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## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

1 Corinthians: *and our brother Sosthenes,*  
2 Corinthians: *and Timothy our brother,*

This time, it is Timothy who is with him as he writes the letter. It is believed that Paul had sent Timothy to straighten things out at Corinth and that he had returned and reported to Paul what had been accomplished.

1 Corinthians: *To the church of God in Corinth,*  
2 Corinthians: *To the church of God in Corinth,*

1 Corinthians: *to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy,*

In the second letter he omits the part about being sanctified. It was not necessary to remind them of this the second time. It was essential is what he had to say in the first letter.

1 Corinthians: *together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours:*  
2 Corinthians: *together with all the saints throughout Achaia:*

The second letter, like the first, was meant for other churches besides the one at Corinth. While it appears that the second letter was addressed to a smaller audience, it is probably only a pragmatic difference - it was not likely that it would be shared by churches other than Achaia. Paul did not know he was writing part of the New Testament. He could not foresee the extent to which this letter was shared. It was meant for you and I to share as well.

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

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*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

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2 Corinthians 01:03-07

The opening praise here is considerably different that that for his first letter. In the first letter his praise for the church was meant to be a springboard for chastizing them for their shortcomings. Here it is restricted to the subject of comforting others.

He begins by praising God - praising Him for the comfort He gives. The word comfort appears nine times in this passage. He begins by linking the word with the term compassion.

The KJV has mercy rather than compassion. The words are synonyms but there must be some difference.

*For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*compassion on whom I have compassion.*"

Romans 09:15

Mercy is a verb of action. When we have mercy on someone we do something. Compassion is a verb of feeling. God has feelings and, in this case, feelings of compassion for His people. It is a compassion based on love.

God's compassion is not just an idle concern. When He feels compassion for one of His, he responds with comfort. This term is from the Greek **parakaleo** (παρακαλεω) to call along side a person for the purpose of helping that person. It was sometimes used in a more technical sense of a lawyer who stands at a persons side to represent him.

*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

1 John 02:01

More often it is used of one who comes to anothers aid in order to comfort them by strengthening them and bearing them up. With this praise there is also a hidden admonition.

God *comforts us in all our troubles*. He helps is when we are in times of need. Just as God comforts us in times of troubles, we are to comfort others in their times of troubles. Note what follows. First there are sufferings which flow into our lives, then there is comfort which overflows.

*the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives  
through Christ our comfort overflows.*

The KJV has a more literal rendering, using the same verb for both phraese. Note the play on words in the NIV *flow over* and *overflow*. The verb means, literally, to superabound, to increase without measure. Whatever the sufferings we experience, God provides sufficient comfort to make up for it.

*If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation;* First their is distress when others need salvation and assurance. That compells us to action to see that the situation is corrected. Then *if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer*. When we are comforted that the problem has been corrected, then we can bring comfort to those who needed our attention since they, also, will suffer afflictions.

Paul concludes by noting that the Corinthians were now sharing with him in both afflictions and in comfort.

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*We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

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2 Corinthians 01:08-11

Paul now elaborates on this concept of affliction and its abatement through Christ's comfort. Paul informs them that he had hardships in Asia.

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*We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

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2 Corinthians 01:08-11

To illustrate the point, Paul gives us an example - his suffering in Asia. That Paul had troubles in Asia is a well attested fact.

*Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.*

Acts 16:06

At first, God spared Paul from what would await him in Asia.

*He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.*

Acts 19:22-31

Paul did not have a good ministry in Asia. It haunted him in later times.

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*The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them. When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place."*

Acts 21:26-28

Finally, writing at a later time, he writes to Timothy,

*You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

2 Timothy 01:15

Paul writes, "*We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.*" The words are emphatic. The KJV has pressed out of measure. First is the Greek word **hyperbole** (ὑπερβολή) which means, literally, to throw beyond something. In other words to go beyond where one intends to go. In this case, the going beyond is with respect to Paul's power (or ability) to be burdened. This is the Greek word **bareo** (βάρω) and is the source of our word barometer. In Asia, Paul suffered from pressures there were far beyond his ability to withstand.

Now, no one can stand such pressures - not even Paul. He says so. *We despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.* Despaired comes from an interesting Greek word, **exaporeo** (ἐξαπρέω) the prefix of which carries the meaning of totality. Together, it means to be utterly at a loss. We might say today that we are at "wits end." Paul despaired of his very life. Today we might say "I wish I had never been born." The phrase indicates the deepest dispare a person can feel. The word is found in the LXX once where we find the following:

*Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken my companions and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend.*

Psalms 88:14-18

One should read the entire Psalm to gain some insight into the afflictions Paul had to deal with.

How, then, was Paul able to cope and continue on? Paul answers the question with "*this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.*" We often speak about raising the dead. God does not, in general, raise people from the dead today. God does, however, raise people from positions where they are as good as dead. God raises people from situations of dispare such as we have already noted.

God allows such situations so that we know, without a shadow of doubt, that we are unable to carry the load ourselves, we must depend on God and receive our strength from Him. Note that Paul not only says that God had delivered him, but also God would deliver him. Paul knew there would be other situations of despair (probably with respect to the Corinthians!) There were other occasions,

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

these arose continually as Paul testifies.

*I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.*

2 Corinthians 11:23b-28

Paul had experienced God's resurrecting power that lifted him from such situations so that he could continue on. Unfortunately, there is a condition placed on this help.

*On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.* God would continue to deliver Paul from such situations as the Corinthians prayed for him! Have you heard of a missionary coming home from the field, defeated and beaten down and never returning. What did that missionary do wrong that he or she was defeated? Probably nothing, it was the fault of the people back at home that were supposed to be praying for this person. They failed to pray and the word was a failure.

Not only is it absolutely necessary that prayer be made for those in the Lord's service but there is another thing necessary. *Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.* We must pray for those who have gone into the Lord's service. We must also give thanks when God works through that person and God's purpose is accomplished. We can not just ask, we must also thank. Not only does God desire our thanks, we need it for ourselves. If we do not give thanks it is because we do not believe our prayers are answered. When we pray, we are to watch and see what the Lord does as a result of our prayers and then, when answered, give thanks.

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*Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

---

2 Corinthians 01:12-14

Here is where Paul really begins to justify himself to those at Corinth. He states that his conduct toward them was *in the holiness and sincerity that are from God*. He says the he boasts in this. The KJV has rejoicing. The Greek word is **kauxema** (καυχῆμα) and is translated to boast, to glory, and to rejoice, depending on the context. Paul uses this word (some form of it) thirty-one times in this letter.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

It is difficult to know exactly how the word ought to be translated. Boast is not a very good term because boasting usually has a negative connotation. It is variously translated in this passage as:

1) Boast	NIV, RSV
2) Rejoicing	KJV
3) Proud Confidence	NAS
4) Glorifying	Wuest
5) A matter of pride	Phillips
6) We are so glad	Living Bible

In order to get a handle on its meaning, one must ask, "How can the same word mean boast, glory, and rejoice? The answer is simple. If one rejoices in something that God has done for him or her, it is glorifying. It is giving glory (credit) to God for what He has done. If the rejoicing is about something we have done ourselves, it is boasting. The difference is in who gets the credit. Who gets the credit here?

Paul states that the way he conducted himself was from God. We have already discussed, at length, the fact that God had to lift Paul up many times and set him on his feet again. So, then, is Paul boasting about how God led him or is he giving God the glory for what He did for Paul. I rather suspect it is the later and the verse ought to be paraphrased something like this.

For the thing we are rejoicing in is how God enabled us to conduct ourselves . . .

The things Paul wrote in the first letter were not written in words of man's wisdom, they were words given by God Himself.

*We do not write you anything you cannot read or understand.* The KJV has read or acknowledge. To understand what Paul is saying here you need to know that he is using a "paronomasia" - a playing on words that sound alike - a pun. The word read is from **anaginosko** (αναγινοσκω) which means, literally, to know again. It is a common word for read since we can read something over and over again and really get to know what is said. The word understand comes from **epiginosko** (επιγινοσκω), the same word as before except that the prefix is not ana (again) but epi which strengthens the verb. It means to understand thoroughly. In Phillips paraphrase, we find this verse translated as below.

*Our letters have no double meaning - they mean just what you understand them to mean when you read them.*

Or, in other words, you do not have to "read in between the lines" in Paul's letters to get the true meaning. Apparently there were those at Corinth who thought that Paul did not mean what he wrote. There are people today who do not think the Bible means what it says. They attempt to distort it and make it say something that it does not say.

Apparently, they understood some of Paul's first letter quite well and responded in a positive way. There were other parts of his letter that they really did not understand and it is Paul's desire here that they will come to understand the rest of what he has to say to them.

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*Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit*



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*twice. I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?*

---

2 Corinthians 01:15-17

There are God's plans and there are men's plans. The plans are not always the same. If you combine the above passage with 1 Corinthians 16 (below) we may note some changes of plans.

*After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you--for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.*

1 Corinthians 16:5-7

At first Paul had planned to pass through Corinth once, as he returned from Macedonia to go back to Jerusalem. After he dropped his first letter in the mail, he appears to have decided to stop there on the way through also and hence make two stops. Now he has changed his mind again!

Many at Corinth had benefited from Paul's first letter. Some did not! Instead, they became more critical of him. To paraphrase what Paul writes here, this group was saying, "Paul is sure a wishy-washy worldly man, he can't make up his mind. One day he says Yes, the next he says No." Paul had made several changes in his plans to visit them and they took this to mean that Paul was acting in the flesh rather than following God.

Was Paul acting in the flesh? Many people do. Many people can't make up their minds about anything. They are weak when it comes to decision making. Then there are those who will make a decision and won't change the minds no matter what happens. "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts."

Paul was neither of them. God has a perfect plan for each of our lives. As much as we would like to see that plan, God only reveals it to us one day at a time. Paul changed his plans because (a) God led him to change it since (b) circumstances had changed that made it necessary to change his plans. We can learn from this. God leads us one step at a time. As we look to the future we may decide to do a certain thing. Then God shows us that this is wrong and leads us in another direction.

We must, if we are to be usable to Christ, do two things. First, we must not be wishy-washy; we must be able to make up our minds as to what should be done in the light of what we know. Secondly, we must be willing to change our plans if God shows us that it is needed.

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*But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

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2 Corinthians 01:18-22

Paul goes on to say that neither his, nor Silas' nor Timothy's message from God to them was not consistent. They did not preach one thing one day and another the next. He says their message was always "yes." One must interpret this correctly. If you asked Paul, "Is it alright to murder in God's eyes?" the answer would not be "Yes". One might strain at the point by saying "Yes, it is wrong to commit murder" is order to always provide a "yes" response. Paul's point, however, is simply that Christ's answer is always consistent, it never changes. If His answer is "Yes" one day, it will always be "yes". Likewise, if it is "no", it will always be "no."

Paul goes on to mention the Amen. We use this word just about everytime we pray. If we have baptist upbringings we often say it when the preaches says something profound or someone delivers some very good special music. What does the word mean? The word is of Hebrew origin, **amen** (אמן) and is sometimes used in the O.T. the way we use it.

*Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen and Amen.*

Psalm 72:19

*Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD.*

Psalm 106:48

It does have meaning. The root verb means to confirm, or to support. It is found in the following O.T. passages.

