

2 CORINTHIANS

WRITER

The author of this letter identifies himself in 1:1. “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*” The apostle Paul wrote this letter in order to follow up on things that he had written and instructed in 1 Corinthians (See intro. to Rm & 1 Co).

DATE

A delegation of brethren from Achaia had already come to Paul in Ephesus to report concerning problems that had taken place in Achaia since his departure after his initial visit to the province (At 18). Paul then wrote the 1 Corinthian letter in order to correct these problems. 1 Corinthians was possibly carried to Achaia by the visitors from the province or by Titus (1 Co 16:17-19). Paul also sent Timothy to the brethren in Achaia to exhort some to repent before his arrival. He did this in order that he not have to come to them with the rod of discipline (1 Co 4:17; 16:10,11). Timothy’s return to Paul with reports concerning the repentance of the immoral brother, but also the unrepentant attitudes of some arrogant disciples, motivated the writing of this letter (1:23 – 2:1; 12:14 – 13:6).

The 1 Corinthian letter was written from Ephesus during Paul’s two to three year visit there, possibly at the end of his stay (At 19:1-10). Therefore, 1 Corinthians was probably written in either A.D. 54 or 55 while Paul was on his third mission journey. This letter was written about one year after the writing of 1 Corinthians. It was written while Paul was in Macedonia on the same journey. Paul was on

his way to Achaia to correct personally some problems among the Achaian disciples, as well as to collect their contribution for the famine victims of Judea (1 Co 16:1-4). Since the letter was probably written about a year after 1 Corinthians, the date of writing would be in the autumn of A.D. 56 when Paul intended to stay the winter with the Macedonian disciples (See 8:10; 9:2). However, some brethren needed to repent before he arrived. If they did not repent, this third visit would be one over which he would mourn because he would have to exercise his responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle in order to discipline them (12:21).

THEME

Since there were those among the disciples who were challenging the apostleship of Paul, this letter was written to contrast the arrogant leadership of these false apostles to the humble servanthood of the apostles of Christ. The theme of the letter, therefore, is to proclaim humble perseverance in affliction by the true servants of Christ (See 6:4-10; 11:16-33).

PURPOSE

Timothy had returned to Paul after exhorting the Achaian disciples to repent and follow the instructions that Paul had written in the first letter. Timothy reported concerning the repentant attitude of the majority of the church. However, there were still some who were defiant, and thus, opposed the apostle's instructions. Paul thus wrote this letter before his third visit to Corinth in order to stimulate repentance on the part of those who persisted in their unrepentant and arrogant attitudes (1:23 – 2:1).

The problems among the Achaian disciples were in reference to certain arrogant false apostles in their midst who refused to repent. Paul had sent Titus with a strong letter

of admonition in order to correct the problems before he arrived and had to exercise his responsibility to exercise the rod of discipline (2:3; 12:14 – 13:6). What he communicated in the letter with the visit of Titus seemed to correct most of the problems (See 2:12,13; 7:5-7,13-16). However, the persistent false teachers among them continued to greatly influence the disciples.

In a few months from the time of this writing, Paul planned to be in Achaia. Since the visit of Titus had accomplished the repentance of the Achaians as a whole, this reconciliatory letter was written for at least five reasons. (1) Paul reminded the disciples of his recent trials and travels as a servant of Jesus (1:1 – 2:13). (2) In defense of his ministry in reference to those in Achaia who opposed him, he defined the nature of true discipleship (2:14 – 6:10). (3) He exhorted them to maintain fellowship with all those who would separate themselves from sin (6:11 – 7:16). (4) He reminded them of their commitment to the contribution for the famine victims of Judea (8:1 – 9:15). (5) He defended the responsibility of his Christ-sent apostleship in reference to those in Achaia who denied such. He then warned that he was coming in order to correct the problem of the defiant false apostles (10:1 – 13:10).

Greetings

(1:1,2)

Chapter 1 GREETINGS

1:1,2 *An apostle:* As in the first epistle, Paul begins this letter by affirming his apostleship that was being challenged by some in Achaia who were false apostles (1 Co 1:1). He writes this letter as a Christ-sent apostle who was personally called by Jesus (At 9:1-9; see Rm 1:1; Gl 1:1). He did not call himself into apostleship, neither was he called by

any man (Gl 1:11,12; see comments At 14:4,14; Gl 1:19). Since he was personally called and sent out by Jesus, then he was a Christ-sent apostle, not a church-sent apostle. **Timothy:** Since Timothy was now with Paul after returning from Achaia, we would assume that he returned with a report concerning the Achaians' response to the letter of 1 Corinthians (1 Co 16:10). This letter was written in response to the good report that Timothy brought concerning their positive response in reference to the immoral brother (See 1 Co 5). However, Titus also brought news that there were still some among the disciples who remained defiant to the apostleship of Paul. **Church of God:** Though they had digressed to the point of needing the stern letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul still considered them the church of God (1 Co 1:1,2). Before we would consider any church apostate, we should first consider the nature of the Corinthian church with which Paul remained in fellowship and referred to as the church of God. **Saints ... in all Achaia:** This letter was probably written no more than a year after the writing of 1 Corinthians. Therefore, there had been Christians in Achaia for six to seven years by the time this letter was written. From the initial beginnings of Paul's preaching in Acts 18, the church had grown throughout all Achaia. The Achaian disciples had thus realized their responsibility to evangelize the entire province (See comments 1 Th 1:6-10). We must keep in mind, therefore, that both 1 & 2 Corinthians were written to all the disciples in all the province of Achaia. **Grace ... peace:** This is Paul's common greeting (Rm 1:7). It is the result of God's grace that we have peace with God through the cross of Jesus (Ti 2:11). God used the person who was the most legalistic in his former life as a Jew in order to write the two most important epistles on grace, the epistles of Romans and Galatians.

Paul's Defense Of His Behavior**(1:3 – 2:11)**

Outline: (1) Comfort in times of affliction (1:3-11), (2) God's work in Paul's life (1:12-24), (3) Paul's delayed visit (2:1-4), (4) Forgiving the repentant (2:5-11)

COMFORT IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION

1:3,4 *Father of mercies ... comfort:* Paul's praise of God is here motivated by His mercy that He has bestowed on us. His mercy and grace brought comfort to all those who realize the futility of their lives in sin. Though one is hopelessly lost in sin, and cannot redeem himself by his own good works, God is rich in mercy because of His great love for all men (See comments Ep 2:4-10). ***Comforts us:*** In times of trial and persecution, true comfort comes when one realizes that God is the one who will eventually deliver us out of this world (See 7:6,7,13; Is 51:12; 66:13). ***Maybe able to comfort:*** Our own individual comfort is manifested in our consideration of others in times of tribulation (See At 9:31). God's comfort, therefore, is not simply for the sake of individual members. It is for the purpose of communicating comfort within the universal body of Christ. Enduring trials gives one knowledge and compassion whereby he can minister to others the comfort of God.

1:5 *The sufferings of Christ:* Because Christians have submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, they take upon themselves the same persecution of the world that was launched against Jesus (See 4:10; Mk 10:39; Jn 15:20; At 9:4; Ph 3:10; Cl 1:24). ***Comfort:*** Paul's point is that the more we endure the sufferings of Christ in living the Christian life, the more comfort we receive through our sufferings (Compare Js 1:2,3; 1 Pt 4:16; see comments 1 Pt 1:6-9). Paul sees trials in this life to be necessary in order to prepare one for the life that exists after the end of this world (See comments At 14:22).

1:6 *If we are afflicted:* Paul's suffering to preach the gospel produced endurance (Rm 5:3). His deliverance from

persecution gave him confidence in God who delivers, and thus, he had more comfort from his confidence to continue preaching the gospel. His confidence in God to deliver him resulted in his preaching the gospel (See 4:15; 12:15; Ep 3:1,13; 2 Tm 2:10; see comments At 18:9-11). The Achaians, therefore, could not question Paul's sincerity in preaching the gospel to them, for it was because of his endurance in the face of sufferings that he preached. The sincerity of one's preaching is manifested in his willingness to preach regardless of persecution and hardships.

1:7 *Partakers of the sufferings:* Paul was confident that the Achaian saints would remain steadfast. Since they willingly suffered with Christ, they would also partake of the result of their suffering. They would receive the comfort of God in this life and eternal life to come (See comments Rm 8:17; 2 Tm 2:12). Their suffering at the hands of wicked men manifested that they were living the life of Christ (2 Tm 3:12).

1:8,9 At the time Paul wrote this letter, he had already passed through Asia. He was in Macedonia and on his way to Achaia. ***Trouble ... in Asia:*** Paul does not inform us concerning the exact nature of this persecution. However, from the statements he made in other contexts, it is evident that his life was in danger (See At 19:23; 20:1; 1 Co 15:32; 16:9). He was in danger to the extent that he could not of his own choice and power deliver himself. Therefore, his deliverance was the result of the work of God to spare his life in order that he continue with His Christ-appointed destiny of preaching the gospel (See At 9:15). ***Not trust in ourselves:*** Paul saw the peril of death in Asia as an opportunity to trust in God who has the power to deliver us from such situations (Jr 17:5,7). We may not perceive how God would deliver us from situations of danger, but we trust that He is able simply because Paul was delivered on the occasion about which he here speaks.

1:10 *Who delivered us:* In some way, God delivered Paul from death in Asia. God worked in the situation whereby Paul was set free from danger, and thus, allowed to continue his ministry (2 Pt 2:9). God's deliverance of Paul gave him confidence that He would continue to deliver him until his ministry was completed (See 2 Tm 4:6-8).

1:11 *Helping ... through ... prayers:* There were many prayers made on behalf of Paul that he be delivered from the sentence of death in Asia. God answered those prayers. Paul now encourages the Achaians to thank God for his deliverance (See Rm 15:30; Ph 1:19; Pl 22). We must be confident, therefore, that God answers our prayers on behalf of others. However, God's answers are according to His work in the lives of those who have set themselves to do His work. He has chosen not to deliver some. Though we do not understand why he has not delivered some from death, we trust that He is working in our lives to do His will in this world. Servants of God who have dedicated themselves to the work of God, therefore, must have confidence in God that whatever happens, it is according to the work of God in answer to our prayers.

GOD'S WORK IN PAUL'S LIFE

1:12 Regardless of the warnings of the first epistle, there were still some among the disciples in Achaia who enviously persisted to attack Paul's apostolic calling. In this context, he continued his defense against false apostles who were in the midst of the Achaian disciples (11:13). ***Boasting:*** Because of the boasting of his accusers, Paul answered with boasting in reference to God working in his life. However, his boasting is done with integrity. He does not set himself apart from others or manifest a trust in his own works. He boasts in order to reveal that his life was motivated by spiritual concerns and not worldly focused (Com-

pare 1 Co 2:4; 3:19). He boasted in his weaknesses in order to manifest that God made him strong. **Testimony of our conscience:** Paul did not allow the judgment of others concerning his work to determine how he should work. He was assured within himself that he was doing the will of God (See 2:17). He worked in order to please God, not man (Gl 1:10).

1:13,14 We write no other things: Paul meant what he said in his letters. There were no hidden agendas. There were no false motives. He was direct and precise, and thus not deceitful. His admonition here is that they will continue to study what he writes in order that they understand the will of the Lord concerning these matters. **We are your boast:** The obedience of the Achaians to the revealed gospel was Paul's witness to the validity of his preaching (1:11; 5:12). When all things are concluded, it will be revealed that he both preached the truth of the gospel and they obeyed the one true gospel (See Ph 2:16; 1 Th 2:19,20).

1:15 I intended to come: In the 1 Corinthian letter Paul had promised to come to them (1 Co 4:19; 16:5-9; see At 19:21). However, his good judgment in relation to the circumstances in Asia forced him to change his plans. This change of plans may have led some of the arrogant false teachers to accuse him of being weak because they assumed that he would not come to Achaia and defend himself. Since he did not come when they thought he should, they may have made them more bold to speak out against him even more. **Second blessing:** Regardless of the circumstances that hindered Paul from going to Achaia according to his initial plans, he was now on his way (See Rm 1:11; 15:29).

1:16 Helped by you: The word here is *propempeo*. It is the word that is used to refer to brethren financially making it possible for the evangelist to continue on his journey (See At 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rm 15:24; see comments 3 Jn 6-8). In this statement Paul sought their financial support in

order that he might continue on his journey to Judea, though he would not accept their support while he was in their presence (12:13-15; 1 Co 16:1-4).

1:17,18 *Lightly ... according to the flesh:* There were those in Achaia who were accusing Paul of being indecisive concerning his journeys, and especially his coming to Achaia. They accused him of making his plans according to worldly desires. But such was not true. Though he had delayed his coming, he was going at an opportune time that was according to the will of God. ***God is faithful:*** What Paul had promised, he would fulfill according to the faithfulness of God (See 1 Jn 5:20).

1:19 Paul was assured that God knew he did not change his plans without serious consideration. His confidence was in God who was working in his life. ***In Him was "Yes":*** The manifestation of Jesus was evidence that God keeps His promises (Hb 13:8). Therefore, Paul would keep his promises because he was the messenger of God on behalf of Jesus. The conduct of his life was determined by the necessity of the preaching of the gospel. It was not determined by his personal desires or according to worldly ambitions. Neither was it determined by arrogant brethren who spoke against him. Paul continued his work of preaching the gospel to the lost regardless of the church politics that prevailed among some arrogant disciples.

1:20 *In Him are Yes:* All that God had promised through the prophets concerning the coming Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus (Rm 15:8,9; see comments Lk 24:44). The Jewish disciples needed to know this, lest they continue waiting for another messiah. Because Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled all prophecies, Paul's life was based on the principle of carrying out the promises of God to proclaim the message of the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Through his proclamation of the gospel, God was glorified for fulfilling His promises.

1:21,22 It is God the Father who establishes and anoints. It is in Christ that we are established and anointed. It is the Holy Spirit who is given as a guarantee of that which is to come. **Establishes ... anointed:** Paul affirms that he, Silas and Timothy have been established in Christ with the Corinthians (Gl 3:28; see comments Rm 6:3-6). They had been commissioned (anointed) to preach the gospel (Compare Lk 4:18; At 10:38; 1 Jn 2:20,27). **Sealed us:** The seal of their commissioning was the miraculous confirmation of the Holy Spirit (See 12:12; see comments Mk 16:17-20; Gl 3:5; Hb 2:3,4; compare Ep 4:30; Rv 2:17). Their confidence in their mission did not depend on themselves, but on the fact that God was working through them in order to accomplish the mission of letting the world know that the Messiah and Savior of the world had come into the world. **The guarantee:** The miraculous presence of the Holy Spirit, that came to them through the laying on of Paul's hands, was a guarantee that God was working in and through them (See 5:5; Rm 8:16).

1:23 It is here that Paul gives the reason why he delayed his coming. He was giving them time to repent so he would not have to discipline them with the "rod" (2:3; 12:20; 13:2,10; see comments 1 Co 4:18-21). It was for their benefit, therefore, that he did not come early. The writing of these two letters would give them time to repent so he would not have to exercise his responsibility to deliver some unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Tm 1:20). The basis upon which they repented was their willingness to follow the instructions of the first letter. Their repentance was not accomplished through his personal problem-solving work among them. Since the inspired letter brought about repentance among them, then it can also accomplish the same today among disciples. When disciples are in trouble, they simply need to submit to the word of God in order to work out problems among themselves.

1:24 Rule over your faith: Paul was not dictatorial or domineering over the disciples (See 1 Pt 5:3). He wanted the Achaians to correct their own internal problems upon the foundation of what was written to them. Disciples must be allowed to correct their own problems without the proclamations of church dictators. Through the struggles that are necessary for disciples to correct their problems, they spiritually grow within themselves. **By faith you stand:** Their faith to stand must be in God and not in man. Paul's delay in coming, and thus delay in his apostolic disciplinary action, proved that he was trusting in God to work in them and not in his personal presence (See Rm 11:20; 1 Co 15:1).

Chapter 2

PAUL'S DELAYED VISIT

2:1,2 Not come again ... in sorrow: Paul's statements here must be understood in the context of his apostolic responsibility to deliver one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (See 1 Tm 1:20; see comments At 5:1-6; 13:10-12). The Christ-sent apostles' responsibility was more than the responsibility of revealing the word of God. It included the physical discipline of those disciples who worked contrary to the will of God. If Paul would have gone to the Achaian disciples before their repentance, then he would have had to exercise his responsibility to correct the unrepentant among them (12:14 – 13:6). **Again:** This word indicates that Paul had made a second visit to Achaia after the initial visit of Acts 18 when he initially preached the gospel. The statements of 12:14 and 13:2 indicate that Paul visited the area at some time that is not recorded in Luke's record of Acts. It is not certain when he made this visit. He could have made a short visit while he in Ephesus for two years on the third mission journey (See At 19:8-10). The visit was made for disciplinary reasons. He did not want to

make another visit as that visit. So he first sent Timothy to them. However, he sent Titus with the stern letter of 1 Corinthians in order to promote their repentance (7:8,9,13,14). Paul delayed the visit about which he speaks in this context in order that certain arrogant members be given the opportunity to repent. If he had to discipline them again, they would have been made sorrowful. There would have been no joy in his heart if he had to discipline them again in reference to their sinful attitudes and practices. But when Titus returned, he brought great news of their repentance (7:13,14).

2:3 *I wrote:* The purpose for the letter to which he refers here was to promote repentance so he would not have to come to them with the rod of discipline (See 1 Co 4:18-21). It was his hope that they would repent in response to the first letter (8:11; Gl 5:10). Some Bible students believe that he does not here refer to the 1 Corinthian letter, but to a letter that was later grafted into 2 Corinthians, specifically 2 Corinthians 10-13. However, most Bible students affirm that he refers to the 1 Corinthian letter. ***Confidence in you:*** Paul had initially lived in Corinth for at least a year and a half. He knew the Corinthians. He thus had faith in those who would correct the matters about which he wrote in the 1 Corinthian letter (12:21; 1 Co 4:21).

