as in our day, "compromise" is expected in almost every area if one is to be deemed "civil" - but if it is what is clearly "right" (before God), compromise cannot be allowed
- b. Paul calls this his "boasting" (ἡ καύχησις, this glorying) because it was all, the absolute right thing to be doing (and saying) - so sure he was, that he essentially vows that it will not stop ("As the truth of Christ is in me...")
- c. So, no matter where he goes or where the word of how things are done go (this approach and its rightness), it will not be stopped
- d. Why would he be so "stubborn"? Was it because he did not truly love them? Such would be the claim of many when they desire to manipulate change in another, accusing of being "unloving" because they will not compromise on a certain point - to answer this, Paul properly appeals to the One who knows all things; God (for He knows that this is done out of genuine love for them, even if they do not see it that way)

D. Satan and his servants disguised as servants of righteousness - vs. 12-15

1. Paul was determined to continue as he had (in ministry and message), against the barrage of attacks, all with the purpose to stop any opportunity the false teacher could have to legitimize themselves by having Paul be like them (he conforming to their demands/criteria) - vs. 12-13

Such tactics have been and still are used by false teachers - they will criticize those that are genuine servants of the Lord, but will still encourage them to conform to them (using it to legitimize themselves)

Such need to look genuine to lure their actual targets; those sincere in their pursuits of Truth - they are not pursuing blatant rebels, but the sincere seekers

Deceit can have a mask for all occasions, depending on those they seek to infiltrate

Satan has his "deacons" (διάκονοι αὐτοῦ) that follow him religiously - they may not themselves see through his disguise and may actually believe they are following the Lord and that they are "messengers of light"

This demonstrates the dread danger of being those who estimate themselves by "comparing themselves among themselves" - they rate themselves very high (righteous) and are secure in the wide range of witnesses to it

This is why we are to treat such approaches and representations of the Gospel with disdain - the bearer of the poison may not know it's poison, but we are still aggressive in our dealing with it

Many very religious people (ministers and other "pious" looking people) will be cast-off from God for eternity, and the core of their "crime" being their neglect (true flippancy) in acting as though they speak for God in any capacity, without making certain that what they are disseminating is actually from God

- a. Paul was determined not to conform to the ways, methods, and philosophical justifications as to why the imposters went about their work the way they did - Paul could not afford to emulate them in any substantial way lest they use any conformity to them as "common ground" and say they are more alike than Paul would want to admit
- b. Method and potential outcomes become the focus of many distractions from the **actual responsibility** we have been given - see Gal. 1:6-10 - there are those that do desire to distort the Gospel for their own purposes - these changes and motives can be very subtle at first; they ease just a little off a strict adherence to the Gospel message, and ultimately end far off-track as time passes and their "disciples" become used to the flexibility of their message
- c. For they truly are "ψευδαπόστολοι" (pseudo (false) apostles (sent-out messengers)) and so are "deceitful workers" (ἐργάται δόλιοι - workers (craftsmen) of fraud/guile - this is what they specialize in (disguised purposes), and maybe even so well that they come to deceive themselves and see themselves as genuine)
- d. Their disguise happens to be that of what looks to be an "apostle" (of Christ in this case) - yet even with such a disguise, they are (at their core) of the same substance as all other false beliefs and philosophies - and as illustrated here, they will try to be like the "real" ministers of Christ (in what is said, in how they live, and even to an insincere sincerity (their heart must look to be fully engaged in the message they bring))

2. Slaves follow the leadership of their master - vs. 14-15

- a. It is "no wonder" (not astonishing) to realize they do this, since the one they serve (consciously or even unconsciously) also disguises himself (so as not to be seen for who and what he really is) - Satan (meaning, "the accuser", "the adversary")
- b. He strives to come across as "an angel of light" (a messenger of what is truth, and what would be used to reveal (enlighten) what is false, light) - this is one of the stark contrasts with his servants and those of the Lord's - Satan's ministers must deceive and cannot reveal what they are truly after, but the Lord's ministers strive to be as transparent and consistent with the actual message (that the Lord gave to disseminate)
- c. To keep up appearances, their disguise is one of "righteousness" (they will look to appear as moral as they possibly can (and will utilize popular ideas of morality so as to maintain the disguise)) - popular ideas of "righteousness" will be followed because the significance is on the disguise and how it will generally be seen
- d. "With Hodge's observation that God, whose judgements are according to the truth, "does not pass sentence... on the mask, but on the man", and that "the end, i.e. the recompense of every man, shall not be according to his professions, not according to his own convictions or judgment of his character or conduct, not according to appearances or the estimate of men, but according to his works..." Hughes
- e. This is a strong accusation of these competitors, but it is so, not because of their challenge of Paul, but because of their alterations to the Lord and so to the Gospel - as in medicine, to tamper with life-saving medications is a serious crime because of the damage it can cause in **not being what it is presented to be**
- f. These will have an "end according to their deeds" (which to them and their followers may be perceived to be a reward, but in light of what they are dealing out (the substance of their "works")) it will be God's true/righteous judgement)
- g. Some may look to come to the defence of those bearing another gospel out of ignorance, but even these are guilty of not honestly scrutinizing what they are saying as "the truth", as though their best of intentions makes it right
- h. As to their end and what it will be, compare this text to what Paul wrote in Php. 3:17-19, Rom. 3:7-8 and II Tim. 4:14-15
- i. This is one of the key reasons any "teacher" or official "preacher" of God's Word is held to an accountability (mainly in their handling of it) - hellish doctrine is not obvious, because of how **it is embedded in some truth** and then marketed by those who know how to be better appealing to greater numbers of people
- j. It is no small matter to mishandle God's Word - we must not excuse it as if **presuming** upon God's mercy

XVII. "Glorying" in Weakness - 11:16-12:10

A. To deal with the popular, "new gospel" proponents, Paul illustrates his point by using his credentials as a person, just as the false teachers were doing - they were doing it to elevate themselves in comparison with Paul, but Paul was going to use this to bring to light the true "credentials" that are to be valued (in comparison to the superficial) - vs. 16-18

1. Boasting is typically frowned upon (and most of the time this is correct) - the object of our boasting makes it wrong when it is self-focused, self-exalting and competitive

So, in conversations, what we walk away with a higher opinion or perspective of, is usually a good identifier

The true authority and "greatness" needs to be considered and controlling, else it is all a waste of time

a. As seen in the previous section, there is to be boasting, but the object of that boasting is always to be the Lord - **all else** is temporal, futile, fleeting and vain

—b. This (vain boasting) is often disguised in clever wording, but can be discerned for what it is when the subject that is actually elevated is determined

c. Paul goes to great lengths to downplay what he is about to do (boast of himself, though insincerely) - he does this because this type of bragging is wrong, and he certainly did not desire to come across as truly building himself up in a round about way

2. Bear with a sarcastic exercise to demonstrate the futility of "glorying after the flesh"

He gives no room for his "boasting" to be taken serious - there is a tendency to get good at playing-along

There will be times when we must bear with those that God will use to humble and correct us - hypersensitivity finds its roots in pride

Public displays of open boldness in any sin can cause others to look on it as an acceptable norm (even to be mimicked)

Many things can look good until seeing someone truly mature/respectable do it

—b. "Observe how, when about to enter upon his own praises, he checks himself." Chrysostom
—b. Since they seemed to be patient and would give "fools" a hearing, so he asked them to indulge this demonstration as if hearing-out a fool

c. He allows for the possibility some would still go ahead and consider him "foolish" (ἄφρονα, one lacking the inner sense to properly regulate behavior) - still, play-along (if they dare) in order that he could "boast" a little - there might be an inclination to ignore him (sensing they were about to be "made-fun of")

d. He does make it clear that such speech and conduct is not "as the Lord would" (as He would have someone actually do and act) - but (in verse 17) he reiterates that "in foolishness" he was writing this in "confident boasting" (which is to be looked upon as absurd, and yet is still taken as admirable by some)

e. Since so many "glory in the flesh" (treat with the utmost respect and admiration achievements rooted in the temporal (this age)), Paul chooses to participate (again, to make a point against it)

B. Putting-up with so much wrong, the right is not considered (or is looked upon as foolish itself)

1. Here he states a very sarcastic response to them - he essentially says "You gladly endure with those that are truly fools, and yet you see yourselves as wise" - vs. 19-20

We see it even today - because of popular trends, those that truly know things are wrong (even stupid) and will tolerate and cooperate with it

There is an odd inclination (because of sin) for us to serve someone (even when thinking one serves self, their motive will be linked somehow to being a slave to another)

There have been countless that have been won over to some form of "Christianity" but not to Christ!