*O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.*

Isaiah 25:01

*He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.*

Isaiah 33:06

*Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.*

Isaiah 65:16

Thus, when you say, "Amen," you are proclaiming the steadfastness and faithfulness of the Lord. For this reason the words yes and amen may be seen as synonyms. Further, when Paul goes on to say *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ*, he is building on the concept of the amen. The steadfastness of God is the source that makes it possible for you and I to stand firm.

Where do we get this steadfastness? God provides it three ways, according to this passage. He annoints us, He seals us and He gives us a guarantee. It is rather interesting if we check out this anointing in the N.T.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

Luke 04:18

*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Acts 10:38

*But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Hebrews 01:08-09

All of these references refer to Christ Himself. It is only here that you and I are also included in the anointing process. We are included with Christ, which gets to the next term.

*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,*

Ephesians 01:13

where we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This happened when we received Christ,

*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Ephesians 04:30

Today, you and I as Christians are sealed. When the Rapture takes place and God again deals with Israel, it will be Jews who will be sealed.

*"Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.*

Revelation 07:03-08

We are seal unto God - protected - to keep us from harm. Isreal will be sealed during the Tribulation for their protection. Satan will also be sealed.

*He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*

Revelation 20:03

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

This will not be for Satan's protection but to protect the word from Satan. It is nice to know that we have been anointed and sealed. Do you feel anointed? Do you feel the presence of the seal? No, so there is one more thing.

Today, when we buy something, it comes with a guarantee (or warranty). It is a promise from the manufacturer that, if something goes wrong with the product during a certain period of time, it will be replaced. Some guarantees are pretty good, some are even lifetime guarantees (whose lifetime is not stated). Some guarantees are useless. They are only good if the maker keeps his word.

You and I have a guarantee with respect to our relationship with God. The Greek word which Paul uses here is derived from a Hebrew word which is found in the following passage.

*And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.*

Genesis 37:17-18

In this case the guarantee was sure. It is like when you rent a piece of equipment and you are required to leave a deposit to cover the cost of the item in case you do not bring it back. God's guarantee is sure. How can we know it is sure? Because the guarantee is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us.

There are two more verses in this chapter but, since they belong to the thought of Chapter Two, we shall save them for that study.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER TWO

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*I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.*

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2 Corinthians 01:23-02:04

In the last chapter, Paul was explaining his change of plans - or rather, God's changing of his plans. The reason that Paul did not return to Corinth as he had planned was for the sake of the Corinthians, not for Paul's convenience. The Greek word here translated spare is found some eight times in the N.T., three of them in this letter. The others are as below.

*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*

Acts 20:29

Paul wanted to spare the Corinthians any hardship or sorrow. There are others, however, are quick to come in and destroy a body of believers.

*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

Romans 08:32

It was possible to spare the Corinthians by virtue of what God did in not sparing His son. Paul also writes...

*For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.*

Romans 11:21

Paul spared those in Corinth. Had most of them not repented, God may not have spared them like Paul did. This is not to say that they would lose their salvation, but they could well lose their church. God might remove their light stands as he promised to do to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

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Paul hastens to add what his attitude toward those in Corinth was. He would not come to them as the Mighty Paul who had instructions to give them for their church. It would not be like on Mount Sinai where God laid down the Law to Moses and the people of Israel. Rather, Paul would come and work with them. He would be a fellow laborer. The Greek word is **sunergomai** (συνεργομαι). The word is used frequently by Paul, once by Peter.

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 16:03

*Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.*

Romans 16:09

*Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.*

Romans 16:21

*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*

1 Corinthians 03:09

*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 08:23

*But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

Philippians 02:25

*Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Philippians 04:03

*We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,*

1 Thessalonians 03:02

*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker,*

Philemon 01:01

*And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*

Philemon 01:24

Paul did not use the word lightly. He really did accept all of these other people as his fellow workers, as his equal in the work of the Gospel. Paul very seldom used his authority as an Apostle to gain anything. It is only through cooperation in the church that anything can be accomplished. Paul would accomplish little if he went to Corinth with a whip. He might accomplish much if he

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

went in Christian love and worked along side of them.

*I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you.* Paul did not want his visit to be painful. Paul does not make it clear who would be pained by this visit. Clearly, from the next verse, the Corinthians would be pained, but I believe that Paul would also. He uses this term in several places.

*I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,*

Romans 09:01-03

It grieved Paul greatly that his kinsmen, the Jews, would not accept Christ as the Missiah. He had a heart for all men but especially the Jews.

*But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.*

Philippians 02:25-27

When one of Paul's fellow workers was distressed or ill or in trouble, it brought great sorrow to Paul. Paul could sympathize with other believers. He would himself have been greatly pained if he had visited the church at Corinth in its present state.

*For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice.* Paul make this clear. Had he come to them, they would have been grieved and this, in turn would have grieved Paul. Paul avoided an unhappy meeting with them and delayed until such a time as the meeting could be more enheartening.

*I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.* It is, perhaps, significant that this anguish of heart with which Paul wrote is found only in one other scripture.

*"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.*

Luke 21:25

Have you ever had to write a letter to a friend in which you have to cover a rather touchy subject. Do you remember how long it took you and how you agonized over just what to say? This was the case with Paul. While he does not state it, I suspect that most of his letters were written this way. I suspect that is why they are in our Bibles. Paul did not just dash off a few ideas on a piece of paper and drop it in the mail. We can rest assured that he prayed a lot before he began to write and then he continued to agonize over getting just the right words.

Whether the communication be oral or written, if there is a problem to be solved by our giving attention to it, we can do one of three things:

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

- 1) Do nothing - just hope the problem goes away.
- 2) Get mad and complain - and get everyone else mad too.
- 3) Work out what you believe the Lord's solution might be and then communicate this solution in the greatest of tactfulness and love.

The first choice is the easiest, but it does not solve the problem. The second may help us get it off our chest, but it will still not solve the problem. The only Biblical approach is the third one.

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*If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent--not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

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2 Corinthians 02:5-11

The If which begins this section is a Type A condition in the Greek. That means that Paul assumed the condition to be true. Paul does not get specific. We do not know the person to whom Paul is referring to here. Some believe it must be true because he appears to be referring to the man noted in Chapter Five of the first letter and there are some valid reasons for it. Others believe it was someone else - one of the ring leaders of the division in the church. Paul does not tell us who.

Regardless of whom Paul is referring to, the theme is clear. There is a time to rebuke and there is a time to forgive. Solomon said there is . . .

*a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,*  
Ecclesiastes 03:07

The reason why many do not think Paul was referring to the man of Chapter Five in the first letter is that there is also a time to be done with something and to leave it alone. The words in Paul's first letter were very final - deliver the man to Satan. Paul could, however, still be referring to him.

It is often said that when Christ forgives us, He not only forgives us for what we did, He totally forgets it. It is unfortunate that man can not be that way at times. There is a time when we should forgive someone who has wronged us. We often forgive but do not forget. Even Paul did not forget sometimes.

*Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*

1 Timothy 01:20

Here was a man whom, like the man in 1 Corinthians, Paul handed over to Satan. Read Paul's second letter to Timothy.



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.*

2 Timothy 04:14

Paul never forgave nor forgot this man. This, again, is a reason why we think Paul is here referring to someone else.

Then Paul says something rather strange. *The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything.* Did Paul ask them to punish this person (whoever it may have been) just for the sake of seeing if they would follow his orders? Is this just? To answer this question, you must ask another. Did the person need punishment? If it was the man in 1 Corinthians Five, he certainly did. If it was a man who was responsible for (some of) the divisions in the church he certainly did. There is no questioned that the man needed what was given him. One might say that Paul was here "killing two birds with one stone." He was seeing to it that punishment was applied where it was needed and he was also testing the others to see if they were willing to do what was right.

This makes sense when you think about it. If the members of the church in Corinth were not willing to follow Paul's admonitions and punish the offending person, then they were really not better than the offender! If they were not willing to take care of their own affairs, there was no use in dealing with them at all.

The Corinthians were to forgive this person, Paul forgave him and, since Paul add's "in the sight of Christ", we assume that Christ condoned the forgiveness, A church and not long function as a church unless there is forgiveness - lots of it. This is not to say that forgiveness should be given when it is not warranted. Every effort ought to be made to bring a person to a place where he or she can be forgiven.

Paul ends this section with the words, *"in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."* There are several reasons for forgiveness. First, of course, if because a person has done what is necessary to be forgiven. There is also another, very important reason. We found it in the first letter. When one is delivered over unto Satan, Satan has control over his life, just as God allowed him control over Job's life.

If a person is ought of fellowship and needs forgiveness and it is not given when due, that person must content with Satan's attacks on his own. He or she does not have the church behind him to protect him. Perhaps it was Satan himself that devised the divide and conquer technique.

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*Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.*

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## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

2 Corinthians 02:12-17

Paul had been at Troas. God had opened a door for him to preach there, but it was no use. Paul could not take advantage of it because he had no peace of mind. It is sometimes hard to figure out the meaning of things such as this. Why would God open a door for Paul and then not allow him to have peace of mind? We already touched upon this previously. No Christian works alone (or is supposed to). Each person who is sent out for a specific ministry must have those who pray for him and provide for his needs. If this is not done, the Lord will not be able to use this person. He could not use Paul at Troas.

What was Paul's trouble at Troas? He was waiting for Titus and for the news which Titus would bring him. Paul was anxious. He couldn't perform his ministry until he received the news. What was this news? Looking ahead a bit we find the following.

*For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.*

2 Corinthians 07:05-07

He had no peace of mind in Macedonia either - until Titus came. What did Titus bring? News of what was going on at Corinth. It was his concern over the affairs of Corinth that had got him down and unable to do the Lord's work.

The fact that Paul was unable to take advantage of the opportunity at Troas was of no great concern to him. Paul's field was the world and if he was not able to work one place, he could work in another.

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ.* This reads slightly different than the KJV which has "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." God does not cause us to triumph as reads the KJV. Christ always leads us in triumph. The Greek verb here refers to a victory procession. In this case it is Christ who leads the processions. It is Paul and others who follow.

We may feel that we fail. Paul couldn't do the work at Troas. We make mistakes, we lose out on opportunities. None of this makes any difference provided that we trust the Lord to lead us. As long as the Lord is in control, we will be a part of this triumphant procession.

*Through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.* Did you know that you smell? Paul here says that, as he went from places to place, he carried an odor with him, the odor of the knowledge of Christ. Some odors are good. Some are not. This is the case here. To people who want nothing to do with the Gospel of Christ, the perishing, we are as if we failed to use our deodorant. These people are uncomfortable in our presence. They want to get away.

To those who accept the Gospel, we are the type of people that some try to be today by spreading cologne on themselves. We are a pleasure to be around and we bring gladness to these people. It is interesting that Paul uses the figure of smell here.

There are things I like to hear. There are things I hate to hear. There are a lot of things that I don't

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care whether I hear or not. The same is true of most of our senses. But I can think of few things that do not smell either good or bad. I can't think of many neutral odors. When it comes to the Gospel, there is not much room in the "middle of the road." Either you accept the Gospel or you reject it.

This is why Paul says it is such a formidable task. When you meet people, it is either for their good or their damnation. We have the ability to lead people to Christ. We have the ability to leave them to eternal damnation.