2:4 *Affliction and anguish:* Paul knew that he was going to Achaia, and thus he wrote the letter of warning in order to stimulate repentance. The sternness of the letter was necessary, though it was written with a heavy heart. Such is the case with teachers who must teach the truth to disciples who are in sin and must repent. Though the teacher may teach in affliction and anguish, he must deliver the word of God to those who are in danger of losing their souls (See comments 2 Tm 4:1,2). ***Know the love:*** The point is that if a teacher does not teach those things that promote repentance in the lives of those who are sinning,

he does not love those he teaches. The teacher's love for the church, therefore, is manifested in his correction of the members with the word of God. Members who discourage teachers from teaching what is needed to correct problematic attitudes and actions, are members who do not understand the God-ordained work of the shepherds to teach the word of God in order to rebuke those who sin (2 Tm 4:1,2; Ti 2:1-10). Teachers are under a commitment to God to teach the word of God to the disciples. Those who are children of God desire the correction of God's word (2 Tm 3:16,17).

FORGIVING THE REPENTANT

2:5 From what Paul says here, it is apparent that someone in the Achaia church had caused him much grief. The grief may have been caused because of personal attacks against Paul or attacks against the principles of moral conduct, or both. Some Bible students believe that this may have been the immoral person who was living with his father's wife (1 Co 5:1). Paul does not name this person.

2:6 *By the majority:* It was the responsibility of all the disciples to take action against the immoral brother (1 Co 5:4,5; 1 Tm 5:20). In other words, the action was an action of the disciples as a group, though there was a defiant, or indifferent, minority who did not agree with the action. In matters as these, the disciples should be led by the majority who desire to comply with the word of God. The minority should not be allowed to determine whether the whole should obey. In matters of teaching and morality, the majority, whose beliefs and lives conform to the word of God, should lead the church. In this context, the majority of the disciples decided to disfellowship the sinning brother. Subsequently, the immoral brother repented (See Lk 17:3).

2:7 *Forgive and comfort:* The purpose of the disfellowship was accomplished. The immoral brother repented.

It was now a time for the rest of the members to forgive and comfort the brother (Ep 4:32; Cl 3:13; compare Gl 6:1). If there were no forgiveness and comfort on the part of the faithful who carried out the discipline, then the repentant sinner would be overcome with sorrow. Their love of the sinning brother was manifested in their discipline of him. Their love would continue to be manifested in their receiving him back into the fellowship of the disciples.

2:8,9 Love: This is the foundation upon which all discipline and repentance is based. The body disciplines itself because of its love for each member. When repentance occurs, it is love that restores the once sinful member to fellowship with the whole body. ***Put you to the test:*** Paul gave the inspired instructions in 1 Corinthians 5 in order to test the obedience of the Corinthian disciples in reference to their willingness to obey God through his written instructions that came from the Holy Spirit (7:15; 10:6). Christians who do not follow his inspired teaching in these matters are not obedient to the Lord. We must remember that the law of exclusion from the fellowship of the disciples comes from God. Therefore, sinning members become the opportunity for the obedience of the faithful to be manifested. Those disciples who do not disfellowship those who are sinning against the word of God, are not obedient disciples.

2:10,11 The Achaian disciples had enacted the disciplinary action on behalf of the inspired decision of Paul (1 Co 5:3,4). They carried out the discipline in obedience to Paul in this matter. Titus had reported that the immoral man had repented. However, it was evident that some among the disciples were not forgiving the brother. Paul informed them of his forgiveness of the brother, and thus, he sought to motivate every disciple to forgive the brother. They must forgive as God forgave us lest the brother be discouraged (See comments Mt 18:21-35). ***Lest Satan***

should take advantage: If all the disciples did not forgive, then the members would develop an unforgiving spirit. In such a state of unforgiveness, they would become hardened, and thus, the seeds of division would be planted among the disciples. Unforgiving disciples are hardened with pride and arrogance in their own self-righteous religiosity (Compare Cl 3:12-17; 2 Tm 2:25,26).

Paul's Defense Of His Ministry

(2:12 – 7:16)

Outline: (1) Victory of the gospel (2:12-17), (2) Ministers of the new covenant (3:1-18), (3) God's work through fallible man (4:1-6), (4) Remaining committed (4:7 – 5:10), (5) The ministry of reconciliation (5:11 – 6:2), (6) Hardships in Paul's ministry (6:3-13), (7) Maintaining separation from sin (6:14-18), (8) Group repentance (7:1-7), (9) Repentance that brings joy (7:8-16)

VICTORY OF THE GOSPEL

2:12,13 *Door was opened:* The great open door for evangelism about which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 16:9 possibly took place in Troas. We do not know what special opportunity he had to preach the gospel, but we are informed here that the opportunity was made possible by the work of the Lord. Upon his departure from Ephesus, Paul was hoping to meet Titus in Troas when he returned from Achaia. When he did not meet Titus in Troas, he was worried that the Achaians did not favorably respond to his letter. He thus departed from the Troas brethren and went into Macedonia.

2:14 *God who always leads us in triumph:* “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rm 8:31). “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37; see Ph 4:13). It is God who works in our lives in order to give us victory by the gospel over the powers of evil. ***Manifests the aroma of His knowledge:*** The Christian is the vessel through whom God propagates the aroma of the gospel of Christ (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). The Greek word here for “aroma” (*osman*) re-

fers to a smell that is given off which affects those who smell it. The preaching of the word of God is the aroma that is given off from the Christian. It is a sweet-smelling aroma to those who favorably respond to the preaching of the gospel (See 1 Co 1:18; 15:1-4). It is sweet smelling because the gospel is the opportunity for the sinner to be redeemed from sin. It is an opportunity for freedom for those who have all their lives been subject to the bondage of man-made religions (See comments Gl 5:1).

2:15 *Sweet fragrance of Christ:* When the Roman soldiers returned triumphantly from battle, they would burn the incense of victory. Some of the captives were set free, while others were executed. The fragrance of their incense, therefore, meant life to some and death to others. However, the fragrance of the aroma of the Christian manifests that there is life.

2:16 The gospel is life to those who are under a sentence of condemnation because of sin (Rm 6:3-6). However, to those who reject the gospel, it is a sentence of condemnation (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). What Paul is here saying is that there is no hope for those who do not obey the gospel (Compare At 4:12; 2 Th 1:6-9). For those who choose to remain spiritually dead, the preaching of the gospel is the occasion where their spiritual death is manifested. But for those who are spiritually alive because of their searching hearts, the gospel is life, for when they hear, they respond (See comments At 18:9,10; see Rm 9:18; Ph 1:28; 1 Pt 2:7). ***Who is adequate:*** Paul here infers that no one on his own power or ingenuity is qualified for the ministry of God's word (Compare 1 Co 15:10). The power is in the gospel that is preached (Rm 1:16), not in the messenger who preaches. The power of the gospel is not in the medium through which the gospel is delivered. The power is in the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4).

2:17 *As from God:* Some were preaching for the benefit of financial gain (2 Pt 2:3). They saw preaching as a job opportunity by which they could receive support from the church. Such was the case with the false teachers in Achaia. However, Paul, and those with him, were preaching because they were commissioned by God. Because they had been commissioned by God according to His grace and power, they could preach the word of God with power (See 1:12,21,22; 4:1; 1 Co 15:10; Gl 2:7; 1 Th 2:4; 1 Pt 4:11). They were ministers of truth because their lives had been brought under the control of the word of God, and not the desire to preach for money. Herein is manifested the motivation of those preachers who are committed to the preaching of the word. They will preach regardless of support. Hirelings preach when they are supported. True preachers of the word as Paul will preach regardless of the support.

Chapter 3

MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT

At this point in this letter, Paul describes the nature of a true evangelist in his work. These were those who went forth to preach the gospel to the lost because of their appreciation for their own reconciliation with God through the cross (4:15).

3:1 *Letters of recommendation:* It seems that the false apostles, who were criticizing Paul, had come to the Achaians with letters of recommendation. They were coming as hirelings (See 2:17; 11:12,13). Letters of recommendation were a common practice among the 1st century disciples (At 9:2; 15:23-29; 18:27; Rm 16:1,2; 1 Co 16:10,11). However, in this case the practice was abused. Paul did not need such letters to recommend him to the Achaian disciples. He had preached the gospel to them, and thus, they personally knew him (See 1 Co 9:2). Paul is not denouncing the use of letters of recommendation. He

is only stating that the hireling teachers were using such in order to take advantage of the Corinthian disciples.

3:2 *You are our letter:* The existence of the Achaian disciples was the testimony that Paul had come to them with the gospel. Their very existence was his recommendation (1 Co 9:2). ***Read by all men:*** Everyone could see that the existence of Christians in Achaia was proof that Paul was preaching the gospel of Christ. Everyone could discern this because their obedience to the gospel was what established them as a church of Christ. They were not based on the person of Paul, but on Jesus. When Paul left their presence, they continued in the faith because Paul had preached the gospel in order that they be converted to Jesus, not himself.

3:3 *Letter of Christ:* If they denied the sincerity of Paul in his ministry to proclaim the gospel, then they would have to deny their membership as part of the body of Christ. Since they were the product of what he preached, then any denial of what he preached was a denial of who they were. Since they were founded on Christ and Him crucified, then they must affirm that Paul preached the same message (1 Co 1:23). ***Tablets of the heart:*** In contrast to the Sinai law that was written on tablets of stone (vs 7; Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:14; 34:1), the law of the new covenant was written on the responsive hearts of men to the cross of Christ (Compare Ps 40:8; see comments Hb 8:7-13; 10:8,9).

3:4 Paul here answers the question of 2:16. His answer is that his sufficiency and confidence as an evangelist were based on his commissioning by God through Jesus (See 5:18; 1 Co 15:10). His effectiveness was not based on his personal abilities, but in the power of God working through him to accomplish his destiny.

3:5,6 Paul's accusers trusted in themselves (3:1) and their own abilities of speech and works (11:6; compare 10:12). In contrast to such arrogant self-justification, Paul

trusted in Christ who strengthened him (See comments Ph 4:13; compare Jn 15:5). **The letter kills:** Our sufficiency as ministers under the new covenant is not determined by our performance, for by works of law no man will be justified before God (See comments Rm 3:20; 11:6; Gl 2:16). Our inability to perform the law flawlessly manifests our insufficiency. If one seeks to be justified before God on the basis of his performance of law, therefore, the letter of the law brings death (See comments Rm 7:9-12). Since one cannot perform the law without sinning, then the law brings death (Rm 8:2; see comments Rm 4). **The Spirit gives life:** In contrast to the law that brings death because no one can keep it perfectly, the new covenant that was revealed through the Spirit, brings justification and life (Jn 6:63; Rm 8:2). It brings life through the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11; see comments Ep 2:1-10). It seems that the Jewish accusers of Paul were resorting to their legal system of religion in order to boast of their own accomplishments before the Corinthians. Paul was thus arguing that these accusers (11:22) had digressed to the ministry of a dead law (See comments Gl 5:4). Or, they may have digressed in their arrogant performance of the law of Christ in order to keep it after a legal manner of obedience (See intro. to Gl).

3:7,8 Paul here contrasts his ministry of the new covenant with the ministry of the Sinai covenant and law that was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. **Ministry of death:** It was impossible that the blood of animals, under the Sinai law, would atone for sin (Hb 10:1-4). Since the sacrifices could not atone for sin, then those who administered the sacrifices administered them with no effect in producing justification from sin. The Sinai law in and of itself, therefore, was a ministry of spiritual death (Ex 34:1,29-35; Dt 10:1; Rm 7:10). Nevertheless, the Sinai law was glorious for it accomplished the purpose for which it was given,

that is, to bring man to Christ (See comments Gl 3:13-29). **Glory ... done away:** When Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, he came down from the mountain with a radiant face (Ex 34:29). However, after a period of time, the glory that was radiated from his face soon passed away. Paul uses this event in the life of Moses to illustrate the passing of the Sinai law and covenant (See comments Hb 10:9,10). **Ministry of the Spirit:** Since the Sinai law was written on stone, and was given through a mediator whose glory passed away, then Paul reasons that the new law and covenant that is written on the hearts of men through the mediatorship of the eternal Son of God is more glorious (See Gl 3:5).

3:9 Since the old was an administration of death, then the new is an administration of life. God gave the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. Paul uses these commandments to represent the whole law that was given to Israel. The ten commandments, with the entire Sinai law, were glorious. However, since the commandments could not bring justification, they were a law of sin and death (See comments Rm 8:1,2). The law was a law of sin and death simply because no man could keep it perfectly (Gl 2:16,21; 3:11,12). Therefore, since the Sinai law could not justify, because no man could keep it perfectly, God never intended that it continue without end. It was thus done away in order that all men be married to Christ (Rm 7:1-4; Hb 10:9). Justification now comes through the cross, not the meritorious works of law (Rm 3:20-24). It is by grace, through obedient faith, that one is now saved (Rm 1:17; 3:21; 4). **Exceed in glory:** Since the first law and covenant was glorious, then its glory magnified the glory of the second law and covenant, for the second is better.

3:10,11 The glory of the new law and covenant overshadowed the glory of the old (See Hb 1:4; 6:9; 7:7,18,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16). In fact, Paul here proclaims that

there is no comparison between the glory of the second in relation to the first. In other words, one cannot compare the justification that comes from the sacrificial incarnate Son of God with the sacrifices of animals. ***Is passing away:*** It has been argued by some Bible students that the Sinai law was in the process of passing away at the time Paul wrote this letter. Such could be affirmed by his use of the present tense “is passing.” However, it is better to understand that the Jews’ obedience to the principles of the law were passing away. The legal binding of the law passed away at the cross (Cl 2:13,14). Nevertheless, obedience to certain ordinances of the law, as the Sabbath, was continued by some Jewish Christians for some time after the establishment of the church. It could be that Paul had in mind in this context that from the cross in A.D. 30, to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the forty years between the two events was transitional in the sense that God gave this period of time for the Jews by faith to be called from the Sinai law to the cross through the preaching of the gospel. In this sense, therefore, the Jews would be in the process of receiving the kingdom of God that could not be shaken away as the Sinai law and covenant (See comments Hb 12:28). The law was nailed to the cross in A.D. 30, but national Israel was not brought to a close until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. From the time of the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, the early evangelists went forth teaching that since the Sinai law could never justify through the offering of animal sacrifices, all men must turn to the sacrifice of Jesus. The old law was an administration of death. It was thus nailed to the cross (Cl 2:14). Therefore, through the preaching of the cross of Christ, Jews were called out of Israel during the forty years of transition from the cross to the destruction of Jerusalem in order that they might be redeemed through the blood of Jesus. Those who obeyed the gospel were made dead to

the law by the sacrificial body of Christ, though God was patient with newly converted Jews as they transitioned out of the culture of Judaism (See comments Rm 7:1-4).

3:12 *We use great boldness:* Because of the hope of the new covenant that is based on the blood of the sacrificial Lamb of God, Paul had greater boldness. His boldness, or confidence, rested not in his performance of law, but in the power of the gospel of Jesus (Rm 1:16). He was confident in his ministry, therefore, because of the One for whom he ministered (vs 4; 7:4; At 4:13,29; Ep 6:19).

3:13 *The end:* Moses used a veil in order to conceal the glory that radiated from his face (Ex 34:33). His shining face eventually faded away. Paul proclaimed that the fading glory represented the fading glory of the Sinai law and covenant (Rm 10:4; Gl 3:23). The fading glory of the old, therefore, magnified the glory of the new. ***Was fading away:*** Israel did not understand that the law that they received would eventually pass away. They did not perceive that the fading of the glory from the face of Moses signified that the law he brought down from Mount Sinai would eventually vanish away (See Ex 34:33-35). In contrast to the fading of the old law and covenant (Rm 10:4; Gl 3:23), Paul is confident in the new law and covenant that will not pass away (See Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:23-25).

3:14 *Their minds were hardened:* Because the Jewish religious leaders, and subsequently the majority of the Jews, were unwilling to accept the passing of the old law and covenant, they hardened their hearts against accepting the new (4:4; Is 6:10; 29:10; At 28:26; Rm 11:7,8). ***The same veil remains:*** Paul here uses the veil to symbolize their hardened minds. They could not accept the fact that the Sinai law was fulfilled in Christ (Mt 5:17,18). Because of their unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Jews misunderstood the fulfillment of the Sinai law in the law of Christ. But the veil of a stubborn mind was taken away when one

came into the freedom of Christ (Gl 5:1,2).

3:15 At the time Paul wrote, the hardness of the hearts of the majority of Israel continued. However, if the Jews would turn to the gospel, the veil would be removed (See comments Rm 9-11). In this context, as well as Romans 11:23-26, Paul expressed his concern for the hardening of hearts in Israel against Jesus and the cross (See comments Rm 9:1-3; 10:1). He knew that national Israel would be brought to a conclusion, for he and the early Christians believed the message of Jesus' prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24).

3:16 *Turns to the Lord:* When one is converted to Jesus, he understands the purpose for which the Sinai law was given (See comments Gl 3). No Jew, therefore, who persisted in keeping the Sinai law could understand the purpose for which it was given. The same is true of all who would seek to live by the Sinai law today. The veil of misunderstanding continues to linger in the minds of thousands throughout the world who do not understand the purpose for which the law of commandments was given to Israel on Mount Sinai. The fundamental purpose for the law was to preserve a nation of people until the Redeemer came into the world. But when the Redeemer came, there was no more need for the nation or the law. For this reason, all obedient disciples are now one man in Christ (See comments Gl 3:26-29).