Allowing such mistreatment shows how fully submissive (and therefore believing/trusting) these were to these imposters - such misguided faith and trust is dangerous, yet not uncommon - for, instinctively, people would rather follow other people than God

a. His sarcasm demonstrates the irony of their enthusiastic response to fools while having calculated themselves to be "φρόνιμοι" (translated "wise", but it has the same root as the word for fool - so they tolerate happily those without "inner sense" while they actually should have inner-sense to know better)

b. How is this actually true? Look at what has happened - they "bear with" those that come and "enslave" them (καταδουλοῖ - to bring one down so far so as to be made a slave) controlling and dictating their morals, values and determining life direction (this being the opposite of seeking all from the Lord, being His slaves)

c. This is so extreme, these so-called "wise" Corinthians would allow themselves to be so taken advantage of, it was as-if being devoured - such become resources that are "fed off of" by these "ministries" of the false gospel - false teachers that associate with the Gospel can be recognized for their drive to **use people for the ministry** rather than steer/direct (truly) them to the Lord

d. Such also (that they gladly put-up with) "take advantage" (λαμβάνει - literally simply "takes" you) - he/they "seize" rather than give or contribute (something useful)

e. In all this, this false-apostle "exalts himself" (ESV, "puts on airs") - he would lift himself up (as in commending himself - and there is something alluring to fallen man that admires and adores these, and seeks to follow them)

—f. To illustrate the absurdity, Paul even says they allow themselves to be hit in the face - this might be required of us by God at times, but this scenario is that of the Corinthians receiving such treatment from those who would be "ministers", and receive the abuse gladly.

2. Take, for instance, Paul's (of this world's) credentials - vs. 21-22

Any of us may have some point of "greatness of the age" that could be looked to as a ministerial credential, but should not become the standards lest we and those we influence look to them also as goals and points of "glory"

Each era has looked to social popularity, intellectual accomplishments, high-standing status and general "good fortune" as identifiers of those who should be given a hearing and should be followed

Clearly, these false teachers were stressing their "Jewishness" as being authoritative, and likely were pushing a new version of it as being better than the Gospel of the Apostles

False teachers delight in segmenting Christianity as well, creating differing "classes" of believers so as to have "standing" and divert attention to proud pursuits rather than Truth

- a. He begins again with sarcasm - he admits, when using the overall measurements of "greatness" (significance) that the false-teachers use, he has shamefully come up short
- b. He does not try very hard to match their points of comparison - he lists a few and then veers into actual standards that should be used for identity (not necessarily as points of competitive comparison)
- c. Most of what Paul will list would have been considered undesirables, but he is looking to redirect away from the temporal values system that was luring them the wrong way
- d. Yet whoever was daring to boast, Paul also would boast (playing the part of the fool, which is what one truly is that uses such standards of comparison in a competitive "service" for the Lord) - Paul will stress points of what seem to be vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and "just getting by"
- e. Their marks of achievement are not ones he looks to "enter the ring" against them - he yields defeat in such an arena - yet they are essentially in the wrong "arena" altogether!
- f. The "competition" boasts of being true Jews with a clear "pure" heritage of being in the "people of God" - yet Paul had those credentials (and based on Philippians 3, could have beat them at their own "game")
- g. Paul was not ashamed of his heritage, but would not use it as though it was the greatest of blessings (because there was something infinitely greater than it)
- h. As to the distinctions between Hebrews, Israelites, and descendants of Abraham, there has been much written on these as being distinct, though we might also consider that these were three distinctions stressed as ranking the "Jewishness" of a person (making unnecessary divisions so as to rank people further)

C. What it actually looks like to be a servant of Christ - vs. 23-29

1. A relatively "good life" may be the lot of some of the Lord's servants, but **it is neither the expectation nor the goal** - starting with the Lord's challenge in John 15:18-27, and other texts such as Php. 1:29 and II Tim. 3:13, along with the examples of the early Church show that being "in Christ" makes us the enemy of the world (not because we hate it, but because it will hate us... a fact, not a possibility)

2. "Are they servants of Christ?" - this is the key question (that still needs to be asked)

"Mad indeed is it to boast of anything as constituting a claim on God for reward." Cambridge Bible Notes

Hard work is characteristic of a true servant of the Lord (the opposite being laziness or one being prone to yield to fatigue, the "work" just not being "worth it")

These are not enviable credentials most would seek after - popular appeal is a convenient indicator of "rightness" to these infiltrators to Christ's work

- a. Paul, (speaking (as he states) as one insane) says he is a better one than they - it's "insane" to think like this, because the Lord would not have such comparisons to be made - all is compared to Him and is for Him, and nothing of His would "pit" one brother truly against another (for their harm and humiliation)
- b. The first "credential" of his authenticity was his "labors" - he worked/labored far more than any of them (as the Lord rewards faithful service with more "work" (opportunities))
- c. The word for "labors" is "κόποις" describing working to fatigue and including the idea of it being up against some type of opposition - it wasn't easy (we would describe it as "blood, sweat, and tears")
- d. Along with grueling work, he was imprisoned (not only temporary loss of freedom but the stigma of criminal activities), beaten beyond his knowing how many times (so it was not uncommon) and so finding himself (often) near death - such categorical opposition and general trouble were not going to be typical "credentials" of false teachers (bad influences) - it is popular to have popularity as the goal!

3. Detailed suffering of a true minister of Christ - vs. 24-29

And to have faced the maximum sentence 5 times made him even more than a repeat offender - this partly led to their determination that only his death would be the ultimate way to silence him

- a. Up to this point he had already experienced 39 "lashes" five times "of the Jews" (his countrymen and those that were generally characterized as being "religious") - 40 "stripes" was the maximum allowable by their Law (Deut. 25:1-2) since such punishment was to be in proportion to the crime - this came to be only a maximum of 39 (just to be safe), so we know that Paul was deemed the worst of criminals/blasphemers because of this punishment being to the maximum degree allowable
- b. To the common observer, such a teacher and message would be a "hard sell" and so would not appeal to a wider audience - part of this form of public punishment was to serve as a deterrent to keep others away from following after them

In the account in Acts 14 this stoning came from a group who were shortly before ready to worship Paul and Barnabas as "gods"

This and more of what Paul will share demonstrate that God's special protection does not guarantee us no pain, fearful situations or life-threatening circumstances- and such should not be allowed to deter us from our life's calling

With many of these, the dangers were not necessarily inherent to the locations as much as it was a result of his identity and service to Christ- the world is against Christ

Part of their danger is their false-front - they claim and have an initial look of being a genuine Christ follower but are not and are used to infect the Truth/Gospel

And it was in such situations like these that Paul was learning and came to learn to be "content" rather than bitter or depressed - Php. 4:11

This is also in contrast to the false ministers whose care is superficial and they are not driven throughout their daily lives for the true best for the churches

One reason why so many do not care deeply for others is because of the costs of such deep concern, and the sharing in the pains and needs of those around us

Deep concern when a brother falls is to help them get back up (and not content to allow them to stay down)