Then Paul makes an interesting statement. In the KJV it is that we are not those which corrupt the Word of God. The NIV has we do not peddle the word of God. The Greek word is **kapaleuo** (καπαλεψω) and derived from the word for an inn keeper. The word is used only here in the N.T. The KJV's corrupt is obtained from the one occurrence of the noun in the O.T.

*Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water.*

Isaiah 01:22

The connection is that in Isaiah's day and in Paul's day, salesmen were much like some are today. They inflate their product to gain more profit. This leads to a corrupted product and hence the KJV rendering. This is not, however, what Paul was trying to say. There are those today who stand accused of making a profit by "selling" the Gospel. In some cases the accusations are true. There have been some evangelists who have been in the "business" for the money. More often the charges are not true. Our day and age is not unique. There were those in Paul's day who accused him of spreading the Gospel in order to get rich. I can not recall any scriptures which indicate that Paul ever had much in the way of material possessions.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER THREE

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*Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the*

*living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

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2 Corinthians 03:01-06

Paul continues to defend his ministry, especially among those at Corinth. He asks two questions:

- 1: Do we have to commend ourselves to you again?
- 2: Do we need letters of recommendation (either from or to them)?

First is the commendation. The Greek word is **sunistemi** (συνιστημι) to cause to stand together. In other words to put together facts which, when considered together, confirm that a person is who he or she claims to be. Paul did the same for others.

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.*

Romans 16:01

Paul commended others to the various churches, attesting to the fact that these people were who they claimed to be. He refers to letters or recommendation, the Greek word being **sustakis** (συστακις) which comes from the same root as the other word. Thus Paul is referring to both oral and written recommendations. Does Paul need a set of credentials to write to Corinth as he does?

Letters of recommendation are quite common today. You can't get a job, a loan, a house to rent, or a lot of other things today without some letter of recommendation. In many cases these letters are very important. As a professor for 30 years, I have participated in the selection process for many many applications for teaching positions. Since these applications come from all over the world, we can not possibly see each of these people in person and get to know them. you can not necessarily depend on what they say about themselves. The thing that really counts, then, is what others say about them - people who have worked along side them or been their supervisors and have first hand knowledge of their work. The only thing that is more important than what is said in the letter is who wrote it. It does not make a lot of difference what is said in the letter if the person who wrote it is a recognized person in his or her field. If a person like this says good things, you know the person is good.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

So, then, did Paul need letters? You bet he did. Are you looking for a new preacher or assistant pastor or some other person for your church? You had better pay close attention to what their letters of recommendation say. You need to know what to expect out of them. A person can memorize some great sermons and come to your pulpit once and, after hours and hours of rehearsing, deliver this great message - can he do it week in and week out? You need to know from people who have intimate knowledge of the person.

Yes, Paul needed such letters. His were not in written form. The interesting point is what these letters were. He says that the Christians at Corinth (as in other places) were his "letters" of recommendation. They were living proof that he was the person he claimed to be. They were proof, not such much in what they had to say about Paul, but in the change that occurred in their lives as a result of Paul's ministry.

*But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."*

John 10:38

Jesus said the same thing.

*I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.*

Revelation 02:02

and he tests others the same way. Paul needed no formal recommendations, the church at Corinth, even with all its problems, was proof of his ministry. Paul goes on to say the following.

*Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

The letters of recommendation did not need to say how good a man Paul was or how good a job he did. All that is was really necessary in Paul's case, and is still necessary today, is that God can and is using the person. It was not Paul that accomplished great things. It was Christ using him as a chosen vessel. It was the Holy Spirit enabling Paul to do the things he did.

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*Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*

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2 Corinthians 03:07-11

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Paul here makes a comparison between the Old and the New Covenants. He compares the covenant with Israel, written on the tablets of stone at Mount Sinai, with the covenant God made with us through His Son. Israel received the covenant with great joy - it was from God. They did not have to question Moses' authority. They did not need letters of recommendation. The very fact that Moses' face shone with the glory of God was enough.

If Israel received the Old Covenant with great joy, what should we do? The Old Covenant was of no value except as to be a schoolmaster. To Israel it only brought death because no man could keep it. The New Covenant brings eternal life and so, how much more gloriously we should receive it. What Paul, tactfully, does not say here is how much more gloriously we should receive the messenger as well.

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*Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

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2 Corinthians 03:12-18

From what Paul writes, it appears as the Jewish Christians at Corinth were the ones who still had not responded to the request made in his first letter. Gentile Christians in Corinth would not have cared much about the Old Covenant.

In Paul's day there were a number of Jews who received Christ only to revert back to many of the things in the Old Covenant. They are usually referred to as Judaizers. These people, according to this passage, had trouble with a veil. The Greek term is found only in this passage of the N.T. It is found in two connections in the O.T.

*When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD'S presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.*

Exodus 34:33-35

This is what Paul is speaking of in the above passage. The other usage is found below.

*"They are to take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand that is for light, together with its lamps, its wick trimmers and trays, and all its jars for the oil used to supply it. Then they are to wrap it and all its accessories in a covering of hides of sea cows and put it on a carrying frame. "Over the gold altar they are to spread a blue cloth and cover that with hides of sea cows and put its poles in place. "They are to take all the articles used for ministering in the sanctuary, wrap them in a blue cloth, cover that*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*with hides of sea cows and put them on a carrying frame. "They are to remove the ashes from the bronze altar and spread a purple cloth over it. Then they are to place on it all the utensils used for ministering at the altar, including the firepans, meat forks, shovels and sprinkling bowls. Over it they are to spread a covering of hides of sea cows and put its poles in place.*

Numbers 04:09-14

When the tabernacle was to be moved, a "veil" was to be placed over the various items so that they could not be seen. They were hidden from the view of everyone, including Israel. When the items were put in place in the tabernacle, they were still hidden from all but the priests who ministered in the tabernacle.

This covering extends beyond this. All of the items of the tabernacle had significance in pointing to Christ. Each was a picture of some ministry of Christ. The tabernacle was a picture of Christ. A study of the tabernacle provides a very rich description of the character and ministry of Christ - if you believe in Him. The Jews, to this day, can not see past the veil because trefuse to see Christ in the articles.

*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* What does this mean? Paul explains. First, we have faces which are unveiled. The verb in the Greek is a perfect participle. It refers to actions of the past which continue to have effect today. We have had our faces unveiled when we received Christ. They remain unveiled today and will continue to do so. Moses's face was veiled and the rest of Israel's eyes were veiled. Today, through the gift of God's Son, our faces may be radiant like Moses but ours are not veiled.

Our faces are to reflect Christ's radiance. They are to mirror the glory of Christ.

How is this accomplished? Paul says it is by our being transformed. The Greek word is the word from which we get metemorphis, the changing of form. The verb is in the present tense. When you receive Christ as Savior, you do not become immediately a radiant Christian. The present tense indicates a continued process of being transformed.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER FOUR

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*Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our*

*gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

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2 Corinthians 04:01-06

Paul says that, through God's mercy, he does not lose heart. The KJV has faint not. The Greek word is **enkakao** (εγκάκω) which has a literal meaning of to act badly. It does not necessarily mean bad in the sense of evil, simply to not behave properly. One might translate this by having Paul say "We did not misbehave ourselves when we were with you." Our translations have Paul saying simply that he did not give up. Giving up, in God's eyes, would be misbehaving.

Paul lists things which indicate that his behavior was proper.

- 1) *We have renounced secret and shameful ways*
- 2) *We do not use deception*
- 3) *Nor do we distort the word of God.*

First, they renounced secret and shameful ways. The Greek word means, literally to speak out. In most contexts it means to speak out against something. It is somewhat stronger than the word renounce. The word secret is the source of our word crypt - a place where you bury things out of sight. The and does not belong. The hidden is attached to the shameful. Paul says that they did not use underhanded practices when they were with him.

This leads naturally to the second thing, deception. Paul and the others were always on the level with the Corinthians. They did not attempt to entice them by deception. Finally, they did not distort the word of God by adding untruths to it. When you think of it, there are many who do precisely this today. There were those who did it in Paul's day. Paul gave them the pure, unadulterated word of God.

*On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly* they commended themselves to them. Paul simply told them the Gospel truths. The Greek word here translated commend means, literally, to (be able to) stand before. Since Paul and the other plainly spoke the truth of the Gospel, they are able to stand before the people and be received by them. Of course, there were, and will always be, those who do



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

not believe.

In the last chapter we spoke of the veil and the Jews. There is a veil for the Gentiles as well and Paul mentions this next. *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* Paul says that the Gospel is veiled to those who are perishing by the god of this age (world, KJV). Note that the word god is not capitalized.

That this does not refer to God is determined by the context. We have considered the phrase of this age in Paul's first letter.

*We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*

1 Corinthians 02:06

*None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

1 Corinthians 02:08

*Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise.*

1 Corinthians 03:18

Paul is referring to Satan whom, at the end of this age is said . . .

*He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

2 Thessalonians 02:04

Why is it that, when a person hears the Gospel, they often do not respond? It is because Satan is at work veiling the hearts of these people.

*For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.* A paraphrase of this statement may help to simplify it.

*For we do not preach ourselves as Lords;  
we preach ourselves ourselves as your servants.  
we preach Jesus Christ as Lord and we are your servants for Jesus' sake.*

Paul alludes to an O.T. Scripture (Genesis 1:3) that says *"Let light shine out of darkness."* It is not a literal citation but a paraphrase of it. Were we to take an in depth study of Genesis 1, we would find that the importance of that chapter is not the account of the physical creation - it is not meant to be such an account - it is the beginnings of God's revelation of Christ Jesus and good as opposed to the darkness of this world.

We are born into sin. Paul was born into sin. He and we were filled with darkness while in that condition. What light he now possesses is due to Christ shining through us. The fact that Paul was so successful in spreading the Gospel; the fact that we may be effective in the Lord's services comes

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

from the fact that, while we are nothing, Christ shines through us. This concept Paul now expands on.

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*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*

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2 Corinthians 04:07-12

*We have this treasure in jars of clay.* Let us examine this statement and some of the words in it. First there is treasure, from the Greek **thesauros** (θησαυρος) which is the source of our word thesaurus - a storehouse of words or knowledge. The word literally refers to a place where things are stored up but, in the N.T., often refers to that which is stored up in such places. To continue the concept, the Christians thesaurus today is the Bible. In Paul's day, before the N.T. was assembled, it was men like Paul who were these places where God's word was stored up.

He likens himself to a jar of clay. The word jar comes from the Greek word **skeuos** (σκευος) which refers to no specific object. Our English phrase "Thing-a-ma-jig" comes close to the same idea. The object which the speaker has in mind must be determined from the context. The context here indicates a jar or some similar vessel used to hold things. In this case the vessel is made of earth (or clay). Paul writes to Timothy,

*In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble.*

2 Timothy 02:20

Thus a clay jar is something which is not considered noble or precious in itself. A clay vessel is expendable. The idea is that Paul, himself, was nothing - he was expendable. The message which he carried within him was a treasure beyond any other. It is to be the same with us.

Paul then lists a number of paradoxes.

<i>We are hard pressed on every side,</i>	<i>but not crushed;</i>
<i>We are perplexed,</i>	<i>but not in despair;</i>
<i>We are persecuted,</i>	<i>but not abandoned;</i>
<i>We are struck down,</i>	<i>but not destroyed.</i>

First, he was hardpressed. The Greek word here means to be squeezed. We find it used literally in a few places.