3:17 *The Lord is the Spirit:* The Lord Jesus and Holy Spirit work as one in order to bring freedom from the necessity of perfect law-keeping (See Rm 6:18-23; 8:2,13,21; Gl 4). When one comes to the grace of God through the cross of Christ, he is set free from the necessity of keeping law perfectly in order to be saved (See comments Gl 5:1,2,13; see Jn 8:32). In order to remain free, one cries out for direction from God, and thus brings himself under the law of Christ (See comments Rm 3:31). Therefore,

where there are those who have obeyed the gospel, and thus have submitted to the instructions of the Spirit through the word of God, there is liberty from the necessity of perfect law-keeping. One is justified by faith and grace, not by a meritorious keeping of law (Rm 5:1,2).

3:18 *The glory of the Lord:* Christians have unveiled themselves from the Sinai law. They are able to perceive the glory of Jesus (4:4,6), and by this, continually grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). Their lives are being transformed into the image of Jesus by their obedience to His will (Rm 8:29,30; 12:1,2). Paul concluded his argument of his proposition by stating that his ministry, as well as the ministry of all Christians, is far superior to the ministry of those who continue to hold to the Sinai law and covenant. It is superior simply because the new covenant is far superior to the Sinai law and covenant (See book of Hb).

Chapter 4

GOD'S WORK THROUGH FALLIBLE MAN

4:1 *We do not lose heart:* The motivation of the evangelist is that he knows that what he preaches is the only hope of the world. He knows that there is salvation only in Christ (At 4:12). The Christian knows that unless one obeys the gospel, he cannot be saved (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). If there is another means by which one can be saved, then it is unnecessary for evangelists to risk their lives in the propagation of the gospel. If there is salvation through the meritorious works of the Sinai law, or through the merit of good works, then there is reason to lose heart in one's efforts to evangelize the world. However, because the gospel is the only means by which men can be saved, those who preach the gospel work against all opposition in order to give people the opportunity to obey the gospel (See comments 1 Pt 4:17; see 2 Co 4:16; Lk 18:1; Gl 6:9; 2 Th 3:13).

4:2 By maintaining his integrity in answering his accusers (1 Th 2:3), Paul identified the dishonest and cunning practices of those false teachers who were preaching and teaching for hire (2:17). ***To every man's conscience:*** Paul knew that those who truly knew him, knew that he preached with sincerity (5:11). Those who were falsely accusing him evidently did not know him. Therefore, he trusted that those in Achaia who knew him would bear witness to the fact that he was sincere in his preaching. He expected them to defend him in his absence.

4:3,4 ***To those who are perishing:*** There are those who are not receptive to the gospel. These are the ones who seek to remain in a state of condemnation. They will not choose to escape from their condemnation because they do not have a love for the truth (2:15; 1 Co 1:18; see comments 2 Th 2:10-12). ***The god of this age:*** Satan is the god of this world because it is his work that men choose to do instead of serving the one true and living God (Ep 6:12; see Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ep 2:2). ***Has blinded:*** Men's minds are blinded to the truth when they desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, pride of life and lusts of the eyes (See comments Js 1:13-15; 2:15; 4:4). The minds of religious people are blinded when they do not seek the one true and living God through Jesus Christ. When one is blinded to the truth, his heart is hardened against the word of God (Jn 12:40; Rm 1:21; 11:7,25). ***Light of the glorious gospel:*** It is the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope that gives us direction for eternal salvation (3:8,9; Jn 8:12; 1 Jn 1:6-10; see comments Rm 6:3-6). This is the light that shines throughout the world, pointing people to eternal life through the cross. ***The image of God:*** Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), it could only be through the incarnation of God in Jesus that we could behold the glory of God (Jn 1:14,18; 12:45; 14:9; Ph 2:6; Cl 1:15; Hb 1:3). Therefore, we know God through the person of Jesus. Paul's opponents in

Achaia had been deceived, or blinded by their worldly attitudes and actions. Satan works through the desire of men to be proud and arrogant in order to keep people from humbly submitting to the gospel. Only through humility will one accept the gospel, and thus, those who are arrogant and proud keep themselves from submitting to the gospel (Mt 18:1-5).

4:5 It seems that some of Paul's readers were promoting themselves. The subject of their preaching was themselves, whereas the subject of Paul's preaching was Christ and His crucifixion (3:1; 1 Co 1:23; 15:13). Therefore, the power of his preaching did not rest in his abilities or human wisdom, but in the power of the gospel (Rm 1:16). He did not resort to human authority for what he preached, but to the authority of God (Gl 1:11,12; see At 2:22-37; 13:26-47; Ph 2:11). ***Bondservants:*** The Greek word here (*doulos*) refers to one being born into slavery (See 1 Co 9:19). Slaves have no reason to exalt themselves. The disciple who is the slave of Jesus certainly has no reason to exalt himself above the message of the gospel that he preaches.

4:6 *Commanded the light to shine:* Paul here identifies the God of creation who is the authority behind that which he preaches (See Gn 1:3). The light of the God who created all things has now been manifested in the hearts of those who have submitted to the gospel. Through our knowledge of Jesus, who is the image of God, we are enlightened through the gospel (See Lk 1:78; Jn 1:14; Cl 1:16; Hb 1:3; 1 Pt 2:9; compare comments 2 Pt 1:19).

REMAINING COMMITTED

4:7 *Treasure in earthen vessels:* Paul's opponents exalted themselves (vs 5). They commended themselves to others and to one another (3:1). But here, Paul confesses his humanity, and thus his frailty by referring to himself and other faithful evangelists as vessels made of clay (5:1).

The value of the vessel is not itself, but in what it contains. It is the power of the gospel that is important. The gospel is exemplified by the fragile nature of the earthen vessel who is the medium through whom it is proclaimed. As the other apostles, Paul was an ordinary fallible person. It was because of the grace of God that the gospel was entrusted to the hands of human messengers as Paul whose strength was limited by their humanity (Jg 7:2; 1 Co 2:5). Because of the power of God, the messengers of God went forth with power, regardless of their human fallibility. Paul's opponents were commending and exalting the clay vessel of the frail messenger, whereas Paul here proclaims that the power is in what the messenger preaches.

4:8,9 *We are afflicted ... perplexed ... persecuted ... cast down:* Messengers of the gospel will often suffer persecution (2 Tm 3:12; see comments At 14:22). Paul here describes the destiny of those evangelists who would commit their lives to the preaching of the gospel. Though they suffer such persecution and trials, it is God who gives strength to endure (Rm 8:31,37; Ph 4:13). God never leaves or forsakes His messengers (Ps 37:24; 129:2; Hb 13:5).

4:10 *The death of ... the Lord Jesus:* When one bears the cross of Christ (Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23), he accepts the burden of the cross (Rm 6:6; Ph 3:10; see comments Gl 2:20). He thus willingly suffers the hardships that come with bearing the cross (At 14:22). In bearing the cross, one recognizes his humanity and dependence on God for survival in Christ (1:8,9). Therefore, it is through trials and persecution that one is driven to depend on God (See comments Mt 5:10-12). *The life of the Lord Jesus:* The life of Jesus is manifested in the disciple who willingly suffers for the name of Jesus (Rm 8:17; Gl 2:20).

4:11 *Delivered to death:* Paul views the trials of discipleship as an opportunity for spiritual growth (Rm 8:36). One's sufferings on behalf of Jesus, therefore, are not for

the self-exaltation of the individual, but for the cause of Christ to preach the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Those who live for Jesus, though it may mean their death (Rv 2:10), manifest in their lives that Jesus is their King and Lord. Their commitment to remain faithful in persecution is a witness to the intensity of their belief.

4:12 Because of his determination to preach the life-giving gospel, Paul lived under the constant threat of death (See At 15:25,26). Because he was willing to suffer persecution, the Achaians had the opportunity to live in Christ (Jn 8:12; Rm 6:4,5). This is the motivation of the true disciple. He is willing to suffer death in order to bring life to those to whom he preaches.

4:13 *The same spirit of faith:* Paul had the same faith as the psalmist who wrote Psalm 116:10 in the face of persecution. ***Believed, and therefore speak:*** In this quotation of Psalm 116:10, Paul emphasizes the courage of the one who has the faith to speak forth in the midst of persecution. He thus defines true faith. If one truly believes, then he will speak forth the word of God (Compare comments Mt 10:32,33; Rm 10:9). Paul's fundamental argument is that the faith one must have is not worth having if he is not willing to die for it.

4:14,15 *Raise us up:* This is the confidence of the bold disciple who works in the midst of severe persecution. God raised Jesus from the dead (Rm 4:24; 8:11; 1 Co 6:14; 1 Pt 1:21). The Christians faith is the power of God to raise the dead. This faith motivates him to trust in God to raise him from the dead if he should die when preaching the gospel (At 21:13; Rv 2:10). ***For your sakes:*** Paul, and all faithful evangelists, were willing to undergo all trials for the benefit of the Achaian disciples. This is the nature of true evangelists who give themselves for the sake of others (See Cl 1:24; 2 Tm 2:10). ***Grace ... reaching many people:*** The grace of God was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11).

Therefore, the more the cross was preached, the more the people would respond with thanksgiving to the grace of God (See comments 1 Co 15:10). When we realize how far God had to send His Son in order to redeem us from condemnation, we respond with a life of thanksgiving. Our good works, therefore, are works of thanksgiving, not works of merit. **Thanksgiving to abound:** Herein is manifested the true motivation of Christians to be obedient, as well as do good works in the name of Jesus. True motivation in Christ is not based on a meritorious effort to earn one's salvation. Christians are motivated by thanksgiving for what God has done for them through the cross. They are thus motivated because of what they already have in Christ. Since they are created in Christ, they respond with works of thanksgiving (See comments Ep 2:10). Therefore, when the gospel is preached and people obey the gospel, there is more thanksgiving in the world for the grace of God (See Ph 4:20).

4:16 Do not lose heart: What motivated Paul to continue was the fact that thanksgiving to God was produced in the lives of men by the preaching of the gospel (vs 15). What gave him hope was the fact that God would raise him from the dead if he died as a result of preaching the gospel (vs 14). Therefore, his hope in the future, and results from his preaching, encouraged him to continue through all adversity to preach the gospel (4:1; Gl 6:9). **Outward man is perishing:** Paul's difficult ministry was wearing down his physical body. However, the results of his preaching were building up his spiritual inner self (See Is 40:29,31; Cl 3:10). He was being spiritually and mentally renewed every day as a result of the effect the gospel was having on the lives of men (Compare 3 Jn 4).

4:17 Light affliction: When we compare the glory of heaven with what is yet to be revealed, the afflictions that we might suffer in this life are considered light (See com-

ments Rm 8:18; see Mt 5:12; 11:28-30; 1 Pt 1:16). When one realizes the glories that will be revealed to the Christian, he is motivated to continue the Christian race (Rm 8:24; Ph 3:13,14; Hb 12:1). **For a moment:** When compared with unending existence in heavenly glory, the duration of our life on earth is only for a moment. Therefore, one should not focus on the moment of life to the neglect of the eternal life that is yet to come. Neither should the Christian endanger the glory that is to come by being caught up in the lust of the things of this world.

4:18 Temporary ... eternal: The faithful Christian will concentrate on the things that are eternal and not on the things that are of this world (Rm 8:24; see 2 Co 5:7; Hb 11:1,13). His mind sees beyond this world to the existence of the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (See comments 2 Pt 3:13). Therefore, he is not willing to sacrifice the eternal for the enjoyment of the temporary (See comments Js 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15). Though the Christian may enjoy the benefits of this world, he does not obsess over the temporary to the exclusion of the eternal.

Chapter 5

Paul continues in the first ten verses of this chapter with the same discussion he began in 4:16. For this reason, there should be no chapter division between the preceding discussion and 5:1-10.

5:1 This verse abounds with metaphors in order to lift our minds above our physical body of this world. **Earthly house:** Paul speaks of our body as not the real self. We dwell in our body as someone would dwell in a house (See 4:7; Jb 4:19; 1 Co 15:47). **Tent:** In comparison to the spiritual and glorious body that is to come, this present earthly body is as fragile as a tent. **Building from God:** Our earthly body is fragile because it originates from that which is of this earth. However, the habitation in which

we will dwell in eternity will originate from God (See comments Ph 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2). It will not be a body built after the manner by which men make houses (Mk 14:58; At 7:48; Hb 9:11,24). It will be a body that is suited for eternal dwelling.

5:2,3 *Earnestly desiring:* Our hope of being clothed with a body from God motivates inward expectation. Christians wait in anxious expectation to be transformed from the earthly body in which they now dwell into the heavenly body that will dwell painlessly in eternal heaven (See Rm 8:23; Ep 1:14; Ph 3:21; 2 Pt 3:11,12). ***Not be found naked:*** It is not the final goal of the Christian to be disembodied in the presence of Jesus. It is always the desire of spirits to be embodied. Therefore, it is the final goal of the Christian to be embodied with our habitation from heaven in order that we not be naked of a body (See Mt 22:11; Rv 3:18). It is our desire to be embodied in the presence of Jesus.

5:4 *Being burdened:* The greater one's perception of eternal heavenly dwelling, the more he understands the burden of the earthly body that confines us to this world. Those who feel comfortable in this present dwelling do not fully understand the glory that will be revealed to us (Rm 8:18). The Christian who has his mind on things above (Cl 3:1-3), groans to be relieved from the confinement and limitations of this world (See comments 2 Pt 3:11-14). ***To be clothed:*** It is not our desire to be disembodied. It is the Christian's final goal to be embodied with a body of immortality (See comments 1 Co 15:35-57).

5:5 The teleology of this verse is most profound. When one considers the very existence of the world, the cross and the church, he must understand that this world is only temporary. Paul says that all that has happened in time has happened for the purpose of bringing redeemed saints into eternal dwelling in the presence of God. All has been pre-

pared by God to transition the faithful into a glorious body for eternal existence. The purpose of the world, therefore, is to populate heaven. Once this world has fulfilled its purpose for which it was created, then it will be removed in order that the new heavens and earth come into existence.

Guarantee of the Spirit: It is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who have commissioned the Holy Spirit for the benefit of those who are living after the Spirit (Rm 8:23; Ep 1:14). The Spirit has been given as a “down payment” on that which is yet to come. Seated in the 1st century with the miraculous work of the Spirit among them, the early church had a visible testimony through the miraculous gifts concerning the presence of the Spirit among them. The Spirit’s work among the early Christians was the guarantee that God was working in them in order to bring them into eternal dwelling. They experienced the supernatural environment of eternal dwelling by the miraculous work of the Spirit (See comments Hb 6:4,5). Therefore, the Spirit’s supernatural work was a guarantee of an existence wherein we will eternally dwell with an immortal body. Paul’s writing this inspired letter gives us hope. The Achaians’ testimony to us is that they experienced firsthand the work of the Spirit. We read of their experiences, and thus, we gain faith through these inspired words of Paul (See comments Rm 10:17).

5:6,7 Absent from the Lord: The Christian can never, while in this earthly body, be present with the Lord as he would like. This physical body separates him from the closeness with which he would be with Jesus. ***Walk by faith:*** We walk by faith that we will eventually be relieved of this body in order to be embodied again with a habitation that is from God (Compare Rm 8:24; Hb 11:1). ***Not by sight:*** Christians are not empirically directed. Guidance by the senses will never take one beyond the limits of the material world. Only through faith can one escape the con-

finer of this world in order to be directed in life by that which is beyond this world.

5:8 *Rather to be absent:* Through faith, Paul's mental attitude was lifted above the limitations of this world (See comments Ph 1:23,24). This is the emotional and mental goal of every Christian. We would rather be delivered from this physical body in order to enjoy to the fullest our being in the presence of the Lord. We would conclude, therefore, that when the Christian dies, he is immediately present with the Lord. This is not the final goal of the Christian, for one is disembodied in the presence of the Lord immediately after death. However, it is enough hope to motivate anticipation on the part of every believer at the time of death (See comments Lk 16:19-31). In our groanings we seek to be embodied again with a resurrected body that will be prepared for us at the end of time and in which we will be with the Lord throughout eternity (See 1 Th 4:13-18).

5:9 *Whether present or absent:* Whether in the world or present with the Lord after death, it is the will of the Christian to do the will of the Father at all times (See Rm 12:1; Ep 5:10). One free-morally chooses to serve God in this life. When he dies, he does not give up his free-moral agency, but seeks also in the presence of the Lord to be well-pleasing to the Lord.

5:10 *Appear before the judgment seat:* The biblical world view maintains that each man will give account of himself before God. The motivation for being well-pleasing to the Lord in verse 9 is explained here. When one realizes that he will give account of his actions before his Creator, then he is motivated to do the will of the Creator. Paul here emphasizes the fact that we will all be judged (Rm 2:6-8; 14:10). God will judge all men (Mt 12:36; Rm 14:10). He will judge all through Jesus (Jn 5:22,27; At 10:42; 17:31; 24:25). ***According to what he has done:*** We do not presume that judgment will be on the basis of meri-

torious works. Good works are the result of one's response to the grace of God (4:15; 1 Co 15:10; see comments Ep 2:10). Paul's statement here, therefore, is written for our benefit. Our only means by which we can know if one has a heart of thanksgiving is by his works. We can know that one has given his life to God only by his fruits (See comments Mt 7:15-20; Js 2:14-26). God does not keep an account of works in order to determine the destiny of the individual. He knows our hearts, and thus our attitudes and motives. We know one another's heart and attitudes by the good works that we do.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

5:11 *The fear of the Lord:* Some translations have rendered this verse in a manner to make the terror (*phobon* - "fear") to refer to God's attitude in reference to those whom He will judge. Others have applied the statement to man's "reverential fear" of the Lord. Whichever position is taken, both are true in the broader context. In our reverential awe and devotion to the Lord, we persuade men to submit to God who will judge justly and without respect of persons (At 17:30,31; Hb 10:31; 12:29; Jd 23). Since the Christian realizes that there is a judgment to come, he is motivated to preach the gospel in order to prepare men for judgment (See At 24:25). The deduction is that if one is not working in persuading men to obey the Lord, he neither fears the Lord nor understands the fact that the Lord will judge all men. ***In your consciences:*** Because there were those in Achaia who personally knew Paul, he assumed that they knew his true motives in preaching the gospel. By understanding his pure motives, he hoped that they would accept him as he knew God accepted him (See 4:2).