- c. Three times he faced a Roman type of penalty for a crime as he was "beaten with rods" which was not to be done to a Roman citizen (yet Paul faced it three times, and so had his "civil rights" infringed upon) - such protective rights will typically "hold-up" except under cases like Paul found himself where the public was in a majority against him
- d. He was stoned once, which was a Jewish form of execution (the recipient was supposed to die (and Paul was dragged out of the city supposing he was dead - see Acts 14:19))
- e. Because of his travels, he faced shipwreck three times, and since this was written before he was en route to Rome, we know he faced such four times - it is possible that many would have been hesitant to continue after one shipwreck, but Paul would not be stopped! The urgency of the mission drove him all the way to his death
- f. Either one of these times or another like it, Paul found himself "in the deep" (likely "adrift at sea" hanging onto wreckage to stay afloat, until he was found a day later)
- g. In his ongoing travels (which were many and essentially non-stop), he was in constant danger of rivers (likely the process of crossing them and other flood related threats), in danger of "robbers" (thieves who made their living off forcefully taking money and possessions from others, even to the point of beating and killing to get it; this was common and why travel was dangerous)
- h. These "dangers" (perils) were probable on multiple fronts; from his own countrymen who saw him as a religious and cultural threat, from the Gentiles who would see him as a threat to the societal religions and "moral sensibilities", in danger when in cities and when in the wilderness (there were no safe locations for those bearing such a message)
- i. And now there were also dangers "from false brothers", those who had the appearance of being his brothers in Christ, and yet he uses the description of the danger "ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις" (in/among pseudo brothers) - these were in and among them as if true Christians - Paul references such in Gal. 2:4 who "secretly" were brought in - these have an agenda to add to the Gospel and to take away other essentials of it
- j. "He mentions it as the chief trial to which he had been exposed, that he had met those who pretended to be his friends, and who yet had sought every possible opportunity to expose and destroy him." Barnes
- k. Summarizing his "pains" he adds "labor and hardship", describing not just hard work, but grievous, wearying hard work ("...equivalent to κοπετός, a beating of the breast in grief, sorrow" - Strongs) leading to "sleepless nights" (difficulty sleeping with dangers and the ongoing pressing needs of his brothers in Christ)
- l. His practical (overall) situation was one of being hungry and thirsty, "often without food" and since he was often without accommodation, he was "in cold and exposure" - some today (in Christianity) flaunt how well-off they are practically, as though it is a sign of God's endorsement of their legitimacy
- m. "Thus was he, who was one of the greatest blessings of the age, used as if he had been the burden of the earth, and the plague of his generation." MH
- n. Most of all though, was his concern for all the churches - he described it as the "daily pressure on me" which has an underlying Greek word picture of a large group of needy people (so many, that their needs seem overwhelming)
- o. The word for "care" (anxiety) is μέριμνα and pictures one being pulled into several different directions - there is trouble staying focused at times, because there are so many needs and potential issues with tempters and bad influences (from without and within), as well as theological "side roads" that could be wandered down by any of these groups and causing damage/hurt
- p. For instance, when any in any of these fellowships of "called-out ones" is weak, Paul asks, "am I not also weak?", as in being weak with them (he realizing his calling to be his "brother's keeper")
- q. If one is "led into sin" ("made to fall"), is not he (Paul) indignant!? - if any of these is led astray into sin or overall distracted negligence, **is this not supposed to be the utmost concern?**
- r. The word is "πυροῦμαι" which means to burn, being consumed inwardly - this is to be the inward passion for the safety of our brethren and fury against those who would cause them to fall

D. Boasting in weakness - God is the one Who knows and that actually “counts” - vs. 30-33

1. If there is to be “boasting” (glorying in something), then he (Paul) would make a point to do so only in what qualifies as “weakness” - vs. 30

This actually makes sense that it is a better point of boasting, since how could one compete when it comes to dependence? Attention is then forced onto the source of aid and strength

- a. This is a summary statement of what has already been discussed and illustrated - it is absurd to “normal” people to focus on areas that would be seen to be “weak” (ἀσθενείας - without strength, frail and therefore in need of assistance)
- b. This is essentially admitting **dependence on God**, and if “weakness” leads to God’s working instead, it then equates to a “stronger strength” than we or anyone else could ever have on their own - too much is done with the motive to impress others
- c. Strong, focused, consistent reliance upon the Lord is a better indicator of genuineness than any other quality that might be showcased as “proof”

2. An appeal to God for validation rather than man - vs. 31

God knows better than any of us how truly weak we are in and of ourselves. To “boast” of a perceived strength is actually what is absurd, in light of our actual dependence upon the Grace of God to do anything of value

The word for “forever” is αἰῶνας, indicating a cycle of time (in this case it is plural), showing that He is the one “blessed” in every “cycle”, not just one (as any person could ever achieve)

- a. Knowing that what he has written would appear to be absurd and far-fetched, he appeals to God as the one who “knows” (even, and especially if other don’t “know”)
- b. The natural drive is to accumulate validations of our significance from as many “quality” people as we can - Paul demonstrates in this statement that it really is God he serves and lives to please, and not those around him (or who might hear of something about him, and so think the better of him)
- c. And to live for His approval (of what is done, and why it is done) makes the most sense, because He is “the Father of the Lord Jesus” and God is the One “blessed forever” (εὐλογητός - He is “well spoken of, truly impressive, and so is more to be sought after for approval than the best of men who are well-spoken of, and those for a short time (not forever))

3. “Starting off in weakness” - vs. 32-33

This is seen in Acts 9:1-25, where shortly after his conversion he was challenging the Jews about Jesus being the Christ - his students “took him” and let him down the wall at night to escape

False teachers will either have or seek the acceptance of their “age” and will use it as a credential - the more accepted/popular the “better” they are

Matthew 28:20 - the key to all we do is that He is with us always

- a. There has been much confusion regarding Paul’s brief description of an incident that happened in Damascus at the start of his ministry - there is textual support of its belonging, so we know this is how he included it, so must not look to explain it away
- b. The basic answer is likely the best - he uses this incident in particular, because it was at the “start” of his ministry, shortly after his call, and it was a quick introduction to weakness to a man that had been working off of “power” and authority
- c. Paul clarifies that the city had guards setup throughout looking to capture him - all of this in sharp contrast to the competing influences in Corinth who were popular
- d. The “great and powerful” Saul of Tarsus was now the lowly Paul having to be smuggled out of the city (like a criminal) - the authority, respect, and influence he had was now gone (now that his association was with Christ) - it is this true association with Christ that brings opposition
- e. “This makes the flight from Damascus so significant. It forced Paul into the long wait in which he finally learned that he was nothing, that his mightiest asset was utter weakness, weakness which enabled God to do everything with him and through him.” Lenski

E. A focus on weakness being greater than supernatural experiences - 12:1-10

1. Paul does not leave the concept of “boasting in weakness” when he describes a very personal and yet very supernatural experience - there would be the natural tendency to be exalted in one’s estimation of themselves (**in comparison to others**)

Real or contrived, spiritual experiences must never be held on the same level as “the Faith”

- a. It is believed that the opponents of Paul were using their own experiences as points of self-promotion over those that had not had such experiences (and so thought themselves better)
- b. Christianity has always had those that claim to be in its ranks that look to make it more an experiential belief system, versus one of strict adherence to faith

2. “Boasting” of an actual experience only to then properly have it “kept in check” - vs. 1-6

This is stated this way because the words “οὐ συμφέρον” literally are “not bringing together” - here it pictures a harmony not to be had with what is right if boasting/bragging is the method

- a. To continue in this “fool’s dialog” he must continue to “boast”, though such boasting and such tactics are “οὐ συμφέρον,” not beneficial in properly bringing together truth with the rightful response and handling of it
- b. Such an experience can cause one to become the focus themselves (their experience, which none can come to know firsthand, and so it becomes much less useful (expedient) to the hearers of it)

Visions and revelations were supernatural insights and understandings of something from God - these were good for Paul, but not for the churches in particular

If such personal accounts are informational or truly glorify God and His Word, then they are useful: but if they just elevate **us** in the opinions of others, we ought not do it

It is our pride that causes us to place too much importance on our unanswered questions or curiosities

God's purposes in any of our experiences resulting from any type of encounter with Him are never to prompt us to pride - we should genuinely think less of ourselves because of these and higher of Him

It happens too often that the tools used to communicate God's truth become more the attraction than the message itself - this is in direct contrast to our duty!