*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

Matthew 07:14

In the following verse is it a little less literal.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.*

Mark 03:09

Then we find in used in a broader sense in the following verses.

*In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.*

1 Thessalonians 03:04

*God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*

2 Thessalonians 01:06-07

*We are hard pressed on every side* is, then an excellent translation here. We have often mentioned the persecutions Paul suffered and, most of all, the pressures he felt in caring for the churches. In spite of all this, he was not crushed. The Greek word is **stenochoreo** (στενοχωρεω) which literally translates into a narrow place. It is found in the following.

*"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*

Matthew 07:13

Again, crushed is an excellent translation. Now, we indicated above that these were paradoxes. Do you know what happens to an earthenware vessel when it is subjected to pressure? It shatters into thousands of little pieces. If you need to subject a vessel to pressures, you use materials, like steel or special alloys or materials which can withstand great pressures.

How could Paul, an earthenware vessel, stand up to such tremendous pressures? The answer has to do with what lies within the vessel. Fill such a vessel with a very strong material, fill it completely, and it will not be crushed. Paul had Christ dwelling in him and working through him. He was not crushed. Christ kept him from that.

Next, Paul was often perplexed. The Greek is **aporeo** (απορεω), the alpha MEANING NOT and the rest of the word refers to a means of passage (a bridge across a river, etc.) or resource (money to purchase a boat to cross the river, etc.). With the alpha, it means to be in a situation where there is no way out. For example, you must cross a roaring river but there is no bridge, you have no money to purchase a boat, you have no means at your disposal to get across. All is hopeless! In spite of this situation, Paul was never in despair. Paul uses the word only twice - here and in 1:8. The word is the same word we just looked at, perplexed, but with a prefix ek-. One might translate it utterly perplexed.

What is the difference between being perplexed and utterly perplexed? Another paradox! Going back to the original meanings of the word, the difference is that, in the first case, a person is completely without the resources needed. In the second case, while the person may be completing lacking in resources there is another who is not and can provide them. Of himself, Paul often reached the end of his rope and had nowhere to go. But he could lean on the indwelling Christ which he carried within him and use His resources. We, too, have such a resource.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Thirdly, Paul was persecuted. The Greek word is a common one. It is found in the following passage.

*When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.*

Revelation 12:13

Its basic meaning is to persue. It may be used in a good sense or, as above, in a bad sense - to persue someone in order to give them trouble. If someone is bent on giving you trouble and you do not run, what happens? You are persecuted - hence the common meaning of the term. On a number of occasions Paul did run. He left one city to go to another with people from the first chasing after him. He did know what persecution was.

He knew persecution but not abandonment. You might say that this is not true. Consider the following.

*. . . for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.*

2 Timothy 04:10

*At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.*

2 Timothy 04:16

On occasions, when the going got tough, though that were not tough got going! The deserted Paul. He was completely(?) alone. Not so!

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

Hebrews 13:05

Men deserted Paul, Christ, who indwelt Paul's earthen vessel, never deserted him. There was only one who was completely deserted for a time.

*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Mark Mark 15:34

Christ knew what it meant to be completely deserted. Christ will never allow us to go through that situation. A Paradox? We can be completely deserted in the eyes of the world but we can never be deserted by Christ.

Finally, Paul was struck down. The word, while a common Greek word, is not often used in the N.T. One interesting usage is found below.

*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."*

Revelation 12:10

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

At this point, Satan was put in his place. He was cast down and never again allowed to do his mischief except for a brief time at the end of the age. Paul was, on a number of occasion, cast down in a literal sense. More often, he was cast down in a mental sense. Normally, when you cast something down, that is the end of it. I have made many trips to the land-fill where I have cast down the things which were no longer of value to anyone. They are gone - covered with dirt and biodegraded (we hope). Paul was cast down but Christ would never leave him there to be destroyed. Christ always picked up the pieces and sent him on his way. This to is the case with us.

The last part of the paradox is much harder to understand. *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.* Let us begin by comparing two words, death and life. In the KJV, it is dying rather than death, a more literal translation of the Greek. Most translations have death because death goes with life, dying goes with living.

Now, whether or not you use the term living, life is an ongoing process. In using the word death, then, Paul is also describing an ongoing process - not a one time event. In the first letter, we read the following.

*And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day--I mean that, brothers--just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Corinthians 15:30-31

Paul dies daily in order that Christ might live through him. In addition to the philosophical aspect of this, Paul came near to death (physical) often for his ministry of Christ. It is thought that, at one point, he actually did die and God sent him back. The point is, as Christians, we have to deny self and follow Christ.

We have already noted the earthen vessel that Paul considered himself (and us) to be. According to the dictionary, a vessel is "a hollow receptical" used to hold things. If our vessels are not empty, if they contain self, they can not be used for their intended purpose, to contain Jesus Christ.

This paradox is summed up most appropriately below.

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"*

Luke 09:23-25

*So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.* Paul faced physical death, as well as surrendering his life spiritually, so that the lives of those at Corinth my live for Christ. Christ might work in them.

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*It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

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2 Corinthians 04:13-15

Paul cites from Psalms.

*For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed; therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted." And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars." How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.*

Psalm 118:08-14

Paul took courage in the assurance of God's word and, based on this assurance, spoke boldly the Gospel of Christ. To do the same, we too must have the assurance in knowing the Word of God. We must know it, not just so that we can present it to others, but, more importantly, so that we have the courage to believe the God will help us and will provide fruit for our labors.

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*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

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2 Corinthians 04:16-18

Again, Paul did not lose heart. He says that outwardly they are wasting away. The same word is found in the passage below.

*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.*

Luke 12:33

One might have taken one look at Paul and said "This man won't make it through the year." Paul was wasting away each day. But, each night God would renew that which had been destroyed and kept Paul going. We have already read what Paul wrote in his first letter.

*I die every day--I mean that, brothers--just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Corinthians 15:31

The rest of this passage is summarized by Christ.

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. -Matthew*

1 Corinthians 06:19-21

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### CHAPTER FIVE

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*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

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### 2 Corinthians 05:01-05

Paul continues comparing our present physical life with the life that is to come. He has assurance that, as his earthly body falls apart, bit-by-bit, it is of no importance. When his physical body is no longer fit for this world, he will go home to be with the Lord where he will have a perfect one.

Paul uses the metaphor here of a tent and a house. I don't know about you, but I never relish the idea of living in a tent for an extended period of time. I much prefer living in a house with inside plumbing, a good bed and lots of food. Paul was a tentmaker by trade and could recognize a good tent. No matter how good the tent might be, the house which we will inherit will be far superior.

Now Paul mixes his metaphors and mixes us up. Now he talks about clothing that we wear. What are clothes for? In some cases they are to keep us warm or dry or whatever. Most of the time it is to cover the parts of us that we do not want to expose and are embarrassed about. How would you feel if you were out in some public place and someone were to grab your clothes and rip them off of you?

We are speaking here spiritually. How would you like to have your spiritual clothing torn off so that you would be standing there bare and exposed. Everyone would be able to see what kind of prayer life you had, how often you studied your Bible. All would know just exactly how spirit-minded you were. Even Paul was afraid to be stripped of his spiritual clothing. He longed to be clothed in the clothing that would never be stripped off and never need to be. When we receive this new clothing, we will have left our old bodies and put on the new, along with the new clothing.

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*Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*



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*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

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2 Corinthians 05:06-10

Paul's greatest objective was to be at home with the Lord. Paul would have liked to be done with his body of flesh and me with the Lord. His time for that had not yet come. With that in mind, Paul made up his mind to live in his current body by faith. He could not do so by sight because we can not see spiritual things by sight. Paul is telling you and me that we must be content with the state we find ourselves in - living in our bodies. That is all we have now.

What he is really saying here is that you and I can not use the fact that we are still living in our sinful bodies as excuses for not doing the Lord's will. We can not say, "Well, Lord, I'd like to do what you say but I am stuck here with this crummie old body and can't do anything!"

There is a day when we will leave these bodies and take on the spritial ones we long for. There is also a day when we will receive what is due us according to what we did in the body. We must keep our eyes on the Lord and not on our weaknesses. We must do the Lord's will and not what our frail bodies would have us do.

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*Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

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2 Corinthians 05:11-15

Paul follows up the notion of our one day being held accountable for what we do in the flesh. It is because of this that Paul had the ministry he did. His ministry was two-fold. First he wished to win the lost and, second, he wish the saved to grow in Christ so they could stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ and not be afraid. Paul's life was an open book to God. God knew every thought that ever went through Paul's mind. He knows what goes through you mind and my mind as well. It was Paul's wish that the Corinthians could also read his mind like a book. He wanted those in Corinth to grow and be obedient. He knew that, in order for this to happen, he had to gain their confidence. They had to trust him.

He wanted them to see him as he really was. He wanted them to see Christ living within him. He wanted them to take pride in knowing a man who was controlled by the spirit and not by the flesh. It is only after one really understands what living in faith and not by flesh is that one can look at others who do not and see them for what they are

Paul now comes to a profound statement of theology. *We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.* Point #1: Christ died for all. There are differences

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in men's theology concerning the extent of Christ's death. Did Christ die for all, the Calvinistic believe, or only for the elect (Hypercalvinism). You can have differing opinions if you wish but Paul clearly states that it was for all. Therefore, all men are dead. Men are dead in their sin and just don't know it. But, praise God, we can also be made alive through Christ. In order to be alive through Christ, one must live for Christ. It is hard to reconcile a person who claims to be born again but shows no evidence of living for Christ.

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*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

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2 Corinthians 05:16-21

Many of us have memorized verse 17, which is good but too few know what verse 16 says. Paul states that he no longer views anyone from a worldly point of view (KJV has after the flesh). How often do we let our worldly impressions of a person get in the way of our viewing him as a soul for whom Christ died and needs salvation? How often do we stand in condemnation of other Christians for the things done in the flesh when we ought to see them as a redeemed member of the body of Christ who needs our help and support. I think of Christ and the woman caught in adultery.

*When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."*

John 08:07

How many Christians have a skeleton or two in the closet that they would not like others to know about. The reason we can not get really tough against drunk drivers and speeders is that there are too many members of the population that are afraid that they will get caught themselves. Paul looked past people's fleshly faults and saw them as Christ saw them.

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

You say, "Well, when the rapture comes, we will all be new." But this verse says that we are new creations now. Is he contradicting what he said at the beginning of this chapter? It would sound like it were it not for the passage we just looked at. "In Christ" we are new creations. If you will take the trouble to look past the flesh that will soon drop away, you will find the new creation that Christ died for.

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.* All we have been speaking about has come about because God reconciled us to himself. The word reconciled is from **katallage** (καταλλαγή, from the verb **katallaso** (καταλλάσω) which means, literally, to exchange. With out the prefix (kata), the verb simply means to change, hence the following:

*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a*

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*flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

*You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."*

Hebrews 1:12

With the prefix, the word takes on an intensified meaning which is not especially clear. The prefix has many uses, depending on the verb. Here it appears to have the meaning of changing something by replacing it with something even better. He has replaced our sinful natures, in His eyes, by that which is much better, the sinless Jesus Christ. When God looks at you and me, he does not see the sinners we were (and still are in the physical sense), He sees the sinless Christ. That is why God can look on us and be reconciled with us.