5:12 *Boast in appearance:* Though there were those who personally knew Paul, there were also those who had not personally met him. It seems that those who had not

personally met him were boasting of their performance, while at the same time criticizing Paul whom they did not personally know (See 3:1; 4:2; 6:4). They were seeking to build themselves up while they tore down the reputation of Paul. In this letter, Paul gave the church personal information concerning his trials and ministry in order to aid those who would defend him before those who made accusations against him (1:14; Ph 1:26). ***Not in heart:*** Those who are legalistically arrogant in their religious performances often stoop to judging others after the outward performance of law and deeds. In their self-righteous religiosity, they are blinded to the point that they are unable to consider the heart of those they criticize. In this context, Paul gives a testimony to these self-righteous accusers in those areas of life and ministry in which they commended themselves. If they wanted to compare works, therefore, Paul challenges them to consider his life of suffering for the sake of the gospel. It is often the behavior of those who seek positions and prominence among the disciples to criticize those with whom they perceive they are in competition for notoriety (See comments 3 Jn 9,10).

5:13 *Beside ourselves:* The word from which this phrase is translated was also used by Jesus' opponents who accused Him of being mentally deranged (Mk 3:21). It is evident that Paul's accusers were stating that he was mad (See 11:1,16; 12:11; At 26:24). Paul simply states that if he is not of a sound mind, then he has still worked on behalf of God. If they have judged him to have a sound mind, then they should accept his ministry to them as a ministry that originated from God. They were not the result of a madman who came to them preaching a gospel of madness. He had come to them in the nature of the gospel by serving their spiritual needs.

5:14 *Love of Christ compels:* "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). Herein is the motivation of

Christianity and the identity that separates Christianity from the host of man-made religions of the world (Rm 5:5; 8:28-31). Disciples of Christ are known by their love of one another (Jn 13:34,35). One is motivated by love in Christ to serve others. He is compelled by God's love for him through the cross. This love moves the disciple with the same attitude of love toward others (See comments Mt 18:35; Js 2:13). Christianity, therefore, is different from most religions in reference to good works. The adherents of man-made religions do good works. However, the good works are often meritorious. They are performed on the basis of what the adherent believes he will receive as a result of his works. With Christianity, it is different. The Christian is moved to do good works because of what the good works will do to the people for whom he works. His good works are sacrificial and focused on the recipient of the works. The good works of man-made religions are often focused first on the benefit to the one who does the good works, and thus the works are meritorious. Because Christianity is a faith of love, that which Christians do is focused on those they love. They thus do good to all men, especially to those who have come into the household of love, the church (Gl 6:10). ***Died for all:*** Jesus died for the sins of all men because all men have died because of sin (Rm 5:15; 1 Jn 2:2). The fact that Jesus died on the cross for the salvation of all men is evidence that all men need the atonement of the cross for sin (Rm 3:9,10,23; 6:23).

5:15 *Live ... for Him:* The testimony of Paul's sacrificial life is the commentary of what he stated here (See comments Gl 2:20). When one comes out of the waters of immersion into Christ, he comes into a new life (See comments Rm 6:3-6). He not only has a new life because he has been washed of sin (At 22:16), he walks in life for the benefit of others. Thus in living for others, he manifests his love of the Lord (Rm 6:11) and thanksgiving for his

salvation (4:15). Because God first loved us through the cross, our response is our love of others.

5:16 *According to the flesh:* Paul's opponents compared themselves according to the works of the flesh. However, when one is in Christ, he is no longer motivated by comparing performances of either law or works as meritorious standards by which to judge others. In Christ, Christians do not consider one another after the human standards of either performance, abilities or social class (See Gl 3:28; Cl 3:11). ***Known Christ according to the flesh:*** Through the New Testament record of the life of Jesus, we all have a knowledge of Jesus when He lived on this earth. Through a knowledge of the records of the ministry of Jesus we know Jesus "according to the flesh." However, He is not now in the body of the flesh of this earth, but at the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He is the resurrected Son of God who has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). We now know Jesus as God over all things (Cl 1:16). As we know Jesus after the spirit, we should know one another. Christians, therefore, should know one another according to the heart, not according to the outward appearance or performance of the flesh.

5:17 *In Christ ... new creature:* One is new in Christ, not only because he has been cleansed of sins (At 22:16), but also because of his perspective of life after obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6; see Gl 6:15; Ep 4:24). Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" to refer to the covenant relationship that one establishes with Christ at the time of immersion. When one is baptized into Christ, he comes into this relationship with Christ at the time of his baptism (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). ***All things have become new:*** In Christ, one does not consider things according to the flesh, but according to the spiritual nature of one's brothers and sisters in Christ. Since Christians have become new creatures in Christ, they consider all things from a new perspective.

5:18 *Of God:* It is God who originated the plan to redeem men from sin, and thus reconcile us unto Himself through the cross. No man meritoriously earned the grace of God (Rm 3:24; Ep 2:3-9). ***Reconciled us:*** Since we could not reconcile ourselves to God through meritorious works of law or good deeds, then God had to initiate the plan of redemption in order to provide atonement for our sins that separated us from Him. Therefore, through the cross the sinner has the opportunity of being restored to a correct relationship with God (Rm 5:10; Ep 2:16; Cl 1:20; see Is 59:1,2; Rm 5:1; Cl 1:21). ***Ministry of reconciliation:*** The word “reconciliation” refers to a restoration in relationship. In this context, it is the reconciliation of man to God. This message of reconciliation has been entrusted to those who proclaim to the lost the means by which all men can be restored to a saving relationship with God. The opportunity for reconciliation to God is not in the power of the messenger, but in the power of the message he bears (Rm 1:16). The messenger simply provides the opportunity for the hearers to respond to the gospel, and thus be reconciled to God.

5:19 It was the work of God, through the atonement of the cross, to reconcile the world to Himself. The cross was not a debt that God paid in response to the meritorious behavior of man. The problem with man was that all have sinned, and thus have fallen from God (Rm 3:9,10,23). It was only because of God’s grace toward man that the event of the cross took place (Ti 2:11). Therefore, no man can claim that the reconciling work of the cross in his life is the result of earning the gospel. ***Word of reconciliation:*** It is the responsibility of the redeemed to preach the message of the cross to the world. God thus works through the messengers in order to get the message to the lost (Compare comments At 8:26,29). If the message is not preached, then it is the fault of the messengers who should have preached

the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16).

5:20 *Ambassadors for Christ:* The Christian is the representative of God to the world on behalf of the cross (See Mt 2:7; Ep 6:20). It was through Paul, and evangelists like him, that the message of reconciliation was first preached to the world of the 1st century (6:1; Cl 1:23). It will be through evangelists today that the same message will go into all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). ***Be reconciled to God:*** Paul here exhorts the Corinthians to put away any behavioral practice of sin that would separate them from God (See comments Hb 12:1,2). They must take the initiative to refrain from sin (See 1 Jn 1:6-10). They must remember that though they were reconciled to God through their obedience to the gospel, they could fall from the grace by which they are saved.

5:21 Before the cross, men were under the curse of sin in that they could not deliver themselves from spiritual death through meritorious law-keeping or good works (Gl 2:16; 3:11-13). Therefore, as a result of God's grace, the sinless Son of God was offered as a sacrifice for sin (Mt 4:1-13; Jn 8:46; Hb 4:15; 1 Pt 2:22). Jesus thus bore the sins of all humanity on the cross (Is 53; Jn 1:29; Rm 3:25; 1 Co 15:3; 1 Pt 2:21-24). In order for any person to take advantage of God's grace, he must obediently respond to the gospel. ***The righteousness of God:*** Jesus died in order that we might become the justified sons of God in Christ (Rm 1:17; 1 Co 1:30; see comments Rm 3:21-31). It is because of His death that we are able to be righteous before God. Since we cannot establish our own righteousness on the basis of perfect keeping of law or meritorious good works, then all men must be drawn to the cross in order to be justified from sin. It is at the cross that we are justified by the grace of God (Ep 2:8).

Chapter 6

6:1 *Not receive the grace of God in vain:* Paul preached the grace of God that was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11). The Achaians responded to the grace of God by their obedience to the gospel (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). However, their walk in the grace of God had to continue lest they fall from grace. They could not be once saved by the grace of God, then be unconditionally saved for eternity. They were conditionally saved by grace through their obedient response to the gospel. The condition to remain within the grace of God was their continued faithfulness to the will of God (See comments 1 Jn 1:6-9). When one obediently lives in thanksgiving to the grace of God (4:15), then God's grace is not in vain in his life (See comments 1 Co 15:10).

6:2 Paul's quotation of Isaiah 49:8 is in reference to God who has heard the pleas of those seeking His salvation. God thus heard the pleas of the lost in Achaia and responded by the preaching of the gospel to them through Paul (See comments At 18:9,10). *The day of salvation:* Though many obeyed the gospel while Paul was in their presence, they must continue to walk in the light of the gospel lest they fall away (1 Jn 1:7). Every day, therefore, is a day of salvation to the Christian, for in one day one can turn his back on the free gift of God's grace, and thus lose his soul. *The acceptable time:* This dispensation of time since the cross is a time of salvation for all men, for we live this side of the good news of the cross and resurrection. There is thus urgency in Paul's message that the gospel be preached to all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15).

HARDSHIPS IN PAUL'S MINISTRY

6:3 As a representative of God for the preaching of the gospel, Paul conducted his life in a manner that did not present a stumbling block to others who were seeking to

obey the gospel (See Rm 14:13; 1 Co 9:12; 10:32). It is the responsibility of every disciple to live as an example to others concerning the message he or she teaches (1 Tm 4:12; 1 Pt 3:15).

6:4,5 *Servants of God:* In these two verses Paul presents the life of the evangelist. Those in Achaia who were opponents of Paul commended themselves (See 3:1; 11:5,12,16,18,22). However, their self-commendation was not evidence that they were either teaching or living the truth. What Paul here affirms is that the trials of a true teacher at least manifest his sincerity in what he believes. If one would follow in the steps of Jesus, he will suffer as Jesus (4:10; 1 Pt 2:21). Walking in such tribulations teaches one to trust in God and not in one's self. In contrast to the comfortable life-style of his opponents, Paul explained his discipleship in the sufferings of Christ (See 11:23-33).

6:6-10 The ministry of Paul was a ministry in service of others. He had crucified the old man of selfishness (Gl 2:20). He thus lived as Jesus would among the people in order to represent his Savior in all things. With the preaching of the message, came the turmoil of life from those who rejected the gospel. Through deprivation of food and comforts, he endured beatings and imprisonment. However, through the strength of God manifested through the Holy Spirit, he was willing to be dishonored and slandered. He was willing to undergo poverty, sorrow and discouragement in order that others enjoy the riches of the grace of God. He was willing to go without all things in order that those who obey the gospel would inherit all things in eternity. Paul was willing to give all that he had in order that others have an opportunity for eternal dwelling in the presence of God. He lived his message, regardless of the hardships the message brought upon him (Rm 1:11).

6:11 *Spoken freely:* As Paul, evangelists must be straightforward with the disciples concerning those things

that must be said. All truth must be spoken to those who are in danger of turning from the grace of God, or have already turned aside unto fables (See comments 2 Tm 4:1-5). Disciples who rebuke faithful teachers for teaching against sin are disciples who have already fallen into sin (See comments 1 Th 5:19,20). **Heart is wide open:** Since he had spoken directly to them concerning the error of the behavior of some among them, he was at the same time open to their repentance. Though they may have withheld their affections from him, he would not do the same to them (7:3).

6:12,13 Paul's opponents among the disciples of Achaia had deceived many into thinking that he was not sincere in his ministry. They had slandered him in an effort to gain the following of the disciples (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). Therefore, the Achaians' affections toward him were restrained. Nevertheless, Paul did not allow his affections for them to be restrained by retaliating. He here manifests the true spirit of love by not retreating from them because they were withdrawing from him. True love is not repelled by the slanderous accusations of one's opponents. **You also be open:** Paul challenged them to respond to His love with love. They were his sons in the faith since he had preached the gospel to them. Therefore, it would be their courteous gesture to return the love of a loving father. Their behavior toward him manifested that they were not yet perfected in love. But Paul did not determine his relationship with them according to this imperfection. He continued to work lovingly with them regardless of their imperfections.

MAINTAINING SEPARATION FROM SIN

6:14 Unequally yoked: In the context, Paul is calling on those who are faithful among the disciples not to continue to yoke themselves with those false teachers who denied fundamental teachings (See comments Gl 5:7-15). Not

only did some deny the resurrection (1 Co 15), they also denied the apostolic ministry of Paul. It seems that Paul considered the false teachers to be unbelievers in the sense that they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They were thus blinded because of their denial of the truth (4:4; 11:3; 13:5,6). In a broader sense, the Christian should certainly not bind himself to any non-Christian who would lead him into compromising his principles. Unequally yoked means to refrain from aligning oneself with another wherein Christian principles and values are subjugated to the morals and behavior of unbelievers (Compare Dt 7:2,3; 22:10; 1 Co 5:9).

6:15,16 *Belial*: Reference here is to Satan. In asking this series of questions, Paul assumed that his audience knew the right answers. ***Temple of the living God*:** The church of believers is God's spiritual temple (Compare 1 Co 3:16,17; 6:19; Ep 2:21; Hb 3:6; 1 Pt 2:5,9). The disciples that know the one true and living God should never place themselves in a compromising situation where those who have given themselves over to idols are encouraged. ***Dwell in them*:** Paul's quotation is from the Old Testament wherein God dwelt in Israel (See Ex 29:45; Lv 26:12; Jr 31:33). He dwelt in the Israelites insofar as they walked according to His commandments. As God dwelt in obedient Israel, so He now dwells in the spiritual Israel of God (Jn 14:23; 1 Jn 4:12,15,16; Rv 21:3). This point is the answer to the preceding questions. Since God dwells in those who have obediently responded to His will, then they can have no spiritual fellowship with those who have not submitted to His will.

6:17,18 *Come out*: As Israel was commanded to come out from the influence of unbelievers (Nm 33:51-56; Is 52:11; Ez 20:34; Rv 18:4), so God's people must come out from the influence of false teachers and idol worshipers. We must keep in mind that Paul's definition of those who

would be false teachers are those who have denied fundamental beliefs as the resurrection and his inspiration in preaching and writing the truth. He is not discussing those with whom one might disagree on matters of opinion or personalities (See comments 1 Co 1:10). **Be a Father:** Those who separate themselves from that which is evil will find a father in God (See 2 Sm 7:14; Jr 31:1,9; Rv 21:7). Those who have found fatherhood in God have been made sons and daughters of God (See Jn 1:12; Rm 8:14; Gl 4:5-7). Though one may have grown up without a father, God promised that He would be a father to orphans.

Chapter 7

GROUP REPENTANCE

7:1 This verse concludes the thoughts of 6:14-18. **These promises:** The promises refer to God being our Father and to us who are His sons and daughters (6:18). In view of the great promises of God, Paul here calls on the Achaians to voluntarily purify themselves of the sinful attitudes and teachings that have been allowed to enter in among them (See Hb 12:1,2; Js 5:8-10). **Cleanse ourselves:** They would cleanse themselves by walking in the light wherein the blood of Jesus continually cleanses the faithful (1 Jn 1:7). The cleansing that is mentioned here was the responsibility of the disciples. In order to have the continual cleansing of God, one must take ownership of his behavior. God's cleansing depends on one's faithful walk in the light of the truth.

7:2 Paul here pleads with his readers to extend love toward him and the other evangelists who were working with him. He reminds them that neither he nor Titus and Timothy have worked deceitfully or dishonestly among them. They never coveted their money (See At 20:33). Paul's plea here infers that his arrogant opponents had slandered him so that the door be shut to his return. It is the

nature and practice of those leaders who seek to dominate churches to slander those they do not want to be in the presence of those disciples they have subjected to their dictatorial control. Slander is practiced for the purpose of convincing others to believe malicious things against evangelists as Paul, Timothy and Titus. Dictatorial leaders will resort to slander in order to dominate and control the whole flock (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). This is a common occurrence throughout the world. Arrogant and autocratic men will seek to steal the sheep of God by using the church as an opportunity to exercise their dominance over their fellow man (Compare comments Mk 10:35-45).

7:3 *To die ... and to live together:* Paul and his fellow Christians had died together by immersion into Christ (5:14; Rm 6:3-6). They now lived together in Christ because they no longer lived according to the selfish lusts of this world (5:15; Gl 2:20). Therefore, Paul's statements here to exhort them to receive him are not written in order to pronounce a condemnation upon them because of their actions. Paul knew that they had been deceived by those among them who had slandered the evangelists. He was thus patient with the disciples until they grew out of the innocence of being children who were led about by arrogant leaders (6:13; 1 Co 13:11; see comments Ep 4:11-16).

7:4 *Boldness of speech:* In situations as these, Paul and all evangelists must speak frankly and with directness. Churches that allow themselves to believe slander, and thus shut out evangelists, must be spoken to with direct speech. In this case, Paul had confidence in them that his direct speech would not turn them away from either him or the Lord. He had boasted to others concerning their repentance to disfellowship the immoral member discussed in 1 Corinthians 5 (2 Co 1:4). ***Exceedingly joyful:*** Their repentance in reference to his instructions in the first letter brought great joy to him because he realized that the

Achaians would not be disciples of “wood, hay, stubble” (See comments 1 Co 3:12-15). Their determination to act brought him comfort (See Ph 2:17; Cl 1:24).