We do not want to "play the game" with other hypocrites, just to gain some visible success or respect - it is to the Lord Himself we will answer and cannot afford to be distracted striving to be "men pleasers"

Pride is so dangerous and detrimental in any of us, that God, in His goodness will deliberately thwart its foothold and growth in us - we will instinctively feel the pain of the attacks on our pride, but must embrace such pain because of its extensive benefit

There has been, for centuries, religious industries constructed to create areas of religious service, designed to give us personal significance in them, because of our apparent "strengths," but missing the needed focus on God's grace being recognized, and so pointing to His glory

- c. This is true with any of our personal experiences - they must not become equated with "the Faith" of the Scripture - if one envies the experience of another, they live to achieve it for themselves, rather than staying focused on the simple trust and focus of taking God at His Word in all things
- d. His experience would be "tops" for many believers, but he is about to demonstrate the benefit of weakness to counter pride from such events - he "goes on to visions and revelations of the Lord" - these are personal encounters with the Lord (which Paul actually experienced (see verse 6 also)) yet it was not profitable to these disciples
- e. In his description of the event, he speaks of himself in the third-person - even when sharing something that actually happened to him, he keeps it at a distance (because it was not the point nor goal) - we should not be enamored with such nor promote them
- f. This was an event from 14 years previous (that he had apparently not shared or written of until now) - many build their life's "ministry" off of an event or experience, yet Paul plays it down because the goal is an ever-present awareness of dependence upon the Lord
- g. "This man" was "caught up into the third heaven", which was, as seen in the next verse, "Paradise", and even down-playing the detail of whether it was a bodily "rapture" (ἀρπαγέντα, - catching-up) - such a topic and its related details would be an unstoppable point of interest to most hearers - yet here, ignorance of this is stressed
- h. The key phrase that is often left un-emphasized in this verse is "in Christ," because without this crucial detail, **such an experience would be dreadful!**
- i. In verse 5 he continues to keep himself at a distance when "boasting on behalf of such a man," likely seeing him as so different from the man that is still here on earth - it may have been, that having had such a revealing glimpse of Paradise, he now saw himself as even "lesser" and weaker than he had previously
- j. Writing of the needed humility of the servants God would use, Lenski clarified, "Such alone are able to transmit his gospel as his, "that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from us" (4:7). The vessels dare be earthen only."
- k. Contrasting himself from the false teachers, he makes it clear he need not exaggerate in the least, regarding this experience, for plainly stated, it was all true (no embellishments) - experiences are quite often embellished to make them more powerful or interesting, because the point supposedly being made is not strong enough in itself
- l. Paul restrained from allowing any boasting of this or any other event or quality of himself, because he was focused on the goal/objective - there are no "cheats" in the work for the Lord; it's either His work or it's not
- m. Our goal ought to be as Paul's, to be as pure in our motive to do as God would have us do, and to be assured of that in His revealed truth
3. A "thorn" from God to block Paul from being exalted (lifted up) - vs. 7
- a. There has been a great deal of speculation regarding the "thorn" given to Paul to harass him, and as to exactly what it was is irrelevant to his point - the point being that, whatever it was, it was given to him to not allow him to be elevated, so as to become the focus... ever
- b. The reason he was given such a continual challenge was because "of the surpassing greatness of the revelations" - there is a natural tendency to misuse a closeness with God, and God's working in our lives, to misuse it to build-up the pride in ourselves
- c. We need not be recognized or appreciated in whatever we are doing in the Lord's work, since He will do it no matter what, and the objective on our part is never to be that we get recognized by others in it - we like to entertain the idea that we are "used of God" because of something special about us (even our humble submission), though it is not any of our "greatness" in any capacity, that fits of for the Master's use!"
- d. Gifts (graces) from God ought to be appreciated, but when entering any competitive atmosphere in the works of the Lord, the focus must be genuinely placed upon personal weakness and not natural talent and skills, or "exceptional" achievements or character on our part - we must not "lose our heads" because they are elevated!
- e. Such a truth is very freeing if we cling to it and remember its priceless value

Pride/self-righteousness is so detrimental that it is a gift of God that is sent to keep us humble (in opposition to our natural inclinations)

The "thorn in the flesh" describes the pain while "messenger of Satan" describes the hatefulness and cruelty

God will utilize specific pains to us to bring about His purposes in us using them

This is in sharp contrast to a majority of the responses we see to various forms of suffering - the likely reason being (for believers) that they are not focused on God's greater grace and work in it

This is an essential truth to grasp and live by - we will all face "thorns in the flesh" and "messengers of Satan", so we need to see past them to God's "opportunity" in them - **this** is reality, and not what we naturally feel/perceive

Strength will be found in reliance (complete reliance) upon the Lord's grace

Again, this weakness is not moral weakness - it is the realized inability in the face of challenge and necessity

This must also change our goals in life - we truly are not pursuing popularity, advantages, "golden opportunities" for we would not see the power of God at work when reliant on other strengths

Therefore, we gladly submit to the multitude of difficulties and overwhelming situations, for each is full of opportunity and potential!

- f. "Possibly the fear that he might be in danger of being made proud by the flattery of his friends may have been one reason why Paul kept this thing concealed for 14 years; and if people wish to keep themselves from the danger of this sin, they should not be forward to speak even of the most favored moments of their communion with God." Barnes
- g. This "thorn in the flesh" was given to keep him from exalting himself - the real danger was within more than without - inner pride is more dangerous than what the "messenger of Satan" can deliver in his harassments (beatings) from without
- h. This "buffeting" (κολαφίζη - to beat with a closed fist/knuckles) was to stop him from lifting himself up (especially within himself) - the battle of pride is lost inwardly (when we begin to credit ourselves with **good that is actually grace**)
- i. Such "messengers of Satan" are allowed to do what they wish, all for their evil intents, yet utilized by God for true greatness (strength in weakness)

4. Power "perfected" in weakness - vs. 8-10

- a. Paul was so pained by this "thorn in the flesh," this "messenger of Satan," that he pleaded with God three times to have it removed - what he was facing was something he clearly did not desire to face - Paul's lack of specifics (as to what this actually was) is useful in that it focuses on the struggle with the pain, and not the instrument of pain (what it was that was happening)
- b. The Lord's response is enlightening to so much of what we all must face in life - we act and respond as though the pains of life should not come upon us, yet they are shown to be the portals of God's strength (through grace) in fulfilling a purpose/end
- c. The wording is "Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου" (enough for you is my grace) versus being released from the painful setting - in other word, the Lord's enabling favor/goodness in the midst of trouble, is **more than enough** to get us through what we are facing
- d. Why is it sufficient? For His "power" is brought to its end goal while in a state/position of weakness ("ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται" in weakness is finished) - it can then be assumed, that in such situations ordained of God, that His power is not utilized to its completing (maturing) purpose when the pain is avoided, or is bitterly resisted (responding as though God has erred)
- e. Knowing this as the truth of the matter (and not some artificial, concocted motivator), his response is to "boast" about his weak situation (knowing what it opens up to him in its fullness; the powerful grace of the Lord brought to its completed effect)
- f. So extensive is the result of this truth, that Paul "gladly" (from a heart of true joy, based in the truth) gloried in his weakness with the knowledge that the "power of Christ may dwell in me" - the word for "dwell" is "ἐπισκηνώση" picturing a tent spread over top of something
- g. With focus not on self and self's perceived abilities, the setting is created for such power to be displayed - pride and self-confidence hinder such personal encounters with true power!
- h. Knowing all of this, Paul could admit that he actually was "content" (εὐδοκῶ - well pleased, satisfied) in weakness (and all that is associated with it when for the sake of Christ) because when he himself was so weak, then at that time he was truly strong/powerful
- i. This is quite an apparent paradox to grasp and accept if one does not realize how it could be (as Paul detailed up to this point) - the objective then is to be as reliant upon the "power of Christ" and content with our inabilities to stop or control oppositions
- j. So is **apparent** weakness seen when insulted (mocked, ridiculed, made fun of (which the "strong" would not tolerate and would seek to force an end)), weakness in "distresses" (truly "pressing situations" which force circumstances and cannot be reigned-in), weakness with "persecutions, with difficulties" (literally when chased/pursued and cornered/limited)
- k. So such "weakening" situations were the path to power (not his, but that of the Lord's) - This puts a drastically different perspective on how we look on our "weaknesses", inabilities, negative circumstances, and lack of popular support in what we are given to do
- l. The pure implementation of such a scenario would end up with God actually glorified, for how can man glory/boast in what he did not produce? This is the ideal we strive for! We actually do want all glory to God