Not only did God reconcile us to Himself, he *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*. There are others whom God can not yet look upon, who have not been reconciled. How were you reconciled? Did Christ appear to you in the middle of a trip like He did to Paul? Did God wrestle with you like he did with Jacob? Did He call you out of your home town like he did with Abraham? No, you were reconciled to God through the work of others who were, themselves, reconciled. Having been reconciled, they took up the ministry of reconciliation, taking the Gospel to others, including you and me. We, like them, are to continue to process.

Chain letters have long been illegal. This is because the never pay off for anyone except the person who starts them of, maybe, the people just after him or her. There is one type of "chain letter" that is legal and, in fact, has been setup by God. In a chain letter, once you receive it, you are to send it on to somewhere between three and seven other people. You are then supposed to receive something in return for this. Having received the Gospel, you are to share it with others and receive a blessing as they accept the Gospel.

Think of it! If you shared the Gospel with seven other people each year, and only two of them accepted, what would happen. In 20 years you would be responsible for over one million people receiving Christ as their Savior. With about 5 billion people in the world, it would only take about 5000 Christians to reach the entire world for Christ.

The work he has given us is to tell other *that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them*. In other words, that their sins can be forgiven through the reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ.

*He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us*. There is something you may never have thought of before. We do not make a commitment to serve the Lord, He has committed us! We have become Christ's Ambassadors. Remember Christ's own words when we left.

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 01:08

He did not say "You may become my witnesses," or "I'd like you to become by witnesses." He said "You will become My witnesses." There is no option. The only option we have is how good we are in the work of being witnesses. Here, however, Paul uses the term Ambassador. It is from the Greek

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word **presbeuo** (πρεσβεψω). The verb, and the related noun, are found in the following.

*If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.*

Luke 14:32

*"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'*

Luke 19:14

*for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

Ephesians 06:20

The root of the word is a reference to age, and older person. It is also the root of our word Elder. Here, as in many places, the emphasis is not on the age of the person but, rather, on the responsibility that goes with the position of being an elder person in a group. The specific term here refers to one who is to go forth as a representative of another. According to the dictionary, an ambassador is:

*am·bas·sa·dor n.*

- 1. the highest-ranking diplomatic representative appointed by one country or government to represent it in another*
- 2. a special representative: an ambassador-at-large is one accredited to no particular country; an ambassador extraordinary is one on a special diplomatic mission; an ambassador plenipotentiary is one having the power to make treaties*
- 3. an official agent with a special mission*  
—*am·bas·sa·do'ri·al adj.*  
—*am·bas·sa·dor·ship n.*

From this definition, we must each be an ambassador extraordinary since we have been sent on a special mission, to deliver the Gospel message of reconciliation.

Christ left this earth when He gave the Great Commission. Since He is gone, we, you and I, must be His representatives.

*We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* While we have been dealing with generalities, we must now turn to specifics. Paul is claiming to be an Ambassador for Christ to the church at Corinth. He has been appointed to bring reconciliation to the people of Corinth. Thus he implores them to be reconciled and explains the process.

The word implore comes from **deomai** (δεομαι) which is used quite frequently in the N.T.

*While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with*

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*leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."*

Luke 5:12

*When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!"*

Luke 08:28

*A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child."*

Luke 09:38

In these passages, there is a very urgent request made. The leper wanted with all his heart to be cured. The demon possessed man did not want to be tortured and the man wanted Jesus to restore his only child. All were desperate requests.

Paul, himself often made such requests.

*Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."*

Acts 21:39

*. . . and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.*

Acts 26:03

*I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong.*

Galatians 04:12

*Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

1 Thessalonians 03:10

Paul's language is strong. It is the great desire that these people be reconciled. As Christians, it ought to be such a desire on our hearts as well. It is not supposed to be an idle wish that someone we know be saved, it is supposed to be an urgent desire in our heart.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER SIX

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*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*

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2 Corinthians 06:01-02

In the last chapter, Paul spoke of his role as an ambassador. While we are all ambassadors for Christ, Paul was dealing specifically of his ministry relative to those at Corinth. Now he changes the me and you relationship to one of commonality. He begins with God's fellow workers. The word comes from **sunergos** (συνεργος) and the verb **sunergeo** (συνεργεω) which means, literally, to work together with another. Paul was very fond of this term as noted below.

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 16:03

*Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.*

Romans 16:09

*Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.*

Romans 16:21

*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 08:23

*But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

Philippians 02:25

*Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Philippians 04:03

*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker,*

Philemon 01:01

*And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*

Philemon 01:24

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We are not only fellow workers with each other, but also with God.

*Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*

Mark 16:20

Finally, Paul has already used this term in other places in these letters.

*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*

1 Corinthians 03:09

*to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.*

1 Corinthians 16:16

In the last chapter he implored them to be reconciled to God. Here he urges them. The words are different. Here is parakaleo (παράκαλεο), to call to ones side. In this sense, it is to call someone to sit down beside you and to receive instruction, encouragement or help from you. He calls them to not received God's grace in vain. The word means emptiness and is found in passages such as those below.

*At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.*

Luke 20:10-11

*And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*

1 Corinthians 15:14

The Hebrew equivalent of the word is found in a well known passage of the O.T.

*so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Isaiah 55:11

God's Word is not supposed to return to Him empty or useless. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is to be received.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:8.

*This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances,*

Isaiah 49:08

This passage deals with a time when God will again give Israel its chance for salvation - its last chance. When this time comes, they had better accept it for no other such time will come. It may

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not be any different with you, or with a loved one or friend. Who is to know if they will ever receive additional chances to turn to Christ. *I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.* It is sufficient on God's part that each person hear the Gospel message once. It is only God's grace that allows some to hear it more than once.

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*We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;*

2 Corinthians 06:03-10

Paul now begins to explain his ministry - again. He begins by stating that he put no stumbling block in anyone's path. The Greek term is also found in the passages below.

*Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

Romans 09:32-33

*. . . "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for.*

1 Peter 02:08

These references are to Jesus Christ who becomes such a stumbling block to those who refuse to believe. But there are others.

*It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*

Romans 14:21

There are many things which we might do which would cause a weaker brother to stumble and fall. We are to avoid them. Paul was very circumspect in his dealings with Corinth.

Paul's concern was that his ministry might be commended to them rather than be discredited. The word discredited comes from **momaomai** (μωμᾶομαι). The related noun is found in the following passage.

*They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.*

2 Peter 02:13

A blemish on one's ministry will make it of no effect. In outlining the qualifications for Elder in 1



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Timothy 3, the first thing Paul mentions is that the elder must be above reproach. The first thing he lists in Titus 1 is that he must be blameless. Paul desired the same of his own ministry. He wanted to be able to stand before them, unashamed of his ministry for Christ.

Paul then goes on to elaborate on what he had done in order to be above reproach in his ministry. He begins with a list of hardships.

- 1) *In great endurance*
- 2) *In troubles*
- 3) *In hardships and distresses*
- 4) *In beatings*
- 5) *In imprisonments and riots*
- 6) *In hard work*
- 7) *In sleepless nights and hunger;*

Paul was a man of great endurance. He testifies to this fact below.

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,*

2 Timothy 03:10

Paul had his share of troubles. He testifies to this time and time again.

*"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.*

Acts 20:22-23

*I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.*

Ephesians 03:13

*It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.*

Philippians 01:15-17

He had his hardships and distresses.

*Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.*

1 Thessalonians 03:07

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

Romans 08:35

He had been beaten on a number of occasions.

*After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer*

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*was commanded to guard them carefully.*

Acts 16:23

He had been in prison and in riots.

*After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

Acts 16:23-24

*But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.*

Acts 17:05

*He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.*

Acts 21:32

*"We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect*

Acts 24:05

he worked hard,

*Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.*

1 Thessalonians 02:09

*nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.*

2 Thessalonians 03:08

He had sleepless nights and knew hunger. He knew all of these things he lists. He had experienced them all - often. It is easy to be saved - believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. It is not easy to be found a faithful follower of Christ. We will face the same trials as Paul did if we are to witness and obey the Great Commission as Paul did. We may not face the physical abuses Paul did (the stonings, the beatings, etc.) but we shall surely experience the emotional and spiritual hardships that Paul did - if we are faithful.

Why, do you suppose, did God give us the following:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you*

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*can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Ephesians 06:10-17

If you and I are not to face the trials Paul faced, why do we need all of this armor? Note that the full armor consists mostly of things which protect you from the harm that is before you (i.e the breastplate, the shield), there is very little to protect you from behind! Some have said that this is a warning that, as Christians, we must face of uto Satan and do the Lord's work. While this is a good thought, the fact of the case is that if you turn your back and do not fight the battle the Lord has given you, Satan will leave you alone and you need no protection for your rearside!

Next, Paul gives a list of positive attributes of his ministry. He ministered

- a) *in purity*
- b) *in understanding*
- c) *in patience and kindness*
- d) *in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love*
- e) *in truthful speech and in the power of God*
- f) *with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;*

First he list purity. John writes the following.

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

1 John 03:02-03

To consider the thought of our being pure we shall go back to some passages from the O.T.

*For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.*

Psalms 11:07

*The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

Psalms 19:09-11

*The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him.*

Proverbs 15:26

*The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright.*

Proverbs 21:08

In these verses we see the word used for uprighteousness, for purity, and for innocence. One might question whether or not we can obtain such characteristics. The writer of the following proverb did.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?*

Proverbs 20:09

In the O.T., the answer was noone! But, for us whom Christ has cleansed, we all can. The important point is whether we are these things only in God's eyes or also in the eyes of those around us. We are cleansed by Christ but do we act that way?

Next on Paul's list is understanding. He speaks of this characteristic in many places. Usually the word is translated knowledge.

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

Romans 11:33

*What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

Philippians 03:08

*My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Colossians 02:02-03

Peter adds . . .

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

2 Peter 01:05-06

If one is to be effective in the ministry of Christ, there must be a knowledge. Consider the vacuum cleaner salesman who comes to your door to sell his product. "How much do the bags cost", you ask. "Gee, I don't know!" he replies. "Well, what kind of warrentee comes with it?" "Golly, I don't know that either!" Some chance he would have of selling the vacumm cleaner.

This does not mean that we must all be theologians to witness - we just need to know Christ and what He has done for us.

Next comes *patience and kindness*. These are two parts of the fruit of the spirit.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

Galatians 05:22

They go together as Paul uses them below.

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

Colossians 03:12

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I am always reminded of one missionary to the Jews who said that Christian Jews must be hand picked fruit. When Christ said the fields were white unto harvest, He did not mean that you should drive out in the field with a massive combine and reap the whole field in one sweep. In some cases, this works (i.e. a massive evangelistic campaign) but usually we must win them one-by-one. We must be both patient and kind in our dealing with the unsaved if we are to reach them.

Next he mentions *the Holy Spirit and sincere love*. It is not necessary to spend a great deal of time on the Holy Spirit in the role of the Spirit in the ministry. We shall look at what Paul combines with this, sincere love. The KJV has unfeigned love. The root of the Greek word is **hypokrites** (ηψποκριτης), the Greek word for a stage actor. It also refers to a person who says (or does) something that is not real - just as a stage show is not real. The word has "not" prefixed to it. When we witness to others, we must have a genuine love for them. Just acting like we have a love for them will never work. People can sense when love is real and when it is being put on.

Remember, we are not supposed to love the world nor the sin in it. We are supposed to love the sinner even though we may hate the sin.