7:5 *Troubled on every side:* Paul continued here with the historical notes that he started in 2:13 concerning Titus’ coming to him in Macedonia from Achaia. Paul had sent Titus to Achaia with the 1 Corinthian letter in order to precede his coming. He had sent Titus while he was still in Asia. When he went into Macedonia, he encountered great opposition (4:8), and thus was delayed in going on to Achaia.

7:6,7 *God, who comforts:* In this context Paul explains at least one means by which God comforts those who are discouraged (1:3,4; Is 49:13). When Titus met Paul in Macedonia with good news concerning the repentance of the Achaians, he was greatly comforted (vs 13; 2:13). Paul was not only comforted by the report of repentance, he was also comforted by their acceptance of Titus. When Paul first sent Titus to them, he was apprehensive about their acceptance of him because of the slanderous false teachers among them. However, they not only accepted Titus, they also repented in response to the 1 Corinthian letter. What was said in the inspired letter, therefore, was sufficient to bring them to repentance. ***Zeal for me:*** Paul is not referring to their personal acceptance of him as opposed to accepting the arrogant teachers among them. This was not a matter of personalities. Their acceptance of him was a matter of accepting him as a Christ-sent apostle who was the representative of God. If they would have rejected him, they would have been rejecting God, for it was through Paul that the Holy Spirit revealed the truth to them.

REPENTANCE THAT BRINGS JOY

7:8 The first letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians was stern. He did not regret writing the letter because it had to be direct in order to produce repentance (2:2-4).

Because of his God-ordained commission and responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle, he did not regret having to write the letter. There are times when the elders must teach a stern message. They regret having to do such because of their love for the disciples. Nevertheless, they must teach the word of God (2 Tm 4:2). Elders are duty bound as shepherds of the flock to teach the word of God (See 1 Tm 5:17; Ti 1:9). **Only for a while:** Once the disciples had carried out the action of disfellowshipping the immoral brother (1 Co 5), then they were overjoyed when he repented.

7:9 The disfellowship had accomplished its purpose. The immoral brother repented, and thus brought joy to the church and to Paul. Paul rejoiced because their obedient actions to disfellowship the immoral brother accomplished the purpose for which it was intended. **A godly manner:** The letter stimulated their repentance toward God. It did not cause them to have hard feelings toward Paul, and thus endanger their relationship with him. Their positive response to his stern message in the letter proved that they were sincere in their obedience to the word of God.

7:10 Godly sorrow works repentance: Regardless of the false teachers who were opposing the directions of Paul, the majority of the disciples carried out Paul's instructions. They did so because they recognized that Paul's instructions were from God, not from man as were the teachings of the false teachers (Compare 2 Sm 12:13; Ps 32:10; Mt 26:75). When one understands that the word of God originates from God and not man, then he will respond to the word of God without reacting to the messenger who teaches the word. Christians, therefore, who react with condemnation and judgment of a teacher who teaches the word of God, are Christians who are falling from the truth. They do not have a spirit of godly sorrow because they refuse to listen to the word of God. They will refuse to repent be-

cause they have no respect for the word of God. They maintain a carnal mentality, and thus are moving away from the word of God (See Pv 17:22; 1 Co 6:9,10; Gl 5:21).

7:11 The repentance of the Achaians is clearly defined in this verse. The words that Paul uses to describe their repentance reveals what happens in the process of repentance. **Sorrowed:** Before one will repent, he must mourn over his sin (See comments Mt 5:3-10). Godly sorrow is the foundation upon which all true repentance is established. **Earnestness:** They were zealous and earnest in their desire to carry out the disfellowship of the immoral brother in order to comply with the commandment of God through Paul. **Vindication:** They had a sincere desire to retain the purity of fellowship among the disciples. Therefore, they manifested their desire to be obedient to God in their actions (2:5-11; 1 Co 5:6,7). **Indignation:** They had not been desensitized to immorality, and thus, they had not condoned the sin. They were only timid in working against the minority who had evidently intimidated them into conforming to their wishes. Paul's letter gave the majority confidence to carry out the action that was in their hearts. **Fear:** They carried out the action in fear of God. They learned to fear God more than any man. They realized that they were sinning because they allowed the immoral brother to go unchecked. **Desire:** They sincerely wanted to reestablish their relationship with God and Paul. They were not willing that the sin of the immoral brother cause a rift between them and God. **Zeal:** Once they had the confidence that was provided by the inspired letter of Paul, they acted quickly to disfellowship the immoral brother. **Avenging:** By disfellowshipping the sinning brother, they vindicated themselves from being those who would condone sin. **Pure in this matter:** When individuals decide to do the will of God, instead of conforming to the wishes of those who would condone sin, they identify themselves as the body of

Christ (2:5-11). Such was the desire of the majority in Achaia. Because of the confidence that came with the 1 Corinthian letter, they chose to ignore those among them who sought to condone the sin. They chose to obey God rather than man, and thus clear themselves of being apostates from the word of God.

7:12 Paul's statement here indicates that the needs of the many outweigh the sin of any one member. In other words, the restoration of the entire body was more important than the need of the one remaining in fellowship with the disciples. Paul's conclusion would be that disciples who condone one sinful brother within their fellowship will identify the entire group to be in sin. The church will be in sin because the members are not carrying out the command of God to keep the church pure. The church sins by being disobedient to the command of God to disfellowship members who would persist in sinful behavior. ***Our care ... made known:*** Paul had to write the inspired instructions in order to manifest his own care for the church (2:4). It was Paul's ordained work as a Christ-sent apostle to deliver the word of God to man. If he had failed in this work, then he would have sinned against God.

7:13 Comforted: Once the Achaian church had carried out the instructions to disfellowship the immoral brother, and the brother repented, the members were comforted. Their action brought peace to the turmoil that was going on among the members. The peace that now prevailed brought comfort to Paul. ***Titus ... refreshed:*** Though Titus must have had great apprehension on his way to Achaia with the 1 Corinthian letter, his return to Paul was one of great joy. He was greatly encouraged by the repentant attitude that was manifested by the Achaian disciples. ***By you all:*** It is worthy to note that the majority of the Achaian disciples who carried out the action of disfellowshipping the immoral brother, was considered the church of God. Paul did not

include in this designation those arrogant false teachers from whom the faithful should separate themselves (6:14-18; see comments Gl 5:7-15). Paul's statement here in this verse refers to the repentant majority who finally saved the day for the Achaian church by being obedient to the commandment of God concerning the immoral brother in the midst of the disciples.

7:14 *Boasted to him:* Before Titus left for Achaia with the 1 Corinthian letter, Paul boasted concerning the true attitudes of the meek majority. The Achaian church was not to be judged according to the arrogant minority who were opponents of Paul. Once Titus visited the disciples, the boasting of Paul concerning the Achaians was found to be true.

7:15 *The obedience of you all:* Though Paul used the word "all" to refer to the Achaian church, we could assume that some of the arrogant false teachers did not repent. Nevertheless, the church was now led by those who were of a humble heart. ***Fear and trembling:*** Since Titus' visit, his affections and appreciation for the church were as Paul's before his visit. The repentant attitude of the disciples had changed his thinking concerning the church as a whole. Therefore, it is not wise to judge any disciples by the slanderous proclamations of a few whose voices can be heard, but whose hearts are ungodly. As with the seven churches of Asia whom Jesus addressed in the letter of Revelation, there were within the cities faithful disciples (See Rv 2 & 3).

7:16 *Confidence in you:* Paul would certainly be putting the arrogant false teachers to shame by exalting the righteous behavior of the majority of the disciples. The members of the body in Achaia knew those who had opposed Paul. Therefore, Paul's commendation of the majority who obediently responded to his letter, would silence his opposition through the righteous behavior of the majority. The righteous behavior of the faithful should be com-

mended in order to encourage them to continue in their work (See 2:3; 8:22; 2 Th 3:4; Pl 8,21).

Paul's Defense Of Contributions

(8:1 – 9:15)

Outline: (1) Excelling in Contribution (8:1-7), (2) Giving out of purpose (8:8-15), (3) Recommendations of Titus (8:16-24), (4) Giving that glorifies God (9:1-15)

Chapter 8

EXCELLING IN CONTRIBUTION

The following chapters 8 & 9 are a follow-up appeal to the Achaians concerning the Judean famine relief contribution of 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. Paul had already taken a collection from the Gentile disciples in the province of Macedonia (vs 1; 9:2). He was now headed to Achaia to gather the collection they had promised to make a year before. His purpose for gathering the contribution was first to bring relief to the famine stricken victims of Judea. However, he also wanted to let the Jewish disciples in Judea know that the Gentile disciples cared for them. The generous contribution from the Gentile members would produce unity between the Jewish and Gentile disciples (Compare vs 13-24; Rm 15:26-31; Gl 6:6). The historical context of Paul's statements in the first few verses of chapter 8 are made to spur the Achaians on to make the contribution by letting them know that the Macedonians had already made their contributions. The Macedonians would at least include the Christians in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

8:1 *The grace of God:* The word "grace" (*karis*) in this passage would better be translated "favor." It would refer to the favor of God that was showered down upon the Macedonian Christians as a result of their sacrificial contribution (Compare Rm 15:25,26; 1 Co 16:1,2). The word "grace" is not used in a salvation context here, but in the sense that God was well-pleased with the sacrificial ac-

tions of the Christians in making the contribution out of an economic situation of great poverty (See comments 3 Jn 5-8).

8:2 By informing them of the positive response of the Macedonians, Paul wanted to encourage the Achaian brethren to contribute. **Great trial of affliction:** What made the Macedonians' contribution exceptional was the fact that they gave out of an economic situation that was very difficult. Though the times were hard for them, they still gave to the need of others. **Joy:** They gave with a joyful spirit. It was not a grudging gift. **Deep poverty:** They were poor people, and yet, they did not use their poverty as an excuse to ignore the opportunity to fellowship the global body of Christ through cooperative contributions. Too often, poor disciples complain about their economic situation, and thus, they neglect to manifest the spirit of giving what they have. However, those Christians who realize the tremendous gift of grace that God has given to them, and the eternal glory that is yet to come, will give out of their poverty (See comments Ph 4:10-18). The spirit of giving is based on the concepts that Jesus taught on giving. Since we have freely received God's gifts, freely we should give to others (Compare Mt 10:8). If we violate this principle, then we will not grow spiritually in the favor of God. There is no favor of God extended toward those who sacrificially contribute to the misfortune of others. **Abounded:** The Macedonian members gave generously. They refused to allow their poor economic conditions to hinder them from doing that which was required in response to God's generosity to them through His grace (See comments Mk 12:41-44).

8:3 Beyond their ability: There were those Christians who gave what they could. However, the Macedonian Christians went beyond what would be expected of them. They sacrificed on their part in order to make a contribution. They gave up material things in order to make it possible for a contribution to be made (See comments At

2:44,45; 4:32-37). **They gave:** The poverty stricken disciples of Macedonia had learned the spirit of Christianity. They had learned the spirit of giving that produces inward joy and spiritual growth (Jn 13:17). God's gift of grace had moved them to willingly respond to the needs of others. As God responded to their need of salvation through His free gift of grace, they learned that godliness responds in the same way to the physical needs of others. Christians who do not sacrificially contribute do not understand what they have received through the cross of Jesus, nor what they will receive in eternal glory (4:15; Rm 8:18).

8:4 Begging us: Paul and his company would naturally refuse to accept a contribution from such poverty stricken brethren. Therefore, the Macedonian brethren begged Paul to accept their gift. The spirit of their giving was thus exemplified by their actions to do that which was right in reference to the famine victims of Judea. **Fellowship of the ministering:** Not only did the Macedonian churches want to give to the famine victims, they wanted to participate in the fellowship of the global church. In other words, they knew that they had to give in order to be in fellowship with all other disciples throughout the world. If they had refused to contribute, then they knew that they would have disfellowshipped themselves from the church of those who were making a sacrificial contribution. The example of their giving, and the giving of all other disciples concerning the Judean famine, was that the universal church worked as one organic body in order to contribute to any specific need that the members of the church faced in any area of the world. Therefore, the cooperative work of churches to carry out projects that necessitate the contributions of many churches indicates the universal fellowship that exists between all members of the church. Those members who would refuse to financially work together in such a manner have disfellowshipped themselves from the universal broth-

erhood to do the work of world benevolence and evangelism (See 9:1; At 11:29,30; 24:17; Rm 15:25,26; 1 Co 16:1-4).

8:5 *First gave themselves:* Sacrificial contributions will happen when people first commit themselves to God. When we give our entire lives to Jesus, contributions will follow (See comments Rm 12:1). When this happens in the life of an individual, then the totality of one's being is given to others. The one who is motivated by the mercy of God that resulted in the giving of God's grace will not see how little he can give (4:15). He will concentrate on how much he can give.

8:6 *Complete ... this same grace:* Paul had sent Titus to Corinth in order to inform the Corinthians concerning the contribution that needed to be made (8:17; 12:18). Paul here refers to the giving as a grace. It is a grace because it is in response to God's saving grace in our lives (4:15). Contribution, therefore, is giving after the manner by which God extended grace toward us. Grace was free. It was given out of the initiative of God to save us. Our contribution to the needs of others is also free and the result of our initiative to help others. It is truly a contribution of grace because we do not expect anything in return. True contribution is given when one does not expect anything in return. If one participates in the benefits of the giving, then it is not a true contribution. It is simply giving that is based on one's desire to benefit from what the contribution purchases.

8:7 *Abound in this grace also:* The Corinthians had received all that they had as a result of the grace of God. They abounded in the blessings of God (Ep 1:3). Therefore, Paul here urges them to bountifully respond to the Judean need by contributing to the "famine fund" of Judea (9:8).

GIVING OUT OF PURPOSE

8:8 Paul is not giving a commandment concerning their contribution. The test was in reference to their love. If they obeyed by commandment, then they would not be motivated by brotherly love to care for the victims of the famine (See 1 Co 7:6). Paul expects them to make the contribution voluntarily out of a heart of love for God and their Jewish brothers. And herein is the difference between legalistic religions and true Christianity. Legal religions assign a percentage for contribution. Jesus says that by love the world will be able to identify His disciples (Jn 13:34,35). Legal religions thus limit contributions, but Jesus says there is no end to how much one should give.

8:9 *The grace of our Lord:* Though Jesus was on an equality with God, He sacrificed Himself in order to offer Himself for the salvation of all men (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58; Ph 2:5-7). When we truly understand our salvation by God's grace, we are motivated to give to others as God gave to us (4:15).

8:10,11 The Achaians had determined a year before the writing of this letter to make a contribution for the famine victims of Judea. If their determination to make the contribution was stimulated by the writing of 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, then we would assume that the 2 Corinthian letter was written one year after 1 Corinthians. *A completion:* The year before this writing, they had the desire to make the contribution. It is possible that the opponents of Paul discouraged them from carrying through on their promise. Therefore, Paul now encouraged them to carry out their intentions to make the contribution, and thus remain in fellowship with the global church that was also contributing (vs 4).

8:12-15 *According to what one has:* God does not expect us to give according to what we do not have. He expects us to give what we can (See Mk 12:43,44; Lk 21:3,4).

Paul did not expect them to give in order to relieve others of what they should contribute. They should also understand that others were not giving in order to relieve them of their responsibility. ***By an equality:*** Their contribution would not simply be a sharing of material things as was the case in Acts 2:44,45 and Acts 4:32-37. It would be a manifestation of an equality with the Jewish Christians who had preached the gospel to the Gentiles (Rm 15:27). When all disciples share in a common contribution to a common cause, they manifest their brotherhood as the organic body of Christ throughout the world. ***Their abundance:*** The Achaians were probably more financially able to contribute than the Macedonians. Paul quoted Exodus 16:18 in order to illustrate economic sharing among Christians. No Christian should be left in a crisis situation where he is destitute of food and shelter (Compare comments 2 Th 3:10). Reference is not that all Christians should normally have the same amount of material possessions or money. The point is that in crisis situations every brother is cared for in the areas of having that which is necessary for living (See comments At 6:1-7).

RECOMMENDATION OF TITUS

8:16-18 Because of his concern and care for the Achaian disciples, Titus voluntarily went to Achaia in order to aid in their spiritual development. Two other brethren accompanied Titus (vs 22). ***The brother:*** Paul does not identify this brother or the brother who is mentioned in verse 22. Some Bible students believe that one of these brothers may have been Luke, or possibly one of the brothers who are mentioned in Acts 20:4.

8:19-21 The church had selected two brothers to go with Paul to collect the contribution for the famine in Judea (See 4:15; At 14:23; 1 Co 16:3,4). The wisdom of the money being handled by more than one person reassured every-

one because everyone knew that the contribution was secure (See Rm 12:17; Ph 4:8; 1 Pt 2:12). The members of the church asked Paul and his company of two brothers to travel among the disciples in order to raise the contribution for the famine. All the disciples cooperated in order to accomplish a good work (Compare comments Gl 2:1-10).

8:22 The brother who is mentioned here is not identified, though he was well known among all the Achaian disciples. The purpose for the company of brethren being sent was not only for security, but also to guard Paul against accusations from those who were carnal in their thinking. There were those brethren who still had a dishonest mind, and thus assumed that others were also dishonest. Dishonest people are often quick to accuse others of being dishonest who are handling the contributions of the church.