The pursuit of the dependent weakness Paul describes here needs to, once again, be our goal/aim

So the two positives in response to Paul's request were sufficient grace, and powerful display of strength in the weak situation

- m. We need to realize also, that such truth should direct where we direct our praise and admiration - there is far too much admiration and awe of mankind/people/individuals - the Church at large seems to be driven for pursuits of "greatness" that (at best) will acknowledge God either as an act of false humility, or as a form of condescension to share it with Him - see also Eph. 6:10 for where strength is sought
- n. "Paul offers his version of the marvellous cures performed by the gods for their petitioners. He prayed for relief in due form, but the answer he received was both less and greater than those of the advertised cures." C. K. Barrett

XVIII. Fear of Finding Unrepentance - 12:11-21

A. Motivated by intense concern for them, Paul remains "harsh" (very serious in his urgency) so as to push them in understanding what was really happening, and their need for actual change of thinking

1. When considering the concept of "repentance" we realize it (at its most basic idea) is a change of mind (and so a change of direction) - but if one thinks (is so minded) that their thinking is correct, there will be no change (or sense of need to change)

Sometimes, with a stubborn person/group, more force is applied in making a point (though, as Paul, it is reluctant)

- a. Paul begins this next section reiterating that he had been "foolish" in this approach (in comparing himself to them and showing how he "outdid" them)
- b. Even showcasing how one (personally) has strength in the Lord, can become a point of pride (where others admire our "humble" display of strength)
- c. Paul is doing all this to change their thinking to what it *ought* to be
- d. He was not "foolish" in actually glorying in weakness - his foolishness was having to use this as a means of comparison (a personal comparison to lend to his "credential")

2. Being "nothing" in the estimations of the truly inferior, does not change reality - vs. 11

"Drastic" measures may be justified if genuinely done to pull others away from toxins that would bring irrevocable harm/damage - such measures are often disliked and unappreciated, but we need to remember God as the true Judge

- a. Paul admits that he has yielded to foolishness in his comparative, but he was truly driven to do it (out of necessity to make a point clearer to this stubborn, wrongly impressed group)
- b. His mention of being "commended" (συνίστασθαι, plainly put it is to "stand with") is not for his vanity, but for their protection - it is a noble desire to seek to be loved more by those we love, over/more than those that would harm the ones we love
- c. In reality (considering the proper "measurements," Paul was not in the least inferior to these "super apostles" even if (especially if) he was truly "nothing")
- d. Who would have ever thought that our life's ambition was to actually be "nobodies"!?

B. These had had all the advantages of "proofs" and service - vs. 12-13

1. "The signs of a true Apostle" were demonstrated - vs. 12

Though it is common for those "won" by miracles, they are only sustained by them

Truly profound things were done amongst them through Paul, yet it reveals that when the message of such miracle performers is disagreeable, lesser works and wonders will suffice to lure them away

- a. These were the "proofs" of the time that validated their particular authority and so should have validated their (Paul's) message (and the following of it)
- b. The "signs and wonders" are not focused upon, but a mere mention in making his case that they had been given what should have been enough
- c. "The passing allusions to miracles in seven Epistles prove that the writers were not enthusiasts to whom miracles seem the most important thing. Doctrines were with them the important matter, save when convincing adversaries. In the seven Epistles the mention of miracles is not obtrusive, but marked by a calm air of assurance, as of facts acknowledged on all hands, and therefore unnecessary to dwell on." JFB
- d. These works were done with patience, because the intent was not to "wow" them, but to convince them to listen, learn and be permanently changed

2. So, there was no need for resentment or a competitive spirit with other "churches" - vs. 13

This is not a request for sin to be forgiven because it was not sin - it is a simple request to "let it go" (graciously, lovingly) so it not be a point of conflict

- a. There may have been a resentment among the Corinthian believers that Paul had done them wrong in not taking support from them - he had explained why this was the case yet still allowed room that he may have been wrong in refusing it and asks for forgiveness
- b. He had accepted support from other churches which may have genuinely hurt some of the "sincere" among them (versus those that might have sought to be controlling) - it is common to upset some with any decision/direction taken, yet we still must move forward
- c. It will often be needed to console (and seek to "turn back") some, by means of helping them *see more of what they have than what they believe they don't have* (or have missed out on) - "mistreatment" can be perceived without actually existing

Yet even the perception of it must be dealt with humbly and directly as Paul does here

C. Spend and being spent for the best in others - vs. 14-15

1. "I do not seek what is yours, but you" - vs. 14

Paul was "ready" to come, still leaving this in God's hands, but revealing his intent (so as his motives would be clear, even when deemed evil or insincere by the critics)

There will be disagreements, but these must not become a block to the serving/sacrificing for each other (as Paul demonstrates here)

This is at the core of Prov. 11:30 and why "winning souls" is wise

He was their spiritual father, having been used to bring them to Christ and start their church - see I Cor, 4:8-18

- a. Paul clarifies again his plan (readiness) to come to them for the third time - this was a point of encouragement, but could also be a reminder of their personal accountability - sometimes a visit/meeting is unwelcomed because of the accounting that will take place
- b. As he will soon make clear (in verse 20), he feared he would not find them "as I desire"
- c. Though there was an apparent "leaving room" for what they perceived was offensive or wrong, he still makes it clear he will not "be a burden to you" (he would not take their financial support even then) - he was willing to stand firm, even against their being offended, for their own good - we are often the last to discern our own needs correctly and God leads us against our own preferences
- d. He makes it clear that his motive is not what they have ("what is yours") but themselves, their attention, focus, hearts (for their spiritual well-being) - the false teachers were, in a sense, seeking to "win" them also, only so they could exploit them in some capacity (getting what was theirs)
- e. He uses the comparison of a parent with their children - the parent supplies the needs of the children (and in this case, the spiritual (greater) needs) - he truly desired them, themselves **for their own good** (versus those that acted as though they were out for their good, but had their own selfishness/pride as their goal)

2. Paul's thrill at the opportunity to be spent for their "souls" - vs. 15

If we see ourselves and our resources as "spendable" by our own discretion, we are likely to resent expenditures in opposition to our own care, comfort and self-esteem

It is too common for us to share the Gospel but not ourselves - see I Thes. 2:8-13

True love is often missed by its recipients because they are seeking what they desire more than what they need - this can lead to entire groups redefining what love is and looks like (making true, Godly love look to be hatred or "meanness")

- a. He uses the superlative adverb (ἡδιστα) describing his "gladness" as being "most gladly" - this is in light of his being a resource of the Lord for their betterment (with and before Him) and since the Lord determines such "expenditures", Paul is glad without reserve/hesitation to actively spend of himself (what he has), and be spent (passively, by however God deems right)
- b. His being expended in any way was for their "souls" (the core of who they really are) - it was a spiritual aim/focus not a practical and not even a social objective - the goal is not to win people to ourselves but truly be used to win them to the Lord - **we** are apt to be "moving targets" and could be unsteady at times, but **He** is the ultimate anchor of the soul
- c. The next statement by Paul looks to be out of frustration or as a point of criticism, though we are unsure exactly how it was taken - it is clear though, that if one is more loving (in the truest sense of selfless love, as God loves for their actual betterment) they should be loved more and not less, though it seems common (as it seemed then) that such true love has a result of being loved less by the recipients
- d. If true love is missing from either side, grudges and resentments of all types will appear - the objective/focus is not waiting on the other to love, but to realize the necessity of being the one who loves, even if it is not mutual in its expression