Next comes *truthful speech and the power of God*

*Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies.*

Psalm 68:34

*Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?"*

Mark 12:24

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Romans 01:16

Look at the above three verses carefully. Proclaim..., the Scriptures..., the gospel. The Word of God is the Power of God. The Word of God is the word of truth.

*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,*

Ephesians 01:13

*the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel*

Colossians 01:05

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 02:15

Apart from the words of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our ministry would be in vain. The word of truth, the Gospel, is the power of God until salvation and we must know and use it to be effective.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Last, Paul refers to *weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left*; What are these weapons of righteousness? We have already seen them.

*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Ephesians 06:16-17

We have already looked at the weapons that God has given us. Only two of these are carried in the right and left hand. Unless you are left handed, the sword of the spirit goes in the right, the shield of faith in the left. One is a defensive weapon (the shield) one is offensive. It is somewhat reminiscent of the following.

*From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.*

Nehemiah 04:16-18

Israel rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in a very short time in the very sight of their enemies. How? With the weapon of defense (the sword here) in one hand and the tools for building in the other. We, too, can have great victory in the spreading of the Gospel of Christ if we carry the right two tools in our hands.

Paul concludes the details of his ministry with one additional set of terms.

- a) *through glory and dishonor*
- b) *through bad report and good report*
- c) *genuine, yet regarded as impostors*
- d) *known, yet regarded as unknown*
- e) *dying, and yet we live on*
- f) *beaten, and yet not killed*
- g) *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*
- h) *poor, yet making many rich*
- i) *having nothing, and yet possessing everything*

As he did in chapter 4, he bares his heart to them. He lists nine areas through which he has served. He served through the good times; he served through the bad times as well. He was given bad reports, considered an imposter, as unknown. He was beaten and left for dead. He had been in sorrow, want and in need. In all of this Christ worked through him and supplied him with what he really needed.

With this description of his ministry and the opening up of his heart, he makes an appeal to those in Corinth.

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*We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange--I speak as to my children--open wide your hearts also.*

---

2 Corinthians 06:11-13

Having thus spoken, he accuses them of not opening their hearts to him. Verse 12, in the KJV is confused by the old terminology, Ye are not strightened in us, you are staightened in your own bowels. This is good Greek but it makes little sense in English. The NIV paraphrases it a bit too much.

Let us begin with the Greek word **stenochoreo** (στενοχωρεω) which refers to being in a straight (i.e. narrow) place. It has the idea of being limited in some fashion. We considered the word in connection with verse 8 of chapter 2. What Paul is telling them is this: "You have not had any trouble with regards to our affections for you but you have been constrained in your hearts toward us." Paul has been open with them; why won't they be open with Paul?

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*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

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2 Corinthians 06:14-18

What does Paul mean when he requests that they not be yoked together with unbelievers? The Greek word is **heterozygos** (ἑτεροζυγος) which is found only here and once in the O.T. (LXX)

*"Keep my decrees. "Do not mate different kinds of animals. "Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. "Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.*

Leviticus 19:19

This verse, then is used as a text to say that a Christians should not marry a non-Christian. The use is proper, but its use goes further than this. A Christians should not enter into any long term and close relationship with a non-Christian. To explain why, Paul gives some analogies.

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| a) <i>Righteousness and wickedness</i> | common     |
| b) <i>light and darkness</i>           | fellowship |
| c) <i>Christ and Belial</i>            | harmony    |
| d) <i>Believer and an unbeliever</i>   | common     |
| e) <i>Temple of God and idols</i>      | agreement  |

Let us begin with the words of connection. Common in (a) is **metoche** (μετοχη) which is found only here in the N.T. Another form of the word is found in the following:

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*So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.*

Luke 05:07

*Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*

Hebrews 03:01

*You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.*

1 Corinthians 10:21

*Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.*

Hebrews 05:13

The idea behind the word is partnership. The answer to the first question is obvious (of course, it is a rhetorical question).

Next is fellowship. This is the word *koinonia* = commonness. What does light have in common with darkness? The answer is simple -NONE! According to the dictionary, the word dark means *without light*. One is the opposite of the other.

Thirdly comes harmony. This is from the Greek word **symphonesis** (συμφωνησις). This word appears, in this form, only here. Other forms are found in the following and is the root of our word *symphony*.

*He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.*

Matthew 20:02

*He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.*

Luke 05:36

*"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.*

Luke 15:25

*Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."*

Acts 05:09

*Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

1 Corinthians 07:05



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Try to put Christ and Satan together and you will have less harmony than you get out of a kindergarten orchestra! The two are not congruent.

The fourth word of comparison is also translated common but comes from another word in the Greek. The Greek word is **meros** (μερος) and is accurately translated part. It refers to a part of the whole. When someone dies, their estate is divided up and each heir receives a part. As Christians we have a reward (part) coming to us at the Judgement Seat of Christ. The unbeliever has a "reward" (part) assigned to him or her at the Great White Throne judgement. The things we will receive are not at all like the things they will receive.

The final comparison word is **sunkatathesis** (συνκαταθεσις) which means, literally, a vote cast at an election along with other votes. Hence,

*Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.*

Luke 23:50-51

This passage refers to a man who had cast a dissenting vote. someone has said you vote whether you want to keep your church open each week by whether or not you come and whether or not you give. You can not choose God's temple and an idol's temple both. You have to vote for one or the other.

*For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

With regard to the last item, the temple, Paul elaborates. The temple is not the building where we go to be with other Christians, we are the temple. Therefore, we shall be involved in only things which are compatible with the temple.

The admonition, then, is to come out from them. The English translation misses one word. We find the phrase come out from their midst in one other passage.

*When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*

Acts 17:32-34

The English translation here is also somewhat missing so we shall turn to another translation. *Come out at once from their midst.* Paul left the midst of the Council but he was not totally separated from them. The text says "a few men became followers... Paul is not saying for us to come completely out of the world (however we might be able to do that!). He is saying not to be in the midst of it (i.e. the "thick" of it). We should not be concerned with the concerns of the world like the unsaved are.

Paul adds that we are to be separate. The word means to stand away from. We are to "stand out from the crowd." We are to be recognized as people who are different than the unsaved. We are to be readily identifiable. We are to be identified as sons and daughters of God.

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*the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.*

Genesis 06:02

*One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.*

Job 01:06

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--*

John 01:12

*. . . because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Romans 08:14

Throughout the ages there are those who have been the sons (and daughters) of God and have been recognized as such. We are to also.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER SEVEN

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*Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

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2 Corinthians 07:01



Verse 1 concludes the thought of the last chapter. Paul concludes by saying that we should purify ourselves since we have these promises. To be specific, the promises Paul cited in Chapter Six, that we would be God's sons and daughters.

He says we are to purify ourselves. Now you probably thought that Christ purified you. There are passages which indicate this.

*The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."*

Acts 10:15

*A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.*

Matthew 08:23

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,*

Ephesians 05:25-26

*while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Titus 02:13-14

*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

Hebrews 09:14

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

1 John 01:07

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 01:09

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

But there are also passages which say we are to do some cleansing.

*Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

James 04:08

The answer as to whom does the cleansing may be seen in the following verse.

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

Matthew 23:25-26

The inward cleaning can only be done by Christ. We can do the outside cleansing. We can "clean up our acts." The Paul also says we are stive for perfection (NIV 1973) or perfecting holiness (NIV 1978 and KJV). The verb is a compound of **teleo** (τελεω) with the prefix **epi** (επι). Without the prefix the verb means to bring to a close or to bring to an end. It is common in the N.T. The prefix intensifies the meaning and hence to bring to an acceptable close. Again, only Christ can make us truly holy. We are to strive to make ourselves holy with respect to outward appearances.

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*Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds. For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.*

---

2 Corinthians 07:02-07

Paul again pleads with them for acceptance. *Make room for us in your hearts.*

The KJV simply says receive us. The Greek, **choreo** (χωρεω) means, literally, make room for. The word is found in the following passage.

*A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.*

Mark 02:01-02

The translators have (properly) inserted in your hearts based on the context of this verse. After a few additional words of encouragement, Paul begins to give them some praise.

a) *I have great confidence in you*

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- b) *I take great pride in you*
- c) *I am greatly encouraged*
- d) *In all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.*

The first is great confidence. The KJV has boldness of speech. The Greek verb means to be able to speak freely or with confidence. In order to speaking with confidence about someone, there must first be confidence in the person and hence the NIV translation. In view of what Paul has been saying one has to wonder how sincere Paul is in this word of praise. It might be that a good paraphrase of this would be I have great confidence in you and I hope that you do not let me down, or I hope my confidence in you will be justified.

Next Paul says he has great pride in them. The KJV has glorying. Basically, he is saying that he can say nice things about them. At least, he is saying that he hopes the nice things he is saying will be justified.

As a result, he is greatly encouraged and his joy knows no bounds. The last phrase is typical of some of the big words Paul uses - **hyperperisseuo** (ὑπερπερισεσσω). This word (or a variation of it) is found in the following.

*People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

Mark 07:37

*The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,*

Romans 05:20

*When we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us. Paul again expresses his concern. Paul had many occasions where he was in distress. This was one of them. In all of them there is always the clause, But God,. Without God life can be, and often is, miserable. With God, we can obtain comfort.*

Does this comfort just drop out of the sky? No! God's comfort usually comes through others. In this case it was Titus who comforted him. It was also the news he brought about how many of those at Corinth had turned their affections to him and had heeded his teaching. He lists attributes for the Corinthians:

- a) Their *longing* for him
- b) Their *deep sorrow* over him
- c) Their *ardent concern* for him

The first word does not need to be elaborated on. We all know what it means to long for something or someone. The Corinthians (at least some of them) longed to see Paul again. Deep sorrow comes from a Greek word that is uncommon in the N.T.. It is a good translation of the word. Paul has commented at length on the many afflictions he had and these people at Corinth had genuine sorrow for all of this.

The third thing is, literally, zeal (i.e. the transliteration of the Greek). To understand what Paul

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means by this one has to take the three terms together. They longed for Paul and, as a result they found out what he was doing and what he had been going through and thus had deep concern for him. This concern then stired their zeal into action, they became ardently concerned enough about him to do something about the situation. They were move into action.

This is the way we should treat all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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*Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it--I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while--yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. By all this we are encouraged.*

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2 Corinthians 07:08-13a

*Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it.* Apparently Paul's first letter had hit home in the hearts of the Corinthians. But, Paul says he does not regret it. That sounds rather strange. If I do something that causes someone great sorrow, I regret it - even if it is someone I don't particularly like. But Paul was not regretful!

The explanation of this follows. We he first learned of their sorrow, he had the same natural reation that you or I would - he regreted it. What changed his thinking? He tells us. He found that they were sorrowful for only a short period of time and then they took action, realizing that what Paul had told them was correct and needed to be heeded.

He then introduces a very important topic, one we would all do well to learn. There are two kinds of sorrow. There is godly sorrow and man-made sorrow.

Sorrow is from **lupe** (λψπη) is the opposite of joy. Other terms for it might be anguish or grief or pain. Often one person is the cause of another's sorrow. Sometimes, however, the source is God. Then we are talking about Godly sorrow. How and why does God inflict sorrow upon His people. Why God causes us to sorrow is that it leads to repentance. This may be repentance in the sense of salvation but, more particularly, it may also be in the sense of changing the things we do or do not do. How does God cause it? In many ways. It may be that in doing something we should not, it brings about bodily harm which leads to sorrow.