8:23 *Ones sent:* The Greek word here is *apostolos* (“apostles”). Titus and the two brothers with him were church-sent apostles. Since the generic meaning of the word *apostolos* is “one sent,” these brethren were sent out by the church for a specific purpose (At 14:4; Ph 2:25). They did not have the power of the Christ-sent apostles who were personally collected and sent out by Jesus to be witnesses of His resurrection (See comments At 1:15-26; 8:18). It is important to make this distinction between the church-sent apostles and Christ-sent apostles. The Christ-sent apostles were the special witnesses to the life and resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24:48; At 1:8; 1 Pt 5:1). Church-sent apostles were simply messengers of the church to carry out the desires of the church. It is significant to understand that the word “apostle” was never meant to be a title. The word defines something that is done. It is a word that is used to define the sending forth of someone on a special mission. Therefore, there was no such thing in the 1st century as an apostle who remained with a particular group of disciples. Apostles were “sent forth.” They did not stay at home. If

one today would desire to be a church-sent apostle, then he must go forth. The common word that is used today to refer to church-sent apostles would be “missionary.”

8:24 *Proof of your love:* Paul urged the Achaians to receive Titus and the two brothers in order to reaffirm that all the disciples know the loving fellowship the Christians in Achaia wanted to maintain with the whole church (vs 4). In their reception of these brothers, Paul’s boasting to Christians everywhere would not have been in vain (7:4,14; 9:2). The practical lesson that Paul teaches is that Christians should be eager to receive evangelists. Those Christians who refuse to receive evangelists would do well to study John’s exhortations in 3 John (See comments). In Diotrophes’ efforts to dominate some disciples, he refused to receive John and the traveling evangelists.

Chapter 9

GIVING THAT GLORIFIES GOD

9:1 *Ministry to the saints:* This discussion emphasizes the global organic body ministering to itself during a famine in Judea (8:4; At 11:29; Rm 15:26; 1 Co 16:1; Gl 2:10). The parts of the body in Achaia were truly willing to minister to the Judean parts of the body (See comments Ep 4:1-16). Paul and the brothers were on their way to collect the Achaian contribution. He knew that they wanted to contribute. He thus wrote in order to encourage them to carry out their planned contribution.

9:2 *Willingness of your mind:* Achaia disciples were willing to contribute, but possibly were discouraged from doing so because of the negative influence of the false teachers among them (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). Now it was time to put into action their desires and talk. ***Those of Macedonia:*** Reference here is to the disciples in Macedonia, specifically these in the cities of Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi. These Christians are not portrayed

as individual groups of disciples who functioned separately from one another in such things as cooperation to contribute to the famine in Judea. They were viewed as part of the one universal church, and thus functioned as the one body of Christ. ***Achaia:*** From Paul's reference to the Macedonians as one church, though meeting in different locations, we must conclude that there were a great number of house fellowships throughout the province of Achaia at the time of writing. There was not just one group of disciples meeting in the city of Corinth. Though the members of the church may meet at different places on the first day of the week, they are still parts of the one universal church. ***Stirred up the majority:*** The Gentile Achaians' willingness to contribute was announced to everyone. As a result, other disciples in other areas were inspired to contribute (8:19).

9:3,4 *You may be prepared:* Paul had boasted concerning the Achaians' willingness to make the contribution for the famine victims. At the time of writing, he sent Titus, and the other two brothers, on to Achaia in order that the contribution be made before his arrival (8:6,16-18,23; 1 Co 16:1-4). ***Should be ashamed:*** Paul had already boasted to the Macedonians concerning the Achaians' willingness to contribute. He sent the brethren to Achaia in advance in order that neither he, nor some accompanying Macedonian brethren, be embarrassed when he arrived if they had not yet made the contribution.

9:5 *Generosity and not as one grudgingly giving:* Titus and the other two brothers would remind the Achaians that they had made a promise to make the contribution. Therefore, if they willingly made the contribution without Paul's presence, then they would make it with generosity and not out of obligation. Paul did not want them to have to submit to a guilt-producing fund raising campaign from either himself or others. He was again testing their sincerity. They

had made all the talk of promises concerning the contribution, now it was time for them to walk the promises they talked. Too many times we behave as the Achaians concerning our work for the Lord. We are quick to talk and make plans, but slow in carrying out those plans in our lives.

9:6 *Reap sparingly:* The principle Paul quotes here is from the Old Testament (See Pv 11:24; 22:9; Gl 6:7-9). ***Reap bountifully:*** Paul does not indicate that they will reap material things for their generous giving. In view of 8:14 and verse 11 in this chapter, the reaping would refer to the spiritual blessing of eternal glory. This was the promise of blessing that was given to the Philippians for their sacrificial contributions to evangelism (See comments Ph 4:14-19). Paul does not teach here that one should expect to prosper materially as a result of his contributions. Such a concept would produce selfish reasons for contributing. Contribution is not an investment strategy. Contributions must be made without expectation for material benefit. Sacrificial contribution is not made in expectation that God will materially bless one with more money or things. The sacrificial contributions that are made by poverty stricken brethren throughout the world is evidence that God does not work in this manner in reference to contributions. Tens of thousands of disciples live in developing world environments today, though they are sacrificially giving to the Lord all they can. Though they give, they are still living in economically dire situations, and thus are still in need. They are sacrificial givers as the widow during Jesus' ministry, who, according to percentage of giving, gave more than the wealthy (See comments Mk 12:41-44). The teaching "the more money you give God, the more He will give you" is a theology, that if true, proclaims that God has no concern for disciples in poverty-stricken economies of the world who still remain in poverty, though in percentage or sacri-

fice are often giving more than the wealthy of the developed world.

9:7 *As he purposes in his heart:* Contribution is based on the concept, “freely you receive, freely give” (See comments Mt 10:8). Christians have freely received the gift of God’s grace. Therefore, they are motivated to freely give whatever they can of their lives in thanksgiving to God (See comments Rm 12:1,2). Every Christian, therefore, gives of his own free will without reluctance and without feeling compelled to give. Christians are moved to give because of the grace of God in their hearts. They thus seek to see how much they can give, not how little they can give. If Christianity were a legal system of religion created after the religious inventions of men, then they would seek only to give that which was established by the legal system of the religion. They would be seeking to give only that which is required. However, since Christians are grace-motivated, they give out of thanksgiving to God for saving them by His grace (See comments 4:15; 1 Co 15:10). Grace-motivated Christians are thus cheerful givers. Legalistically motivated Christians are grudging givers. Grace-motivated givers spiritually grow every time they have an opportunity to give (Compare 8:12; Ex 35:5; Dt 15:7,10; 1 Ch 29:17; Pv 11:25; Rm 12:8).

9:8 *Grace abound toward you:* Reference here is to the contribution (8:1,4,19). God expresses His bountiful favor to those who give sacrificially. God has not promised to match the contribution with riches of this world. He has only promised that He will take care of us in this world (See comments Mt 6:19-34). Christians must keep in mind that in the world to come, their possessions of this world will not be compared with that which they will receive (Rm 8:18). Since few who are rich in this world either gain or maintain their faith, it seems that God would not make one rich because of contributions (See comments

1 Tm 6:6-10). However, those who are materially blessed, and yet contribute well, should use their gift of making money to bring glory to God through their contributions (See comments 3 Jn 2-8). ***Abound to every good work:*** Some brethren have the gift of making money. Those who do should be exhorted to use their gift in order to benefit the work of God through their contribution.

9:9 *Given to the poor:* In the context of Psalm 112:9, which is here quoted by Paul, reference is to the one who fears God. Therefore, the Christian who is faithful will give to the poor. If the Achaians feared the Lord, therefore, they would give to the poor famine victims of Judea. One's concern for the poor is thus an evidence that he has the heart of God.

9:10 It is God who provides the seed of righteousness in our hearts from which our contributions abound to others. We thus give because He first gave to us (Compare comments 1 Jn 4:19; see Is 55:10). ***Fruits of your righteousness:*** The result of the righteousness of God in our hearts is that it produces the fruit of righteousness in the lives of others. In other words, the result of the justification of the Christian by the grace of God is that Christians freely give to help others (See Hs 10:12).

9:11 *For all liberality:* The Achaians had already been enriched with the things of this world that gave them the ability to contribute. God did not make them rich in the five to seven years they had been Christians. They were now Christians, and thus, they must direct their riches toward the good works of their faith. What they had consumed on their own lusts before they were Christians, was now to be directed to the help of others. Therefore, when one becomes a Christian, his standard of living comes down in the sense that his riches that he formerly consumed on himself before he became a Christian, are now prompted by the grace of God to be directed toward others (See com-

ments Rm 12:1,2; Gl 2:20). When one so directs his material blessings toward others, then God spiritually blesses this one in his giving (See comments Mt 6:19-21; see Pv 23:5).

9:12,13 *Thanksgivings to God:* Not only would the contribution benefit the famine-stricken victims of Judea, such would also cause men to thank God for working in the lives of men. They would see that Christians believed in the one true and living God because His grace in them moved them to lovingly consider others before themselves (See comments Jn 13:34,35; 1 Jn 4:19). Therefore, every time a contribution is made, God is to be thanked for working in the hearts of men. ***Proof of this ministry:*** The contribution of the Achaians was evidence of their sincere obedience to the gospel (Compare Mt 5:16). ***Confession of the gospel:*** They believed the gospel, and thus, they obeyed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4; Rm 6:3-6). Others were glorifying God because of their obedience to the gospel, and now, they were glorifying God because of their contribution to the Judean brethren. ***Liberality:*** When one becomes a Christian, he comes into a fellowship of sharing (See comments At 2:44,45; 4:32-37; see Hb 13:16).

9:14 *Grace of God in you:* The grace of God in them was manifested by their willingness to serve God. Paul wanted the Achaians to know that other brethren were praying for them and wanted to meet them. It seems that the disciples in Achaia had become well-known in the 1st century because they came out of the idolatry of their society through their obedience to the gospel. Because of their reputation, it was important that they manifest in their lives the spirit of true Christianity.

9:15 *Indescribable gift:* The gift of God that is beyond human explanation is His grace that He manifested to man through the cross for the salvation of man (See Jn 3:16;

4:10; Rm 6:23; 8:32; Ti 2:11; Js 1:17). Men do not normally behave as God did through grace. He loved us when we did not deserve loving (Rm 5:8). Jesus died for us when we deserved no gift because of our sin against God. Therefore, it is by grace that we are saved (See comments Rm 5:1,2; Ep 2:1-10).

Paul's Defense Of His Apostleship

(10:1 – 12:13)

Outline: (1) Spiritual warfare of the Christian (10:1-18), (2) Sacrificial preaching of the gospel (11:1-15), (3) Boasting in one's weaknesses (11:16 – 12:13)

Chapter 10

SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF THE CHRISTIAN

It is in this discussion that Paul now warns some disciples in Achaia that he is coming. And when he comes, he must carry out his responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle on those who continue in their denial of his apostleship. He had already taught stern lessons through the Corinthian letters. Now it was time to use the rod of a Christ-sent apostle (1 Co 4:21).

10:1,2 Appeal to you: Paul pleaded with them to correct those who were defiant in order that he not have to come to them with the rod of discipline. **Bold toward you:** As a Christ-sent apostle with the responsibility to deliver apostates to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, Paul would have to exercise the responsibility of his apostleship when he was among them (See 13:2,10; 1 Co 4:21; 1 Tm 1:20).

Against some: The problem was with the entire group of disciples only in the sense that they tolerated the arrogant defiance of a few brothers. The 1 Corinthian letter motivated the majority to act on Paul's instructions concerning matters of immorality among them. However, in reference to the defiance of some who rejected the authority of Paul's apostleship, the disciples were still unequally yoked with those who opposed Paul (6:14-18). **According to the flesh:**

Those brothers with fleshly minds assumed that everyone else lived and thought according to their carnal thinking. Those who are dishonest think all men are dishonest. Therefore, Paul's opponents assumed that he was walking according to worldly desires because they were walking in this manner.

10:3,4 In this world we must live in a physical body. However, this does not mean that our desires are directed toward satisfying the lusts of the flesh. Our warfare is spiritual, and thus, we fight a spiritual war with Satan, though we live in the flesh. *Weapons of our warfare:* Since the Christian's battle is against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places, the weapons of his warfare are spiritual (1 Co 9:7; 1 Tm 1:18; See comments Ep 6:11-16; 1 Th 5:8). The power of the Christian is strong against the works of Satan because the power of his weaponry originates from God, not man (vs 8; 13:10; Jr 1:10; At 7:22; 1 Co 2:5).

10:5 *Casting down imaginations:* Through the power of the word of God one is able to cast down false philosophies and theologies of men (1 Co 1:19; 2 Tm 4:1-5; Hb 4:12). Error is cast down when men seek truth (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). The Christian is in a war with the deceptive beliefs of witchcraft, false science, false religions, and man's ignorance of the truth. It is the work of the spiritual leaders of the body of Christ to build up the body in truth in order that members not be tossed to and fro by the onslaught of false teachings that prevail in the minds of the deceived (See comments Ep 4:11-16).

10:6 When Paul arrived in Achaia, he would unleash discipline on all those who would not submit in obedience to Christ (1 Co 4:21). This would be accomplished after the obedient in Corinth were made known. The Achaians' obedience would be complete when they disfellowshipped from the church those opponents of Paul who refused to

repent of their arrogance against God's representative.

10:7-9 If they would judge by seeing the obvious, then they would see that Paul was speaking the truth (See 5:12; 1 Co 1:12; 14:37). ***We are Christ's:*** Paul was living the sacrificial life, and thus, he manifested in his behavior that he had given his entire life to the Lord (Rm 12:1,2; 1 Co 3:23; Gl 2:20). ***Authority ... for edification:*** The "rod" of power that the Christ-sent apostles had for the purpose of disciplining the church was given to the apostles for the purpose of building up the church, not tearing it down (13:10; see comments At 5:1-11; 1 Co 4:4). They were given the responsibility to unleash this power on those who opposed God's work to establish the early church. If an unrepentant Christian was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, then he would be taught that one not endanger the flock of God (1 Tm 1:20). However, the responsibility of the apostles in these matters was exercised only when members manifested defiance of God's designated authority of the apostles. Therefore, if Paul had to come to Achaia and exercise his responsibility as an apostle of Christ, then he would not be ashamed of having to exercise what he was commissioned to do in reference to disciplining those who defiled the church of God. ***Terrify you through my letters:*** It was not Paul's desire to frighten the faithful majority among the Achaian disciples. However, he intended to frighten those who were defiant against God's work.

10:10 The opponents of Paul accused that his letters were stern, but mocked by saying that his personal presence was weak (1 Co 2:3,4; Gl 4:13). They misinterpreted the meekness of one who maintained control of the power that was invested in him and the other apostles to discipline the early church. However, those who questioned his responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle to unleash the power of God on defiant men, were sorely wrong in their estima-

tion and determination of Paul to correct the Achaian problem. Paul here reassures them that he is able and willing to exercise all his God-given responsibility to save the Corinthian disciples from the clutches of dictatorial leaders. No one individual will be spared the disciplining rod of God that would be exercised through Paul in order to preserve the faithful majority of the body.

10:11 The warning here is to those who would assume that Paul's coming would be as it was in the past. If they understood that his letters were stern, then they must understand that his presence among them would be stern in reference to those who were defiant against the work of God (See comments 1 Co 4:4,5; 1 Tm 1:20). If some among them continued in their rebellion, then they would suffer the sternness of the power of God.

10:12 It is the nature of those who have constructed their own religion to establish their own standards by which they judge one another (See intro. to Gl). Since the thinking of the legalistic religionist is based on the performance of law and meritorious good works, then those who adhere to such a belief tend to be competitive. They tend to be competitive with one another concerning conformity to the established standards by which all adherents of the religion must conform in order to remain loyal to the system of religion (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9). In churches where power struggles exist and personalities clash, there is envious competition between those who would presume to be leaders. Throughout the maneuvers of church politics, carnally minded members seek for positions of control, and thus, they end up stealing the sheep of God away from the one Lord Jesus Christ (See comments At 20:29,30; 1 Pt 5:1-5). Paul's answer to such autocratic thinking and carnal behavior is not to involve oneself in such matters (See comments Ti 3:9-11). Those who would are simply not wise. They have manifested their lack of wisdom by

turning the fellowship of the church into an opportunity to play political games in power struggles. The wise disciple will refuse to participate in such spiritually immature behavior and worldly mentality by focusing his life on humbly serving others.

10:13 *Not boast ... beyond our measure:* In order to defend his work, Paul says that he will confine his report to the works of his life. He will not report the works of his life in a competitive spirit, nor with a boastful attitude. Since he is judged only by God, then he neither needs to compete with others, nor ask for the approval of others in order to do his work (Compare comments Gl 2:6-10). He thus mentions the hardships of his work in order to proclaim how God had worked in his life. ***As far as you:*** Paul's boasting would include the very existence of the Achaian church. It would include the Achaians because God worked through Paul to bring them into the membership of the global family of God. At the time Paul wrote this epistle, they were members of the family, and thus, they were involved in the work of Paul.

10:14 *Not overextending ourselves:* Paul, and those who worked with him, would not report on those accomplishments that were outside their personal efforts. Paul would not try to exalt his work by adding to his reports the accomplishments of others. He could report concerning the accomplishments of others, but on the basis of giving honor to whom honor is due (Rm 13:7). Keep in mind that Paul's ministry was not localized with one group of disciples. He did not work as the self-appointed false leaders who were intimidating the disciples into conforming to their standards of performance. As a Christ-sent apostle, he maintained a ministry that extended to the global church, of which the Achaian disciples were a part. ***Gospel of Christ:*** Paul preached the death of Jesus for the sins of man and His burial and resurrection for our hope (3:5,6; see comments 1 Co 15:1-4).

10:15 *Your faith is increased:* When the faith of the disciples is increased, they will do what Paul hopes they will do as explained in verse 16. ***Increased by you:*** Though Paul's opponents boasted in other men's labors, he confined his reporting to what he had personally accomplished (1:14; 9:3; 12:1; compare Rm 15:20). The spiritual and numerical growth of the Achaian church, therefore, would expand his boasting because the Christians in Achaia were the result of his preaching the gospel (1 Co 1:23; 15:1,2).