3. Loving without love in return? - vs. 15

"...if others be wanting in their duty to us it does not follow therefore that we may neglect our duty to them." MH

- a. This next phrase looks to be more a conclusion on Paul's part than it does a question - he is indicating that he will continue to love them abundantly (in true love, not in the "catering" love some seek), even if he is loved less
- b. This demonstrates true love - it does what needs to be done even when not appreciated and responds to the need, not reacting to the resistance
- c. Yet the interrogative looks to be used and may also be taken as a motivating question - does it make sense that as he sacrificially loves them more that he should be loved less? This places focus on personal responsibility in loving, versus any use of excusing ourselves from it

D. Countering the distractions used to point away from needed repentance - vs. 16-21

1. Paul is dealing with accusations and other ideas spoken against him, yet where he "goes with this" is interesting to consider - he's concerned that he will find them unrepentant in the matters that had already been addressed and that there will be in-fightings

If the focus can be diverted indefinitely, the true issues and needs will be left undressed

- a. This is an oft used technique when confronted with personal sin - divert the discussion back to the "messenger" pointing out his/her sin or inconsistencies
- b. It would also appear that the influence of the false teachers was at work to find fault with Paul and, in so doing, impugn the message

2. Some will “see around” answers and see what they desire to see - vs. 16-18

Deceitful people will use the accusation of deceit in others (accusing others what they are themselves guilty of) - a liar calls others “liars” to conceal their lies

He had already dealt with some of this in II Cor. 4 - what he would not do and what he was focused upon

This is a good example as to why it is important with whom we associate (on the most serious of life’s situations and callings)

Regardless the methods or outward appearances (and impressions), the true inner-self will be seen for what it really is over time - motive is not everything, but it truly is at the heart of why we do what we do (and needs to be scrutinized because of its profound influence of our actions)

- a. Paul’s defense was that he was determined not to be a burden to them (especially financially), but he knew what was being said/thought - he knew that they already had or would conclude that he had gone a roundabout way to get their money
- b. “But be that as it may...” is as if quoting their response - even though he made a case for why he did what he did, they would think he was deceitful in his dealings with them (not being up-front with them) and that he would trick them with his “guile”
- c. When Paul writes “...crafty fellow that I am, I took you by deceit” he reiterates the accusations against him - he (sarcastically) paints himself as he is perceived by some as using “crafty trickery” and so was able to “bait” them into his trap
- d. It is not uncommon for us to allow the negatives in another to become so frequent in our thinking, that it does us well to have it illustrated before us as Paul does here with the Corinthians - Paul looks to summarize how he has been portrayed (expecting the absurdity to be obvious)
- e. Others might seek to (in the cleverness of trickery/deceit) seek to captivate/entangle them, but Paul would not (it was not his goal, it was not his heart) - he appealed not only to his own reputation, but to that of those he sent to them - the purpose would be that any of these he had sent to them were also honest and honorable in their methods and motivation - see also Paul’s defense in I Cor. 4:9-17
- f. His particular challenge against him was with Titus and “the brother” that were sent, and the rhetorical question “Titus did not take advantage of you?” - so any challenge of their actual integrity would “hold-up” - personal integrity/character are desired defenses against inaccurate portrayals of ourselves, no matter the reason for the negative portrayals
- g. The reason Paul gives is important (for why they were alike in character) - they were acting “in the same spirit” (not necessarily referencing the Holy Spirit), generally, as their “walk” (“the same steps”) was the same - what led/directed them was the same
- h. The Corinthians needed to come to understand what Paul was truly after, versus what the “super apostles” were really after - if one is seeking the wrong thing because of an infected heart/mind/motive, they will ultimately follow their heart (their true “inner man”)

3. Driven to truly “build them up” and not to defend himself personally - vs. 19

He was not driven by the desire for others to understand and accept him (as would normally be the case for most of us)

It is absolutely futile to think that we can hide anything from God (especially our motive/intent)

Impatience with the time frame or disagreement regarding the schematic will cause major issues

Paul used the word “ἀπολογούμεθα” for his defense (where we get “apology”) which was required to refocus them (as was his calling before God)

- a. Next he addresses the notion that some might have, that he is just on a self-defense dialogue, seeking to defend his name and reputation (that this was at the core of why he had been writing what he had) - Many would expect that he would, so this disarms them as well
- b. His driving motive was singular (and that along with his associates) - to have them built-up in the Lord (to actually have them mature/grow, and not be coddled in their laziness, self-service, and/or pursuit of ease)
- c. For Paul knew well that God saw all that was happening (it was “in the sight of God” Who is everywhere present and all-knowing, all-seeing)
- d. What was being “spoken” was not of Paul but “of Christ” (it was His Truth, His authority, His purposes and direction) - this needs to be the controlling factor, else the battle of the wills becomes the driving-force and the determination of right/wrong
- e. It was all being done for “ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς” (your construction, your being raised-up as a house is “raised” part by part, section by section, over time) - it is an architectural term describing the building of a house
- f. His use of the term “beloved” demonstrates who he seeks to build-up (over against the false teachers) - he is being “tough” on those he truly loves and that for the right reason
- g. There may be times when some must be opposed, not in the defense of self, but to not allow their opinions, feelings or the “read” on circumstances to rule the day - they must be corrected for the removal of growth-obstacles

4. Paul’s fear of finding in-fighting when he comes in the stead of repentance - vs. 20-21

- a. It is common to fight for personal rightness in such disagreements, when the motive (known or unknown) is the avoidance of repentance (which can involve multiple areas) - it becomes a philosophical “fight” to avoid the “moral fight”

This he truly did not desire to have happen, and he gives them the negative possibilities as a motivation to "repent"

These fighting terms and "bad attitude" descriptions demonstrate a group distracted from what their purpose is (or is supposed to be)

Two of these concepts were addressed in I Cor. 3:1-4, where there was a division over who "followed" (identified with) who - it was not so much as who they followed as much as what they followed - they desired to identify with the messenger more than the message itself

Such terms must not describe those truly in Christ! They are common in humanity, but unacceptable in Christianity - the "peace" is not won by shallow complacency (the avoidance of the "controversial", but a solid, open understanding of who/what the authority actually is in our midst)

For those who care for the spiritual well-being of others (spiritual leadership), even when there is progress, there is the fear of some infiltrating influence that will lure them away

What would humble Paul was different than what would humble the false teachers - he was humbled and mourned over lack of growth and unrepentance

Any spiritual leader can identify with the shame felt when those they are responsible for stagnate, revert or do not change at all

These three words, used in a group, are the same ones used by Paul in Gal. 5:16

John Gill writing on those still practicing sexual sins while a part of the church