God mainly brings sorrow to His people through other people who are led by the Holy Spirit. Paul was one example. People may cause other people great sorrow that are not lead by the Holy Spirit. This is wordly sorrow and is to be avoided. Paul states that it leads to death.

Now, let's get ptractical. You have an unsaved friend and you wish to see him or her saved. You

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can reach out to this unsaved friend in your own strength and tell him that he is a sinner and is going to go to Hell and the like. You may cause him great sorrow in that you fell like that about him. It will not lead him to salvation. On the other hand, you can pray about it and, at the right time, allow the Holy Spirit to speak through you and bring sorrow upon this friend that will lead to repentance. Unfortunately, there are three types of Christians in the world:

- 1) The ones who cause sorrow without being led of the spirit.
- 2) The ones who cause no sorrow because they do not speak up.
- 3) The one through whom God brings sorrow leading to repentance.

Unfortunately, there are far too few in this last group.

Godly sorrow can bring salvation. In this case, it had other results. Paul writes, *See what this godly sorrow has produced in you:* and he then enumerates them.

- 1) *Earnestness*
- 2) *Eagerness to clear themselves*
- 3) *Indignation*
- 4) *Alarm*
- 5) *Longing*
- 6) *Concern*
- 7) *Readiness to see justice done.*

Several of these we have already commented on, longing and concern. First he lists earnestness. The Greek word is **spoude** (σπουδή) which as a literal sense of haste or speed. It is often translated in the KJV with the word diligence. The NIV sometimes translates it eagerness. The word not only implies a sincerity in wanting to do something but also a diligence to get it done as speedily as possible. This leads to the next characteristic.

The second term is **apologian** (απολογία) from which we get apologetic. Our word has come to mean something somewhat different than the Greek. We use the word today when a person asks another person to forgive them for doing something wrong. The Greek word encompasses this idea but goes beyond it. Maybe we are not wrong and the other person only thinks we are. To "apologize" in this case is to speak to them and to convince them that what you did was not wrong. In either case, it restores fellowship between believers. This is the source of the NIV's Eagerness to clear oneself.

The third term is indignation. Some English synonyms for this are anger, resentment and wrath. These terms do not sound like feelings which Christians ought to possess. The Greek word is **aganaktesin** (αγανακτησιν) which is found only here in the N.T. The verb is used a number of times. Most of the occurrences are used in the bad sense we have discussed. Consider the following.

*People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

Mark 10:13-15

The root of the word (appears) to have to do with feeling pain. The word came to refer to mental

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pain, not physical. While this word is not found elsewhere in the Bible, we can locate one or more synonyms.

*How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Selah Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him. In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah*

Psalm 04:02-04

*"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,*  
Ephesians 04:26

Here are an OT and a N.T. example of passages in which Christians are supposed to get angry or indignant. Note, however, in both cases the anger is not to last past nightfall. The Christian is to become angry when there is cause to be angry and, as a result of this anger, to take action to correct the situation. Jesus Himself followed this advice.

*On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"*

Mark 11:15-17

He was angered by what was going on in the temple. His anger moved Him to action. Having taken this action, we may assume that Jesus went to bed that evening with the anger gone.

Fourth on the list is alarm. The Greek word is **phobon** (φοβον) the root of which is the root of our word phobia, a fear of something. The KJV has fear here. But Paul wrote . . .

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

2 Timothy 01:07 KJV

However, if you read this in the NIV, it reads as below.

*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

2 Timothy 01:07

This is a completely different Greek word. We are not to be timid Christians but we are to be fearful or alarmed when there is cause for such. The problem is that too few Christians today are alarmed. The world is going to pot at an alarming rate and Christians are just sitting around peacefully ignoring it.

We are supposed to be alarmed at things which give cause for it. Paul writes,

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be*



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*made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

1 Timothy 02:01-02

Paul admonishes us that we are to pray for those in authority over us. His reason is so that we might live our lives for Christ in peace and quiet. Today it is those in authority that are partly to blame for Christians losing ground and having some of our liberties and freedoms denied us. It is the society in which we live that is becoming more pagan and atheistic all of the time. Yet we do not become alarmed and do anything about it.

Longing and concern we have already considered. The last item on the list is readiness to see justice done. This comes from the Greek word **ekdikēsō** (ἐκδικήσω). The word has an interesting origin. Its root is **dike** (δική) which means right or justice. It is found in the following.

*When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.*

Acts 25:15

*When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."*

Acts 28:04

*They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*

2 Thessalonians 01:09

*In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

Jude 01:07

With the prefix, it means to extract judgement or punishment. Hence we have the following.

*He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"*

Luke 18:02-05

But then we have the apparently contradictory statement . . .

*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

Romans 12:19

Paul says the Corinthians were ready to see justice done. This does not mean that they were to be

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the avengers. It means that they expected God to see to it that justice was done.

*At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. By all this we are encouraged.* Paul now adds a statement that is a bit curious. In his first letter he was very adamant about what was wrong and needed to be corrected. Now he tells them that he was no so much concerned with the things or people that needed correction but with the people as a whole accepting the responsibility to see that this was done. He wanted to "test their mettle" and see if they would listen to his words and follow his advice. They did and he was encouraged.

It is still the same today. As Christians, the thing that is of uttermost importance is that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing in causing the church to be what it is supposed to be. It is of lesser importance that there are those in the church that are not.

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*In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.*

---

2 Corinthians 07:13b-16

When Christians are doing what they are supposed to be doing, it is not only good for them, it is good for those they come in contact with. Paul was greatly encouraged by their response to his first letter. Titus was too. Titus was refreshed in his spirit - **anapauo** (αναπαψω).

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*  
Matthew 11:28

*Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

Mark 06:31

*Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.*

Philemon 01:07

*Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*

Revelation 14:13

Note that the words refresh and rest are used interchangeably. Refreshment comes from rest. Rest comes when another is ready to take over and relieve you for a period. The response of the

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Corinthians was something that comforted Titus and allowed him to rest from his concern from them. Hence he was refreshed.

Paul concludes the chapter with praise for the church. He claims that he has complete confidence in them. To have someone like the Apostle Paul say that he has complete confidence in them is certainly gratifying. How would you like the Lord to say to you, "I have complete confidence in you."?

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### CHAPTER EIGHT

*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*



2 Corinthians 08:01-05

Paul turns from his praise for those at Corinth to praise for those in Macedonia. This would include the Christians at Philippi, Thessalonika and Berea. He speaks of the generosity. This he mentions in other places.

*Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*

Philippians 04:15-18

He is probably referring mostly to the church at Philippi when he uses the term Macedonia. He tells us the source of their generosity.

- 1) *The most severe trial*
- 2) *Their overflowing joy*
- 3) *Their extreme poverty*

The terms translated most severe trial are nowhere else found together. Leaving out the middle word, we do find the following.

*They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

Acts 14:21-22

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*For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.*

2 Corinthians 02:04

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.*

1 Thessalonians 01:06

In Acts, Luke recorded the words of Paul and the other, saying that great hardships awaited those who look for the coming of God's kingdom. From 2 Corinthians 2:4 we learn that Paul did go through extreme hardships. From 1 Thessalonians 1:6 we learn that others, who imitated Paul in his beliefs also went through severe hardships.

Have you endured great hardships for God? Should you have? From what one can learn about this country (and the world today) we will go through great hardships unless the Lord returns for us soon. Perhaps, if we had endured hardships in the past and stood up for Christian principals, the country would not be in the state it is in today and we would not face hardships in the future.

Those in Macedonia endured sever trials and hardships. Then, to this Paul adds the second attribute - great joy. It is interesting to note that the two go together in several places in the N.T.

*A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.*

John 16:21

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.*

1 Thessalonians 01:06

*I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.*

2 Corinthians 07:04

It is of interest to note that the word for joy, **charis** (χαρις) is also the word for grace. Paul wrote,

*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

2 Corinthians 12:07-09

If you want more of God's grace, more joy, you must experience more of His afflictions and hardships. If you live a life of ease here on earth, there is no reason why God should bestow the riches of his grace upon you, you do not need it! The Macedonians suffered significantly. God gave them grace in this time of trial.

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Lastly, comes extreme poverty. Later in this chapter Paul writes,

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

2 Corinthians 08:09

and Christ said to the church at Smyrna, the persecuted church,

*I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

Revelation 02:09

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 05:03

The Macedonia were poor and they did not know it. There are many people today who have a great deal of money and yet are extremely poor. They are poor because of the spiritual conditions - not their financial positions. But, just as good can give grace, He can relieve poverty.

In spite of their poverty, the Macedonians were like the widow with her last mite. They gave generously to the work of the Gospel. *For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.* There are the following types of Christians today.

- 1) Those who give nothing.
- 2) Those who give sparingly.
- 3) Those who give as they are able.
- 4) Those who give beyond their ability.

The majority fall into the first two categories. Most of the rest fall into the third. Few fall into the fourth, few understand the passage below.

*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Corinthians 09:07

The word cheerful is **hilaron** (ἡλερον) from which we get the word hilarious. Paul writes that they did not just give what they could. They not only gave beyond their normal ability but they urgently pleaded with Paul that they be allowed the privilege of sharing in the ministry. It is of interest that the word privilege here is the same word we just considered, grace or joy. As God had bestowed joy and grace upon them, they wished to pass it on to others who had not yet experienced it. They were willing to give whatever it took to promote the good of the kingdom.

One wonders at this. How were they able to do this? Could you give in this manner or would it make you uncomfortable? No one can give like this! How, then, did they? Paul tells us. *And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*

Paul says they did not do as he expected. He does not tell us what he expected. He probably

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expected them to give the way most of us give. They, however, did something quite unexpected. They did not give Paul any money (at first). They did not give Paul anything (at first). Instead they gave themselves to the Lord. God does not want our money. He wants US. What does this mean?

*And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*

Luke 11:2KJV

Having given themselves to the Lord, what happened? The same as it was with Jesus Himself.

*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

Luke 22:42

Once they belonged to the Lord in a Lord-Servant relationship, they no longer needed to be concerned with their will, they did the will of the Lord. After all, that is what Lord means. The Lord, then, directed them to given themselves to the work of Paul and also of their substance.

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*So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

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2 Corinthians 08:06-07

Having explained the generosity of the Macedonians, Paul again turns to the Corinthians. He is expecting them to follow suit and do as the Macedonians did. They had made progress but they had not gotten around to giving in the manner of the Macedonians. That had not excelled in the grace of giving.

We often speak of God's grace. Some have defined it is God's Riches At Christ's Expense (G.R.A.C.E.) and others have contrasted it with mercy, "Grace is receiving what we do not deserve and mercy is not getting what we do deserve." But here we are talking about you and I being the givers of grace. It refers to our giving beyond what one might reasonably believe to be sufficient. It refers to giving beyond the point where it is comfortable.

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*I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

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2 Corinthians 08:08-12

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Paul does not command the Corinthians to give. God does not command us to give. We have already cited the verse that tells us that God loves a "hilarious" giver. He loves the giver but does not command it. Rather, Paul uses their giving as a thermometer of their love and faith. Some have said that Paul and James were miles apart. Not so here!

*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

James 02:26

James said that a person really has no faith if there is no works. He could also have said that a person has only a little faith if there is little work involved. Paul was measuring the faith of the Corinthians by their giving!