10:16 As the Achaian Christians assumed their responsibility to evangelize the world because of their growth in faith, they would support Paul in order to allow him to go beyond them to preach the gospel in other regions (See comments Ph 4:10-18). If they did such, then they would increase the realm of his accomplishments in preaching the gospel to the lost.

10:17,18 *Boast in the Lord:* One should not glory in order to emphasize his own abilities to perform. He should glory on the basis that he is in the Lord, and thus, it is the Lord working through him (See Is 65:16; Jr 9:23,24; 1 Co 1:31). When we boast in order to bring glory to Jesus, then we know that our lives are about Jesus, not ourselves. ***Whom the Lord commends:*** One is neither justified nor commended to the Lord on the basis of his own performance of law or meritorious good deeds (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; Ep 2:1-10). One is not so commended simply because God cannot be placed in debt to either save or glorify on the basis of human performance (Rm 11:6). Those who glorify themselves before God on the basis of their performance are establishing their own standards, and thus, they are arrogantly asking God to accept their standards as payment for their salvation. In comparison to the righteousness of the good God, there is no righteous person (Rm 3:9,10,23). No man can stand righteous before God on the merit of his own works of law or good deeds.

He cannot because no man can perform either law or good deeds in order to demand justification for sin. Therefore, we cannot establish our own standards of performance, and then, measure ourselves righteous or good before God on the basis of our standards. Commending of one's self before God on the basis of humanly devised standards is futile (vs 12; 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; see Pv 27:2). One can boast only insofar as the grace of God has worked in his life to move him to respond to the will of God (Rm 2:29; 1 Co 4:5; see comments Gl 2:20).

Chapter 11

SACRIFICIAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

11:1 *A little foolishness:* Paul's defiant opponents had established a political atmosphere among themselves in which they compared themselves with themselves (10:12-17). They thus sought to impress other disciples by their works. In the following discussion, Paul portrays his works in the Lord in reference to himself and God. He is not seeking to join the political fellowship of the self-commending leadership. He is individually portraying what each individual Christian should do in his personal relationship with God. However, it appears that he was somewhat embarrassed by having to so boast in order to shame self-commending leaders. Nevertheless, he feels that he should record his labors for Christ in order to refute the pride by which others were conducting themselves.

11:2 *Godly jealousy:* As their spiritual father who provided the opportunity for them to obey the gospel (1 Co 4:15; see Ep 5:26), Paul sought to care for them in order to protect them from the evil conduct of those who would take advantage of their innocence (Gl 4:17). He sought to continue his teaching influence of the church in order to present them before God without blemish through the blood of Jesus (Cl 1:28; Jd 24; see Lv 21:13). ***Betrothed:*** As a father

would present his daughter for marriage, so Paul, through the Achaians' obedience to the gospel, espoused them as a pure virgin to God (Hs 2:19; 1 Co 4:15).

11:3 *Eve:* Eve was deceived by Satan to eat of the forbidden fruit (Gn 3:4,13; Jn 8:44; 1 Th 3:5; 1 Tm 2:14). It is worthy to note that Paul here affirms the existence of Adam and Eve and the fall of man through the deception of Eve. If one would deny the Genesis account of these events in the beginning of human history, then he must deny the inspiration of Paul. Philosophies as the evolution of man deny the creation of the first man and woman and their fall through sin. Such false philosophies deny the inspiration of Paul and all inspired writers who confirm the creation account of Genesis. ***Corrupted:*** The Achaians were in danger of accepting without question the deceptive lies of Paul's opponents (See Ep 6:24; Cl 2:4,8; 1 Tm 1:3). If they did, then their minds would have been corrupted (See comments 3 Jn 9,10).

11:4 *Another Jesus ... a different gospel:* Those who preach salvation by works of law and meritorious good deeds were actually preaching another Jesus and gospel. They were preaching the insufficiency of the grace of God by affirming that meritorious deeds must supplement the grace of God (See comments Gl 1:6-9). ***You bear with him:*** Legalistic religion is appealing in the sense that it is a quick fix to satisfy one's religiosity. If one compares himself with the accepted standard of legal requirements that are established by a legal system of religion, then his confidence is in his performance of his own catechism. If we seek to establish our own religious codes of behavior, then we often digress in our beliefs to reject the law of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). The legal system of religiosity that was presented to the Achaians by Paul's opponents was appealing. It was appealing because they could measure their performance by the standards of the legalistic teach-

ers (See 10:12-16; see comments Rm 3:20; 11:6; Ep 2:1-10).

11:5 *Inferior:* Paul was not inferior in reference to any Christ-sent apostle simply because it was the same God who worked through all the apostles. ***Eminent apostles:*** In the early church, there were Christ-sent apostles and church-sent apostles. The eminent apostles were the Christ-sent apostles who were personally called by Jesus to be His special witnesses to the world. In this context Paul is possibly being sarcastic in reference to those false apostles in Achaia who claimed the authority of a Christ-sent apostle. He was not less than them because of what he states in the following verse.

11:6 *Not in knowledge:* Though he might not have been the most eloquent speaker, Paul's responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle was based on the inspiration of what he said (2:14; 4:6; 10:5; 1 Co 12:8; Ep 3:4). ***Thoroughly manifested:*** Through the miraculous works of God that were manifested in the life of Paul while in Achaia, the Achaians clearly knew that God was with him (12:12; see comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). They could not question the divine approval of his apostleship.

11:7 *I have preached ... without charge:* Paul handed out no invoices for the work of his ministry. He humbled himself by supporting himself while preaching the gospel (See 12:13; At 18:1-3; 1 Co 9:18). The false apostles in their midst were evidently extracting pay for their work among them. There seems to be irony in how Paul here rebukes both the false apostles and the church. He asked them if he should be considered unjust because he supported himself while preaching the gospel to them.

11:8 *I robbed other churches:* This was certainly a devastating blow to any pride the Achaians may have had in reference to their own introverted concern for themselves. While they were concerned about their own well-being by supporting themselves and false apostles among them, other

churches sacrificed in order that the gospel be preached to them. On Paul's initial evangelistic visit to Corinth, we can understand the principle of not taking contributions from new converts (See comments 3 Jn 7,8). Paul did not take contributions from the new converts of Corinth on his initial visit in order that he not be accused of preaching for money. However, he stayed in the area at least a year and a half on the first visit (At 18:11). He had possibly visited Achaia at another time previous to the visit he was about to make. At some time during their initial conversion, six to seven years before the writing of this epistle, they were involved in church robbery because they did not support him. Neither did they support Timothy or Titus on their visits to edify them. Disciples, therefore, who allow the teachers who minister to them to be supported continually by disciples outside the local region are thus robbing others for their own benefit. If a local group of disciples fosters the practice of allowing their teachers to be supported by others, then Paul is saying that such a practice is church robbery. Teachers who allow such to continue are discouraging the spiritual growth of local disciples to accept their financial responsibilities (See comments 1 Co 9:7-13; Gl 6:6; 1 Tm 5:17,18). The reason Paul brought up this point was to shame them. The Philippian disciples supported Paul, Silas and Timothy within only a few weeks after they were converted (See comments Ph 4:10-18). The Achaians never took the initiative to make an effort.

11:9 *Present with you and in need:* Paul continued to shame these Christians for their inconsiderate behavior. When he was in their presence, he was in need of physical sustenance. However, they did not care for him, for he did not want to be a financial burden to them, lest he be accused of preaching for money (See At 20:33). ***The brethren ... from Macedonia:*** While in Achaia, Paul worked with his hands in order to provide for his own physical

necessities. What he lacked in making tents, brethren came from Macedonia with contributions to support him (See comments Ph 4:10-17). Whenever he stayed in a particular location on his journeys, Paul supported himself by making tents (At 18:3; 20:33; 2 Th 3:7,8). What he lacked was often made up by other Christians who supported him. In the case of the Achaians, Paul worked to support himself, while the new disciples in Macedonia sent help in order to supplement his tentmaking. ***I will keep myself:*** Paul was coming again to Achaia. In order to emphasize his point of not taking their money, he here states that he will still not take their support when in their presence. If they wanted to support him while he preached to others outside their local area, then they could. However, while he was in their presence he would not allow them to support him in order to shame them for their inconsiderate behavior. There seems to be a good lesson here in reference to discipleship. Those disciples who support only those teachers who minister to their own needs, should seriously consider the principle that Paul here practiced in his own life. When he was preaching to the lost, he accepted the support of the church. However, when he was locally teaching, he supported himself (See At 20:33).

11:10 *This boasting:* Because of his practice of not allowing local disciples to support him while in a local situation, the self-appointed false teachers among the Achaians could not argue against the sincerity of his work. Those who support themselves locally while they teach, therefore, have a great witness of their sincerity. They cannot be accused of preaching for money. Paul never boasted concerning the receiving of payment for preaching, though he had a right to receive payment (1 Co 9:14). He took no pride in being “full-time” for the church. He only boasted when he preached while supporting himself. The indication is, therefore, that honor is deserved by the preacher

who preaches the gospel while supporting himself.

11:11 Paul was not concerned about the judgment of others concerning either his work or motives. His personal relationship, as a Christ-sent apostle, was with God alone. And so it should be with every evangelist. One's work as an evangelist is not determined by men who know nothing or little about being called by God to do the work of an evangelist. The evangelist is called by his freewill commitment to accept the commission of Jesus to preach the gospel to the world. Those who have not accepted such a destiny for their lives do not understand such commitment. It is for this reason that the evangelist understands that he is sent out by God, not man.

11:12 *Continue to do:* Paul was going to Achaia. On this trip he again would not receive their support. He would not in order to keep his accusers in the same uncomfortable situation they were at the time of his writing. They claimed to be sacrificially serving as Paul, and yet, they were being supported by the church. They accused Paul of preaching for hire, and yet, they were doing the same (See 1 Co 9:12). Paul made tents and they made accusations.

11:13 *False apostles:* These self-proclaimed apostles were neither commissioned by Jesus nor by the church. (See At 15:24; Rm 16:18; Gl 1:7; Ph 1:15; 2 Pt 2:1; Rv 2:2). ***Deceitful workers:*** They manifested a religiosity that came from a heart of evil motives (Ph 3:2; Ti 1:10). They professed to be leaders of the church when at the same time they were accusing the true leaders as Paul, Timothy and Titus. ***Masquerading themselves as apostles:*** They were classifying themselves in the category of the Christ-sent apostles, and thus assuming the responsibility of the Christ-sent apostles. The truth was, however, that they were neither church-sent nor Christ-sent apostles because of the very fact that they had never gone forth to preach the gospel anywhere. They stayed at home and soaked up the support

of the church, while at the same time, they made accusations against the true apostles who were going forth preaching the gospel to the lost.

11:14 *Satan masquerades himself:* This is the same Greek word that is used in verse 13. It is not that Satan was incarnated into the flesh of man. Paul metaphorically explains that Satan uses deceived men through whom he works to deceive others (Mt 24:24; 2 Th 2:3-12). Therefore, Satan was using the self-proclaimed false apostles of Achaia as an opportunity to deceive members of the body.

11:15 *His ministers:* The false apostles were actually the servants of Satan. Brethren who have been deceived by their own self-righteousness and appointment as leaders, are evil workers whom Satan is using in order to deceive the church (See Rm 16:17,18; 1 Pt 5:8). ***Whose end:*** If one uses the church as the occasion and opportunity to exercise his desire to lord over men, and thus misdirects the flock of God according to his own religious traditions, then his end will be the same as the one he is actually following, that is, Satan (See Mt 25:41; see comments Mt 7:21-23). Leaders must caution themselves about leading the flock in a manner whereby they are actually stealing the sheep of God (See comments At 20:29,30; 1 Pt 5:2,3).

BOASTING IN ONE'S WEAKNESSES

11:16 Paul's purpose here was not to boast in order to compare himself with the false teachers, and thus be validated as sincere before the Achaians. His purpose was to manifest the true life of all those who would be the true disciples in the social environment in which they had to carry out the great commission of Jesus (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). If one was a true apostle—whether Christ-sent or church-sent—then his life would have been as that which Paul here explains of his own life. The conceited false apostles were boasting of their sufferings before others in

order to exalt themselves. Paul mentions the turmoil of his life in this context in order to manifest the foolishness of their sufferings in comparison to the sufferings of a true apostle of Christ. To do such was somewhat embarrassing to Paul. Nevertheless, such had to be done in order to shame those who proclaimed themselves to be apostles of Christ, but were not.

11:17,18 *I do not speak as the Lord:* Paul did not consider his manner by which he answered the false apostles as the way the Lord defended Himself against His enemies. In Paul's situation, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use his life as a testimony against those who claimed to be Christ-sent apostles. He wanted to stop the mouths of those who had exalted themselves to be apostles of Christ. If they would compare their lives with the lives of the true apostles, then they would be ashamed.

11:19 *Gladly tolerate fools:* The Achaian disciples possibly prided themselves in the fact that they overlooked the error of some (See 1 Co 5). However, they were being indifferent to sin and false teachers, and thus, they were not wise. They claimed to be wise in order to make proper judgments in reference to those who were true apostles of Christ. But they put up with the foolishness of those defiant disciples among them who claimed to be apostles, and yet, were attacking the true apostles (See 1 Co 4:10).

11:20,21 *Brings you into bondage:* They were being brought into bondage by the intimidation of the false apostles who bound on them that which God had not bound (See comments At 15:10; Rm 16:17,18; Gl 5:1,2). ***I am bold also:*** The false apostles among them were bold to affirm that they were apostles of Christ. They boasted of their own infirmities. However, Paul wanted to remind them of his personal life, as well as, the life that he lived as a Christ-sent apostle.

11:22-28 Paul was more than all the claims by which

his opponents exalted themselves in their assumed positions among the disciples (At 22:3; Rm 11:1 Ph 3:4-6). **Labors:** See 1 Co 15:10. **Beatings:** See At 9:16. **Prisons:** See 6:5; At 16:23ff. **Death:** See At 21:31. **Lashes:** See At 16:22 (Compare Dt 25:1-3). **Stoned:** See At 14:5,19 (Compare Ex 19; Lv 20; Dt 13,14). **Shipwreck:** We do not know when this shipwreck took place in the ministry of Paul. The incident of Acts 27:1-44 took place after he wrote this epistle. **Perils:** See At 9:23,24; 13:45,50; 14:5,19; 17:5,13; 19:23; 20:3; 1 Th 2:15. **False brethren:** See Gl 2:4. **Weariness and hardship:** See 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8. **Sleeplessness:** See 6:5; At 20:31. **Hunger and thirst:** See 1 Co 4:11; Ph 4:12. **Fastings:** See At 9:9; 13:2,3; 14:23. **Concern for all the churches:** One of the major burdens of the evangelist was his concern for the faithfulness of new disciples (2:12,13; 7:12; 12:20; At 20:18; Gl 4:11; 1 Th 3:10).

11:29-33 Paul states that he feels empathy and great concern for those who are still weak as new Christians (1 Co 8:9,13; 9:22). If someone stumbles as a result of the puffed up or unloving attitudes of some brethren, then he suffers indignation. Paul affirmed that his sufferings only manifested his weakness (12:5,9,10). They manifested his dependence on God to protect him. He was not boasting about things that he had not experienced. God knew his sufferings (See At 9:15). **In Damascus:** At the very beginning of Paul's ministry, there were plots to kill him (See At 9:19-25). However, God protected him throughout his ministry until he had accomplished his God-given destiny.

Chapter 12

12:1 Not profitable: In the previous discussion, Paul spoke of the hardships of his life during his mission journeys. He did so because of some arrogant false apostles in the midst of the disciples who were boasting concerning their trials. Paul here states that such boasting does not

produce spiritual growth. However, his reporting of the nature of his apostleship in the preceding and following contexts does put to silence those who would compare their lives with Paul for the purpose of dismissing his apostleship.

Visions and revelations: Paul now turns to special visions that were given to him from the Lord (At 16:9; 18:9; 22:17,18; 23:11; 26:13-15; 27:23) and revelations of truth that were to be taught (At 9:3-6; 1 Co 14:6; Gl 1:11,12; 2:2; Ep 3:3-6).

12:2,3 I know a man: Paul speaks of himself as another man who had this experience in order to humble himself to God who brought him into the vision. **Fourteen years ago:** The date of this visionary experience would probably have been between A.D. 40-42. **Whether in ... out of the body:** The vision was so real that Paul could not determine if he was actually taken in bodily form unto heaven and into paradise. If he did not know whether he was in bodily form or in a mental state of exaltation, then certainly we would not know. **To the third heaven:** The Greek word *heos* means that he was caught up “even to” the heavenly realm. We would be cautious about saying that this is a place or location. God is omnipresent as spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus, He does not dwell here or there as we would. We would have to assume that Paul uses these words in a metaphorical sense because God’s realm of dwelling is not as ours, for we are confined to physical bodies. Therefore, whatever “caught up even to” would signify we must consider the fact that Paul is discussing a transition from the physical realm of dwelling of man to the spiritual realm of the dwelling of God. **Third heaven:** According to the theology of the Jews, the third heaven was the realm in which God dwelt. The Jews had the concept of three heavens. There was the first heaven of the birds and clouds. The second heaven was the place of the sun, moon and stars. The third heaven was the dwelling of God. Paul was

thus “caught up” unto, but not into, the third heaven.

12:4 *Even into Paradise:* The Greek word for “into” is *eis*. Paul was brought into the realm of Paradise, though he was only “caught up” unto the third heaven. Paradise is the realm of dwelling of the disembodied saints (See Lk 23:43; Rv 2:7). It is the realm of dwelling with the Lord in His presence (5:8; Ph 1:23; see comments Lk 16:19-31). Paul’s experience concerning this personal event cannot be questioned, though we do not understand the nature of what he experienced. ***Inexpressible words:*** He passed from our realm of dwelling that can be defined by the words of our dictionary, into a realm that cannot be described by the words of our world. Therefore, there was no possible way for Paul to describe what he experienced or saw. God, therefore, told him not to try. He could explain that he experienced something that was beyond this world, but he could not explain what it was.