- b. His fear is described not just in the particulars, but in the potential, conflicting attitudes (theirs and his) - he is not legitimizing (or treating their opinions as equal with his, their assessments of him), just laying out what it might look like when he visits
- c. There will be some we do not "like" in life, but may be seen as a dislike to what they present (their message and what they stand for) more than the person themselves- Paul feared that what he had challenged them with was not followed, and that as a result of their being undisciplined in the implementing of what they had learned, that they would be confrontational with Paul and amongst themselves
- d. The list of negative actions and proud (full of self) identifiers, focus on the particulars of self-will versus that of a surrendered, submissive, obedient will (which looks to grow and be challenged rather than excused in carnal pursuits and in vanity)
- e. It is a legitimate fear to foresee the possible "turning-on each other" (in the church) rather than the need to fight the actual enemy - compare this to James 4:1-4
- f. "Perhaps there might be..." (not that there assuredly will be, but leaving room that it does not have to be...) "strife, jealousy, anger", three underlying attitudes that dominate the heart/mind and dictate priorities, and so then, actions - strife (inwardly quarrelsome and so outwardly argumentative), jealousy/envy where others are resented and seen as competitors, and pent-up anger (unaddressed inwardly, and so it spills-over constantly when riled) - "offenses" allowed to inwardly accumulate
- g. Such leads to "disputes" (ἐριθεΐαι, describing contention out of selfish ambition, and so competing with others), along with defaming talk (slanders) with an aim to "tear them down" in the eyes of others, and also "gossip" (literally whispering, malicious gossip), serving the inner "conceit" (an inflated ego, seeking self-exaltation), and so they are left with "disorder" (struggles for power ending in "revolutions")
- h. If such "ruled" them, then Paul also feared there would be unrepentance in the areas of their "immoral behavior" - our behavior in our general relationships with others **may be** indicative of our "moral" condition in other aspects of our life
- i. As discussed in I Corinthians, the city of Corinth was known by its sexual immorality, and the underlying fear was that they would conform to their surroundings and not live in contradiction to such thinking and practices
- j. There have been some that try to look on these verses and following belonging to another letter - the reason is that they see so many compliments before this point, yet now see such fear - but this is not abnormal; even with commendable growth, from our perspective, we still see others as susceptible to change, and so ***we work diligently to thwart any downgrade***
- k. In any church, there can be a mix with unbelievers who made a profession, which initially took on some of the form of a convert, but are unrepentant, unchanged - clearly there were some who were unchanged in regards to their sexual sins
- l. Paul also feared, that when he would come again, he would be "humbled" before and by God because of their sexual sins - we would not normally expect this word (humiliated) to be used in such a context, but it reveals another type of dreaded humbling that comes often in working with others - it is before them he would be humbled
- m. There is good reason to associate the use of "again" in this verse with the being humbled, and not just returning "again" - such anticipation makes one hesitant to meet with them again - our goal as students and those needing to grow should never be to seek to humiliate those God has placed over us - it is not for our good - see Heb. 13:17
- n. In the case of the grouping of sexual sins here (that Paul feared he would still find in their midst) would be a case for "mourning" (grieving) - "bemoaning" is understandable in the face of such, for it shows they have not repented (they are most likely unconverted altogether) - these words describe "filthiness", sexual immorality and "licentious wantonness"
- o. These they "had practiced" which was supposed to characterized their past and not their present - this type of grief is what motivated Paul to stand firm against the "super apostles," for ***such breed the excusing and fostering of all types of sins***
- p. "...impenitent ones are to be cut off, and remain so, till brought to a due sense of their evils.

XIX. Test Yourself To See Whether You Are In The Faith - 13:1-14

A. Persistent, flagrant sinners “will not be spared” from being dealt with - vs. 1-2

1. Paul begins, stressing his planned “third visit” followed by a statements from Deut. 19:15 which is in a context of how community judgment was supposed to be organized - see Deut. 19:15-21

Such judicial terminology demonstrates the seriousness of the situation - there is far too lax of an approach to dealing with open sin in our day

This concept was what constituted “church discipline” - not so “power” could be flaunted, but to openly demonstrate the official “stance” regarding particular sins

- a. Every “fact” (literally a “matter”, the word being “ῥῆμα” referencing “words spoken”), so all accusations spoken against one are required to have two to three witnesses (these being legal witnesses to make a “case” against one before judging them)
- b. This is not Paul on the defensive but now, clearly on the offensive!
- c. Why these particular sins and not all sins? - too often “open” sinning is left unaddressed because “everyone sins” - yet open, flagrant sinning is particularly detrimental because it poses the notion that it’s “OK” and acceptable, becoming a negative influence on all others looking on - compare with Pro. 19:25
- d. It is true that all sin, but openly justifying/excusing it directly affects/influences others
- e. Sin is not “dealt with” openly/judicially because it is a power-struggle; it is done to deal with distractions that would be hazardous to spiritual growth

2. They were “warned” (previously told) of the coming accountability if there was no change - vs. 2

Confronting fellow believers is never our first choice - gracious counsel and cautious warnings are preferable, in allowing time for change

- a. As Paul wrote in 1:23-24, he had not come as he had planned in order to “spare” them - he shows that “harsh” dealings with them is far from his normal desire, but that would become necessary if there was no change
- b. There is a “fine line” between determining whether to forcefully deal with a brother in sin, or to exhort them after they have already been warned - see Gal. 6:1-10 where it deals with one “overtaken” (caught/ensnared) in sin - ***the idea is that they will desire to be freed from it and not that they will fight to justify it***

B. “Weakness” in association with Christ, is powerfully at work - vs. 3-4

1. In answer to their desiring “proof” of Christ being the one actually “speaking” through Paul, he would not spare them! They would face what they did not expect to face - vs. 3

As Paul clarified in I Cor. 2:1-5, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” was all that he would “know among them”, they being so affixed to worldly wisdom

And this is common today - how the power of God is demonstrated is not popular

- a. Paul was battling what we still must battle today - a personal idea of Christ (the “ideal” Christ as one pictures) versus the actual Christ as revealed in Scripture
- b. The “powerful working” of Christ was amongst them, but was not apparent to many - they were looking for “power” exhibited in ways that were typified in their society
- c. They desired “proof” (“δοκιμῆν” - proven by being tested), but the testing would need to be founded on the right parameters of Christ “speaking” and at work - they would not “naturally” like what they would be confronted with - patience and faith would be required, and neither are “natural”

2. True strength was demonstrated in weakness - vs. 4

Mankind has never known such power, that can be brought to its end and die, and then overwhelmingly conquer death itself!

If the Lord used weakness this way, why would we think we would use what the world looks on as “power” and strength as the means God would use with us?

- a. It is true, “in weakness” Jesus was crucified - it was a humiliating, painful and a condemning way to face rejection, and then to die (which is the ultimate defeat known to mankind) - it was what followed that demonstrated the greatest of power
- b. The “power of God” conquered death because the most powerful enemy (sin) was conquered - but if sin is loved (consciously or unconsciously) there will be an opposition to its conqueror - this is at the core of why even so many “religious” and “spiritual” people actually oppose the true Christ and His Gospel
- c. As associates of Christ, we will then be “weak” in Him, but the same usage of weakness as was used in Christ - this goes back to Paul’s conclusion in 12:9 (true strength reaches its pinnacle in weakness)
- d. Not only would Paul (and we also) live with Him in eternity, but we live in His power now (since sin has been conquered in us now - see Rom. 6:6-14)

C. Passing the true test of “the faith” - vs. 5-7

1. While they (the Corinthians) were seeking “proof” to satisfy their subjective, world-influenced demands, Paul directs them to put themselves to the test - vs. 5

Countless erroneous conclusions have been reached because the standard was incorrect

- a. A common mistake that is made is when self becomes the standard of right/wrong (or best/permissible), failing to realize the standard of measurement (themselves) is flawed, ignorant of fundamentals and grossly biased toward themselves
- b. Paul tells them “Ἐαυτοὺς πειράζετε” (yourselves put to the test (scrutinize) first)

Truly assessing self requires something outside ourselves — to compare to (objective truth) - the objective is “the Faith” and so “Jesus Christ in you”

“Feeling” and experiences can be mistaken for “faith” and need something to govern/judge them for soundness

Criticizing the test/exam is a normal tactic used by those unprepared for it

Essentially, is one a “real” Christian or a “fake”?

Too much resistance to God’s Word in our living deserves such a serious, strict examination - too much is at stake to “write it off”!

A proper diagnosis is needed before the need can be genuinely addressed

The danger if the wrong tests are used to determine reality, is the affirmation of the wrong results/conclusions

It is too common to look at outcomes in ministry endeavors, as though they determine whether one is truly being used of God or not

The inconsistency of other professing believers never constitutes an allowable, justified bad response, disobedience, or irresponsibility

D. Building-up and nor tearing-down - vs. 8-10

1. Paul’s motive was pure, and his behavior was dictated by “the truth” - vs. 8

One of the best clarifications anyone in spiritual leadership can make is their subservience to a higher authority and that being what dictates their life and responsibility

“τι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας” - **not the least little thing** against the Truth

c. They desired “proof of Christ speaking” in Paul - Paul directs them to prove themselves - some find security and assurance in finding fault with others while avoiding self-scrutiny

d. Interestingly, in BDAG (Greek Lexicon of the Greek NT) this word for “Test” (examine) is also used of “tempting,” and here it is used “to endeavor to discover the nature or character of something” which is precisely what is to be done - strive to discern one’s actual true character and true nature

e. The “test” of self is whether they are “in the faith” (ἐν τῇ πίστει - the proper article is present, it not **subjective** /personal faith being addressed here, but the objective “Faith” of the Word if God (the beliefs themselves based solidly in Scripture)

f. James addresses the evidence of true faith in someone versus professed faith (in word alone) - James 2:14-26 - true faith is evidenced in action/behavior/character

g. “Of course, if the Corinthians do not truly know that Jesus Christ is in them, if, in fact, they are spurious believers, they will not feel like trying and proving whether they are in the faith... True believers never resent that, only people who could not stand a **real** test are resentful.” Lenski

h. This is done by “examining” (δοκιμάζετε - scrutinizing whether or not something is genuine versus counterfeit, so “approved” or “not approved”) - the ending words of this verse “fail the test” are the same word prefixed with the “ἀ” - compare with I Cor. 11:28

i. The probing question is “Or do you not know this (particular fact) that Jesus Christ is in you?” - this demonstrates the seriousness of the topic, a key point Paul has been working toward throughout the letter - **“Are you actually in Christ or not?”**

j. “Christ in you” is to be “recognized” by you, “in you” - What would this look like? How would He be seen? Clearly, they had to **truly** know Him to come to know this (it being far more than “a feeling” or “sense” but, as instructed often, growing in the “knowledge of Christ” (Eph. 1:17-21; II Pet. 1:2-11))

k. The only alternative to passing such a test is to fail it, to be found “unauthentic” - yet, for a professing Christian to come to see this is crucial, if they are to truly be “saved”

2. “Do what is right” no matter their assessment of Paul - vs. 6-7

a. The purposes of such “tests” is for their own good - it is a test for authenticity and not some achievement/status to be proud about - **this is not about appearance but reality!**

b. Paul, knowing his genuineness in Christ, expected that these Corinthians would see clearly that he was “the real deal” and not a “reprobate” (having failed the true test)

c. Regardless of their assessment/opinion of Paul, Paul genuinely desired they do “no wrong” (evil), so much so, it was their prayer to God - and, to be very clear, he was not motivated in a “positive outcome” so as to prove his own personal genuineness - their response would not determine/prove his **authenticity**

d. Instead, to avoid “doing wrong,” do “what is right” (counter evil by doing good (not just avoiding the practice of evil, but practicing/living what is right))

e. Even if they “appear unapproved”, even if their conclusion of Paul is that he is not of Christ, still do/live-out what is “right” - it was not about Paul and any credit he could gain, the objective was singular; the good of the Corinthians in doing/living as they should before God (not basing obedience off of the perceived consistency of others)

f. Doing what is right before God outranks public/popular perception

a. “Our aim is to promote the truth, and to do what is right; and we cannot, therefore, by any regard to our own reputation, or to any personal advantage, do what is wrong, or countenance, or desire what is wrong in others. We must wish that which is right to be done by others, whatever may be the effect on us...” Barnes

b. Recognizing that those in authority sense their own accountability is comforting and motivating at the same time - such can identify with the pressures of obedience and can be seen as “in the fray” with us (not seeming to be infinitely above us)

c. This verse is a particular reminder that we are under authority and are not at liberty to do whatever we desire with “the Truth”, but are obliged to follow it strictly

2. "Restoration" / "Completion" / "Maturity" is the goal - vs. 9-10

The word for "made complete" is *κατάρτις*, describing an equipping, making one properly prepared- the verb form is used for "restore" in Gal. 6:1

These false teachers had to tear down what had been built in order to make room for (allow) their more "glorious" facade

There will be an increasing of "evil people" and "imposters.. bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

- a. Here, Paul literally rejoices/celebrates when his "weakness" is so used as to make them truly (in the best sense) strong (spiritually equipped) versus an immature vulnerability, being susceptible to all sorts of dangerous influences (intent on diverting them away from the right walk of life)
- b. This is the greatest evidence of God's grace at work, when His instruments are perceived as "weak" (without power/influence), and yet are still used to bring genuine strength to those God sends them to
- c. His prayer for them also demonstrates Who he relied upon for their being "perfected"- such should be our prayers for each other... spiritual growth/equipping
- d. Paul did not desire to have to be severe with them - for even if he was, his "severity" was still for the purpose to build-up and not tear down (the false apostles were tearing down what had been built)
- e. The objective was their being equipped - see II Tim. 3:10-17 - the "equipping", the "completing" of the "man of God" is the task/assignment using the Scripture (by means of continuing in what they had learned, considering of whom they had learned it)

E. Final greeting and challenge - vs. 11-14

1. Five final commands - vs. 11

True joy finds its source in faith, seeing the hand of God even in circumstances that would have us (naturally) yield to grief altogether

In James 1, the instruction for joy is followed by the reason; the production of faith, and so the need for patient endurance to completion

It also contains the idea of "be challengeable" (challenged to yield our will before God)

This was one of the first things Paul dealt with them regarding in I Cor. 1:10

- a. "Rejoice" - when commanded to rejoice (be glad), it can strike some as odd if joy is seen as simply an emotion, triggered by favorable circumstances or pleasant thoughts - yet it is actually an **obedient disposition of the mind**, surrendered to trusting God's control and guidance, and with a focus on that, is therefore content and glad in it
- b. "Be made complete" (the ESV translates it as "aim for restoration") - it carries the working idea of being fully equipped for a journey, task, or challenge (e.g. battle), and so planning ahead - in our case, it is more a submissive posture to God's Word, God's leading, and His control - compare to the similar idea in James 1:2-8
- c. "Be comforted" - this is a passive imperative, as in "allow it to happen," so do not resist the encouragement of the Lord (reasoning against hope) - it is not uncommon to mount a fight against the encouragement of the Lord in all its forms
- d. "Be like-minded" (agree with one another) - it does not mean to search out what everyone will naturally agree upon, but instead, "think the same thing" (be united in your thinking/philosophy, around the same thing) - as in Php. 2:2-4
- e. "Live in peace" - the basic idea is to work at getting along - this takes a yielding of perceived rights, a yielded pride, and a focus on the needs of others above our own - fights find their source in pride, self-will, and personal agendas over the Lord's

2. The goal and realization of God's presence with us - vs. 11-14

"Saints" - we are "set apart ones" among "set apart ones" striving for the holy (set apart) objectives and instruction of God - this defines us and not our individuality

- a. God, as regards those that are His, is "of love and peace" - He loves and so should we; He has made the way to peace, and so must we with each other - this aspect of the fear of God (knowing He is always, everywhere present) should be an ongoing motivator
- b. So, be gracious with one another (a "holy kiss" which was a common greeting, but here it was one "set apart" (holy) because of those we are to be "greeting")
- c. For it was, in this case, "all the **saints**" that greeted them (this would have been the believers that were with Paul)
- d. And in all this, with all that has been given to do and think upon, **realize** the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" (His unending favor toward us, of which we do not deserve and yet receive it because of Him and His work for us)
- e. This grace of Christ is ours because of the "love of God" and will be implemented to us, in us, and through us (in our service for Him) by means of the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" - such is the wish of us all, for each other, continually!