12:5 *Of such a one:* Since the vision did not happen as a result of Paul’s will, or was he under his own control throughout its occurrence, he could not take any credit for it. He was totally under the control of God throughout the entire experience. However, he did have control over the personal experiences of his life. He had taken the initiative to preach the gospel to the world, and thus, he accepted the credit for what transpired as a result of his preaching.

12:6 *Say the truth:* Paul would not speak of himself in a manner by which he would exaggerate concerning his personal experiences. He would speak exactly what happened. However, he was cautious about this lest he exaggerate concerning his experiences to others. He seeks to relate to us, therefore, only those experiences that manifested his weakness. If there were any exaggerations, then his weaknesses would be exaggerated.

12:7 *Thorn in the flesh:* We are not told what this physical infirmity was. Numerous possibilities have been

presented by commentators. However, the point is not what it was, but the fact that Paul affirms that it persisted in his flesh by the will of God in order that he not exalt himself in reference to his choices to undergo great hardships in preaching the gospel. The thorn in the flesh kept him humble. Paul considered it a “messenger” (*angelos*) of Satan that would buffet him lest he exalt himself beyond what he should. Thus, God allowed Satan to inflict Paul with this thorn in the flesh. Satan was the true source of the infliction, though God allowed such to happen. The world is under the control of God, but God will allow Satan to inflict suffering. In the end, however, the suffering prepares characters of gold who will inhabit heaven (1 Pt 1:6,7).

12:8 *Implored the Lord:* Sometimes our prayers are not answered. Paul made three specific requests that his physical infirmity be relieved, but God did not relieve him (See Dt 3:23; Mt 26:44). After the third prayer, he ceased his prayers for relief. After the third prayer was unanswered, Paul concluded that God would not remove the thorn. He was thus content with his physical infirmity, but continued his ministry. Physical infirmities remind us that we live in a physical world, but are looking forward to a realm of dwelling wherein there will be no pain (Rv 21:4). If there were no pain in this world, then we would not desire a heavenly realm of dwelling that is free of pain.

12:9 *My grace is sufficient:* This one statement concerning the grace of God manifests God’s sufficiency to deal with all aspects of man. God is able to deliver us from this physical world. God is able to deliver us from the power of sin and death. Therefore, whether in the midst of physical suffering or mourning over our sin, we must trust that God is able to deliver us. Such trust in God’s grace will carry us through times of hardship. Paul learned, therefore, to trust in God’s power to deliver. He did not trust in

his own ingenuity as did the false apostles (11:30). ***Boast in my weaknesses:*** When Paul spoke of his infirmities, he was actually glorifying the power of God who was able to help him live with his infirmities (1 Pt 4:14). If we boast concerning our accomplishments, then we have the tendency to glory in our own ability to perform.

12:10 *I take pleasure in weaknesses:* The point is not that he willingly endured persecution and hardships. The lesson is that his weaknesses and infirmities glorified the name of Jesus. ***I am strong:*** Through his hardships his weaknesses were manifested (See Rm 5:3; 8:35). However, when his weaknesses were manifested, the power of Christ was also manifested because it was through the power of Christ that he was delivered (13:4; see Ph 4:13). Therefore, when he was weak through his infirmities, he was made strong through the power of Christ. He was made strong because the infirmities and hardships drove him to trust in God for deliverance and not in himself.

12:11 *You have compelled me:* The faithful majority in Achaia should have been defending Paul in the face of his opponents. Because they were intimidated to keep silent, Paul had to make his own defense through this letter. Therefore, the silence of the majority allowed the minority to reign over the church, and thus, move Paul to defend himself through this epistle. Good brethren must take the initiative to defend good brethren who are under attack by those who are politically motivated with selfish ambition. ***Eminent apostles:*** Reference here would be to the original twelve apostles. Except for possibly Peter, none of the Achaians had met the original apostles (See 11:5).

12:12 *Signs of an apostle:* These were the miraculous signals of God that would confirm a Christ-sent apostle. Those Christians on whom a Christ-sent apostle's had laid hands, received the gifts of the Spirit (See Mk 16:17-20; At 8:18; 1 Co 12:9-11; Hb 2:3,4). However, God gave special

miraculous authority to the Christ-sent apostles in order that they be proved to be personally sent from Christ. Since the word “signs” is here in the plural, we must assume that there was more than one sign. These signs would include the ability to impart the miraculous gifts (At 8:18). They would include the power to deliver one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Co 5:3-5; 1 Tm 1:20), strike blind (At 13:6-12), and possibly strike dead (See At 5:1-11). They would also include raising one from the dead (At 9:36-42; 20:9-12). They would include special miracles (See At 19:11,12). The Achaians knew the special powers that were manifested among them through Paul. They could not question God’s miraculous witness through him. The false apostles among them could not do what he had done while among them.

12:13 Since the Achaian disciples were the result of the preaching of a Christ-sent apostle, they were not inferior to any members of the body in the matter of possessing the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. ***Not a burden:*** Because of the nature of the Achaian society to support hireling teachers, Paul did not allow them to support him while in their presence. He possibly knew also of the situation that would eventually arise among them. The situation that arose was the presence of hireling false apostles in their midst. Since he did not receive support from them while in their presence, then he had the opportunity to challenge these false apostles to work also with their own hands as he did in order to preach. ***This wrong:*** The principle of supporting the teacher is both an Old Testament and New Testament principle. It is the responsibility of the ones who sit at the feet of the teacher to support the teacher financially (See 11:7-9; 1 Co 9:12-14; see comments Gl 6:6). Paul says he wronged the Achaians by not allowing them this opportunity, for he supported himself by making tents (At 18:3). However, he did such because it was expedient at the time

due to the situation of hireling teachers in their society. The society was corrupt with hireling teachers. Paul thus knew that the problem of hireling teachers would arise during his stay there. Since it was his common method of work to support himself when located for any period of time in one location, he did such in Corinth in order to cut off accusations against him. His decision to support himself proved correct.

Paul's Defense Of Another Visit

(12:14 – 13:14)

Outline: (1) Paul's coming visit to Corinth (12:14-21), (2) Examine yourselves (13:1-10), (3) Final exhortations (13:11-14)

PAUL'S COMING VISIT TO ACHAIA

12:14 *Third time:* The first visit of Paul to Achaia resulted in many being born again (At 18:1). He made a second visit that is not recorded in the book of Acts that he referred to as a "painful visit" (See 2:1; 12:21). On that visit he seems to have disciplined some disciples through the power of a Christ-sent apostle. He is now coming for a third visit. ***Not be a burden:*** On this visit he will again refrain from taking their financial support (See At 20:33; 1 Co 10:24-33). He wanted them and the false apostles in their midst to know that he did not preach for money. On the contrary, he would be coming as a father who cares for his children (1 Co 4:14; Gl 4:19).

12:15 *Gladly spend and be spent:* Paul willingly gave the totality of his life to the preaching of the gospel and edification of the one body (See comments Gl 2:20; see 1:6; Jn 10:11; Rm 9:3; Ph 2:17; Cl 1:24; 1 Th 2:8; 2 Tm 2:10). ***Less I am loved:*** This was meant to be sarcastic. What Paul is saying is that the more he sacrifices his own life for the edification of the Achaians, the more their lack of love for him seems to be manifested. The statement was made to shame them. However, this would not be the case

with the majority, but with the minority who attacked both his character and work (6:12,13).

12:16-18 *I caught you by cunning:* Some had accused that if Paul did not personally take money from the disciples, then he would send others to take money. But this did not happen. When Paul sent Titus to them with the first letter, he did not take support from them (8:6,16-18). Therefore, the answer to the series of questions in these verses is “No.” Paul did not personally take support from them, neither did he send others to take it for him. Therefore, because some accused him of preaching for money—which he actually did not—the ungodly hearts of the accusers were discovered.

12:19 *We speak before God in Christ:* Paul was not in this context seeking to justify himself before God. He knew that God knew his heart and work. His life had been given to the preaching of the gospel to the lost and edification of the church (1 Co 10:33). Therefore, he did not need the approval of the Achaian disciples, nor anyone else (5:12). He was assured of his right standing before God, and thus, he was confident in his work (11:31). No man could find fault in his behavior in reference to his preaching of the gospel in Achaia. He manifested great wisdom in not taking support from them on his initial visit. He manifested great wisdom in not taking support from them as new converts. The fact that he had not taken support from them has given him the powerful argument he uses here in order to rebuke those among them who have evil minds and are quick to charge others with the same evil that is in their own hearts.

12:20 *As you would not wish:* It was Paul’s worry that on this third visit he would come to them and find a minority among them who were defiant and unrepentant. He would thus have to discipline them with the “rod” of a Christ-sent apostle (See comments 2:1,4; 13:2,10; 1 Co 4:21; 5:3-5; 1 Tm 1:20). In order to give them the opportu-

nity to correct those who had attitudes that needed discipline, he describes in this verse the character of those who will be disciplined when he comes.

12:21 *God will humble me:* As a Christ-sent apostle, it was not Paul's choice concerning the use of the disciplinary responsibility that God had invested in him to discipline sinful brethren. As with the case of two Christians who died before Peter in Acts 5:1-6, so in this case God would carry out through the apostle, the physical discipline of sinning brethren. The occasion would cause even Paul to mourn (2:1,4). Therefore, Paul wrote this letter in order to urge them to repent before his coming (13:2). Those who would suffer would be those who practiced the immorality of uncleanness, fornication and lewdness. When Paul came, therefore, it would be the brethren who practiced these and similar sins who would suffer from the discipline of God. The occasion would not be a time of rejoicing, but one of mourning because of those who would not repent.

Chapter 13

EXAMINE YOURSELVES

13:1 *Third time:* There is no record of the second visit of Paul to Achaia (12:14). His initial visit was recorded in Acts 18. The only other possible visit he could have made was during his two-year stay in Ephesus on the third mission journey on which he now was when writing this letter and the 1 Corinthian letter (At 19:8-10). ***Two or three witnesses:*** Paul was on his way to correct any remaining problems that persisted in reference to the false apostles (12:20). When judgments were made in the Old Testament, two or three witnesses confirmed the judgments (Nm 35:30; Dt 17:6; 19:15; Mt 18:16; Jn 8:17; Hb 10:28). This practice was continued in reference to judgments among the early disciples.

13:2 *I will not spare:* Paul was finished with writing

letters of warning. Now it was time to exercise the discipline of a Christ-sent apostle upon those who would not repent (1:23; 10:11). The spiritual safety of the many outweighed the few defiant individuals among them who would not submit to the authority of God (See 10:2; 12:20,21). As in the case where disciples fell dead before the apostle Peter, so it would be in this case (See At 5:1-11). Ananias and Sapphira fell dead because of their lying to the Holy Spirit. In the case of the arrogant disciples to whom Paul wrote this letter, the discipline that would come through a Christ-sent apostle would be severe.

13:3,4 *Seek a proof:* The proof that Paul was a Christ-sent apostle was about to be made known again. However, this time it would not be the result of miraculous confirmation to the unbelievers (12:12). It would be miraculous validation to the believers as a result of Paul's delivering some disciples unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Tm 1:20). ***He lives by the power of God:*** Jesus submitted in His humanity to the will of man to crucify Him (See At 2:22-24; Ph 2:6-8; 1 Pt 3:18). However, Jesus was raised to have authority and power over all things (Rm 1:4; 6:4; 1 Co 6:14; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:5-11). Paul uses the example of Jesus' power after the resurrection as King of kings and Lord of lords to exemplify the power that Jesus can work through the apostles. ***Live with Him by the power of God:*** This statement surely sent emotional tremors through the minds of some in Achaia who understood the power of the supernatural that God worked through a Christ-sent apostle. Though Paul's humanity, and thus weakness, was manifested through the persecutions he endured (10:3,4; 11:30), his power would be manifested by God's work through him to discipline the defiant false apostles of Achaia (1 Tm 1:20). Paul was not willing that the purity of the church be sacrificed for the sake of being tolerant with those who denied the nature of the body of Christ. When he

came to them, therefore, it was time to purge the fellowship of the body of a virus that was eating away at the very Christ-like nature of the body of Christ. It was time for arrogant church leaders to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

13:5 *Examine yourselves:* Since Paul was coming to Corinth for the purpose of judgment, before he came he exhorted each member to examine himself in reference to what he had already written. Each member must determine for themselves if they were the servant of Christ, or the representative of Satan. ***That Jesus Christ is in you:*** This is a question. Each disciple must determine if Jesus reigns in his heart (Rm 8:10; Gl 2:20; 4:19; Cl 1:27; 2:7). Paul's point here is that Jesus would reign in their hearts insofar as they submitted to Paul's instructions through the inspired writings of his epistles. Paul has written to them the Spirit-inspired standard by which they must examine their lives. He is coming to determine if they measure up to the standard. If they did not, then they would be found to be counterfeit Christians (See 1 Co 9:27).

13:6,7 His actions of judgment in the coming visit would prove that he was qualified as an apostle. They would witness the proof of his apostleship by the discipline that would be carried out. ***Do what is honest:*** Paul exhorted them to repent in order that they not have to witness the proof of his apostleship by his discipline of those among them who refused to repent. He was willing to forego the proof of his apostleship in the area of discipline if they would repent before he came. They must do what is right, therefore, because such was what God desired. He was willing to appear disqualified as a Christ-sent apostle if they would only repent so he would not have to prove his apostleship by the exercising of disciplinary power.

13:8 Since the authority to exercise the power of God originated from God, all that the apostles did in exercising

their discipline of wayward disciples was for the purpose of preaching and defending the truth of the gospel.

13:9 Paul and the apostles were willing to be perceived to be weak for the sake of the church (1 Co 4:10). As long as the church remained spiritually strong, and thus disfellowshipped those who would destroy the church, then the apostles would not have to exercise their God-ordained power of discipline. Therefore, Paul chose to appear weak while the Achaians maintained their spiritual strength.

13:10 Paul's purpose for writing is here defined. He wrote in order to produce repentance among those who were false apostles, and thus, were leading the disciples away from the authority of Christ by the denial of the responsibility of the Christ-sent apostles (12:20; 1 Co 4:21). *Sharpness:* This does not refer to a stern sermon. Reference is to the responsibility to deliver one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Tm 1:20). *The Lord has given me for edification:* The purpose for the disciplinary responsibility of the Christ-sent apostles was not for destruction, but for the spiritual establishment of the church in the beginning generations of the 1st century. It was given in order that the newly born again disciples be edified in discipline. By our understanding of how God dealt with the early church through the apostles, the church today understands the seriousness by which God considers matters of sin. As God dealt directly with the punishment of sin in the beginning of the nation of Israel when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity, in the same way He dealt immediately and directly with sin in the early church. God knew that the Israelites would have difficulty in adopting the moral standards that were given on Mount Sinai. The Israelites had lived in Egyptian captivity for over four hundred years. When they initially came out of captivity, therefore, they needed the strict discipline of the Lord in order to rid their culture of idolatrous ways. The same principle applied to

the church. The 1st century culture was one of idolatry. The early Christians, therefore, needed to understand that they must refrain from being yoked with idolatry. They needed to know that when one obeyed the gospel, he had to cut his ties with idolatry. Through the Christ-sent apostles, therefore, God handed down strict discipline to those who would bring idolatrous behavior into the church. Even though God does not hand out immediate judgment on the church today, we must not be deceived into complacency that He will not eventually hand down judgment upon those brethren who sin (See Jn 5:28,29).

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

13:11 *Comfort ... one mind:* See Rm 12:16-18; 1 Co 1:10. When Christians live as one mind in peace with one another, they comfort one another. If there is turmoil among the disciples, then there will be no comfort with one another. It is for this reason that all things must be done in love (Cl 3:14,15). ***Live in peace:*** See Rm 15:33; Ep 6:23; Cl 3:12-17. The peace of God would continue with them as long as they determined to live at peace among themselves (Mt 5:9). Christians must not only live in peace with one another, they must work for peace. Peace comes when everyone is working together to preserve harmony among members. Blessed are those brethren who work for unity among brethren (Mt 5:9). Every Christian must make every effort to work for peace and harmony among the disciples.

13:12 *Holy kiss:* This affectionate greeting manifested the close fellowship that was maintained among the disciples of the early church (See At 20:37; Rm 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 1 Th 5:26; 1 Pt 5:14). Though Paul makes this an imperative, he is not binding a common custom of the 1st century on the church today. He is binding that which is signified by the custom. That which was signified was that

brethren receive one another. They must receive one another regardless of their differences of opinion (See comments Rm 14).

13:13,14 *Lord Jesus ... God ... Holy Spirit:* The Godhead is manifested through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though God is one, there have been three manifestations of God throughout history in order to carry out the eternal plan of God to save man. The Father manifested love to man through the giving of His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). Jesus manifested grace toward man through His sacrifice on the cross (Ti 2:11). The Holy Spirit has manifested fellowship through the inspiration of holy writers to inscribe Scripture upon which fellowship could be maintained (1 Jn 1:3). Because God has manifested Himself in three areas of work in order to bring about the eternal redemption of man, we must not be confused by what we do not understand. It is not impossible for us to understand how God can manifest Himself as three, and yet, be one God. There is no earthly illustration to picture fully the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God. We accept His oneness simply because God says that there is one God. He chose to manifest Himself as He is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in order to carry out the plan of redemption, and to nurture His children until the end of all things on earth. We must, therefore, be careful about using human terminology and experiences to define God. God is beyond the definition of the words of our dictionary. He is beyond the full comprehension of man. If He were not, then He would be no greater than our imagination. If He were no greater than our thinking, then He would be a god we have created after our own image. He would thus be no god at all.

ABBREVIATIONS**OLD TESTAMENT**

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**