Paul goes further. He has pointed out the way the Macedonians have given. It was the Corinthians, however, who started it. They were the first to have a desire to give and then to fulfil that desire by giving. The problem was that, for some reason, they had ceased in their giving. What was the reason? Paul does not state it. It is not hard to guess.

A missionary couple will speak in church and really impress members of the congregation and move them into action. In the weeks that follow, the church members pray for the couple, they send them support, they are truly concerned about them. But then . . .

*Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.*

Mark 04:18-19

They get caught up in other things. The prayers diminish. The giving diminishes. The care wanes. Finally, the support stops altogether. The giving of the Corinthians had ceased. Paul urges them to repent from their laziness and to complete their giving.

Now, we come to something which might have been better unsaid. *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable.* In other words, don't bother giving if you are not willing to do so. Should we tell our members not to give if they don't want to? We have already noted that God loves a cheerful giver. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God loves an unwilling giver. God does not even think much of a disinterested giver.

*As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*

Luke 21:01-04

Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering. Some probably gave quite a lot. They were all giving "out of their wealth." They still had plenty of money left over when they were done. It wasn't hurting them at all. It was the widow who gave self-sacrificially who impressed Jesus. It is still the same today.

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*Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need,*



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*so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."*

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2 Corinthians 08:13-15

Now, you can relax a little. Paul puts a lid on the matter of giving. At the time Paul was writing, it was the Christians back in Jerusalem who were in great need. The Corinthians gift would be of great help back in Jerusalem. But it would do no good if the Corinthians gave so much that the people in Jerusalem ended up with more money than those at Corinth. Paul calls for equality.

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*I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.*

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2 Corinthians 08:16-24

In this passage, Paul speaks about sending three men to Corinth for the purpose of receiving the offering they will have taken for the church at Jerusalem. One of these is Titus, who the other two were there is no way of knowing. We can still learn something out these two, as well as of Titus, from this passage.

First there is Titus. Paul says God put the same concern in Titus' heart that He put in Paul's. There are those who wonder if it was the other way around. There are those who suspect that, in serving as an intermediary between Paul and the Church at Corinth, Titus encouraged Paul in his feelings for the people at Corinth. In addition, Titus was going as part of the group, not only because he was asked, but because he really wanted to. There is good reason for this and we shall consider this later.

The second person, who is not named, was one who was praised by all of the churches for his service to the Gospel. "All of the churches" should be interpreted as "all the churches of Macedonia." Literally, the Greek would indicate that the praise was in his knowledge of the Gospels. Moreover, he was chosen by these churches to fulfill this ministry of collecting the offering and taking it to Jerusalem.

The word chosen is from a Greek term that refers to the laying on of hands and is found in the following passage.

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*And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

Acts 14:23

In other words, this man was an official representative of these churches. He was elected to accompany the group. The Greek word is **synekdemōs** (συνεκδημος) which is a compound of three words with-out-people. Leave off the first part of the word and we have a word found back in chapter 5.

*Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*

2 Corinthians 05:06,08-09

In the above verses we have the word without the prefix three times (**ekdemeo** (εκδημew)) and we also have the same root word with the prefix **en** (εν) three times and translated "at home." This representative was to leave his home and his people and accompany Titus with the collection. The last part of verse 19 is a bit difficult to translate accurately. We have . . .

. . .with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord . . . KJV  
. . .as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself . NIV  
. . .in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself  
NAS  
. . .  
. . .in this work of administering the gifts of others. It is a task that brings glory to God . . .  
Phillips  
. . .in the matter of this grace [their financial contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem]  
which is being administered by us [this arrangement whereby two are responsible for the  
distribution of money] with a view toward the glory of the same Lord . . . Wuest

While the KJV is, perhaps, the most literal translation, it omits what needs to be filled in to make the verse understandable. We have already noted that giving is an act of grace and hence the grace which Paul is speaking of is the collection that the Church at Corinth was taking. The administration spoken of also needs to be expanded to indicate that Paul is speaking of the manner in which the money received was to be handled.

Before introducing the third man, Paul explains the reasons behind the rather elaborate plans for receiving the offering and taking it to Jerusalem. He did so to avoid criticism. Criticism, if it is constructive, can be helpful. More often than not, it is hurtful. Peter was criticised in the passage below.

*The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."*

Acts 11:01-03

Peter had done the Lord's will. He had opened the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles but he was criticised for it. In this case, it was not malicious criticism, it was criticism based on ignorance. The

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Christians in Jerusalem were not properly instructed that the gospel for for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. In the matter of handling the money received from Corinth, Paul wished to take no chances on being criticised, either rightfully or wrongfully.

Paul then states that he is taking pains to do what is right, not only in God's eyes, but also in the eyes of men. He uses a similar expression in the following.

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*

Romans 12:17

Even if something is right in God's eyes, if men are likely to perceive it is being wrong, don't do it. We have considered this principal in the first letter, the doctrine of the Weaker Brother. Paul is taking great pains in the way he is arranging to have the funds transfered from Corinth to Jerusalem. He is sending Titus who is trusted by the Corinthians. He is sending this other man who is trusted by the Macedonian churches. He is sending three men altogether that . . .

*. . . "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."*

2 Corinthians 13:01

He is ensuring that there will be sufficient witnesses. This is both a N.T. and an O.T. principle. First, if these two or three are gathered in the name of the Lord,

*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*

Matthew 18:20

This is expanded in the following.

*Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.*

1 Timothy 05:19

and

*But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'*

Matthew 18:16

The O.T. principle is stated clearly.

*On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.*

Deuteronomy 17:06

*One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

Deuteronomy 19:15

*Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

Hebrews 10:28

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The following excerpt is from the *CLERGY DESK BOOK* by Manfred Holc, Jr. It deals with precautions that ought to be taken today.

### *INTERNAL CONTROL*

*Internal control is a plan of control, not only to detect error or fraud, but to safeguard assets - to check the dependability of financial records; to encourage operating efficiency and adherence to the rules, regulations, and policies set by management: An accounting system for a church is essentially based upon the principles of internal control accepted by that congregation.*

*Thus, a good system of internal control will help prevent theft. It will keep honest members honest by removing the temptation to dishonesty. And, it will help to defend officials against unjustified claims of incompetence in the management of contributions made by the membership.*

*The assets of the congregation must be safeguarded from unauthorized use so that dollars are available when needed for programs. For not only would the loss of a large sum be a crime but it might seriously jeopardize the programs of the church, as well. Appropriate internal control features minimize those risks of loss.*

*There are, of course, many checks and balances that a congregation might develop to be certain that there is no intentional or unintentional misstatement of any transaction or account balance. And any system of internal control must account for that. But handling cash often proves to be a temptation to steal. And it is that physical asset of cash that is the thrust of the principles listed below.*

*Receivables, inventories, securities, and other assets are not of as much concern as cash, although proper controls must be maintained for those assets as well.*

*In developing any accounting system so that internal controls are adequate, just plain, good, common sense is important. So any listing of controls includes rather obvious and elementary procedures. Nevertheless, listing them is important. You can check off your own procedures by comparing what you do with what you "ought to do."*

*1. Don't assign the same person responsibility for more than one of the following tasks: counting the offering, writing checks, recording individual contributions, and reconciling the bank statement with the financial record books.*

*That separation is important in order to reduce the opportunity for any misappropriation. When one individual has responsibility for more than one function involving cash, the ease of misappropriation is greatly increased. For example, if the same person that counted the offering also kept the individual contribution records, false entries could easily be made to the member's account and the cash pocketed. A verification request to the member would reveal nothing amiss since the record would be accurate. Only an audit of all contributions and a determination that all contributions*

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*had not been properly deposited and recorded would reveal the discrepancy. But, that would be time-consuming and would only be done upon suspicion of an irregularity. Or, if the same person counts the offering and writes the checks, one set of records could be falsified to cover up a discrepancy in the other set. Bank statements reconciled by the person who writes the checks can be used effectively to cover up checks inappropriately written to the embezzler or a fake payee.*

We have observed this with people appointed as (a) Financial Secretaries and assistants, (b) bookkeepers, (3) Treasurer and assistant treasurer, and (4) Elders who are involved in the finances.

*2. Make certain that at least two people are in custody of the offering until it has been safely deposited in the bank or placed in a night depository or safe.*

*It doesn't take much imagination to figure out what could happen to the loose coins and bills in an offering plate if only one person has access to them. Since receipts have not nor will not be given for those gifts, there is no way to tell how much money should be in that offering. The temptation is there to slip a few coins or bills out of the pile with no one the wiser for it.*

*When at least two people must be around that cash all the time until it is safely deposited, the chance of cash going into the wrong pocket is minimized. The two people may not watch each other, but the likelihood of two people entering into a collusion to defraud the church is less likely than for one person. Not only does this procedure protect the congregation's money, but it also prevents unjustified accusation against an individual suspected of taking the money. No one should agree to handle the cash unless a second person is also assigned the task.*

*And the rule is important from beginning to end. It is not enough to have several people counting the offering (just because that gets the job done more quickly), but two people need to take the offering plates off the altar, go together to the counting room, count together, and together take the bag to the bank. Such togetherness is an essential element of internal control.*

We have followed this to the extent possible. There are not always two financial people around to handle all offerings.

*3. Promptly deposit all money-cash or checks-received on Sunday or during the week. A list of checks received should be compared regularly with the bank statement. Those responsible for record keeping should not have access to the mail.*

*The purpose of this control is to prevent any misappropriation of money after it has been received. Midweek mail is not likely to include any cash, but it may include a substantial number of checks. While it is supposed to be relatively difficult to endorse a check made out to someone else, with care it can be. Thus, checks received in midweek, or even those received on Sunday, should be promptly endorsed for deposit and available in the bank.*

*Safeguards for protecting such midweek contributions include mail opening*

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*by someone not responsible in any way for record keeping. Checks should be promptly endorsed by that person and a list made of checks received. A copy of that list may be given to the treasurer and the financial secretary, the latter to make the deposit. The point of that activity is to prevent those responsible for record keeping from converting a check to their own use and marking the records as though it had been received.*

*A comparison of that list with the amount deposited as shown on the bank statement will confirm that the deposit and all the checks listed were received. That comparison may well be made by the person reconciling the bank statement. When confirmation of contributions recorded are sent out to members, it will quickly be evident if the person opening the mail has misappropriated any checks.*

*The purpose of depositing the Sunday offering promptly is to have a record of all receipts and disbursements. No payment for services should be made from that offering. Checks should be written to pay for any bills. Such a control will not prevent a person from claiming and getting any illegal payment from the church, but at least a check request will have to be made. All bills should be paid by check and all cash received deposited.*

The Sunday morning offerings are promptly deposited in a safe. The Sunday Evening offerings (and any other occasional offerings are also promptly deposited. The offerings are always deposited in the bank on Monday mornings (holidays excepted).

*4. Encourage all members to use offering envelopes. The purpose of this control is to make certain that each member's contributions are actually received by the congregation as intended. It is obvious that loose cash can easily be removed for personal benefit without anyone else being aware of the loss:*

*An envelope offering means a record will be made of the gift and a confirmation requested from the member. Members should contact the church secretary if they fail to receive a report of their offerings. When adequate procedures are followed, the use of offering envelopes can be an effective internal control feature.*

*Another purpose for using offering envelopes is to provide the member with a record of gifts to the church for income tax purposes. Offerings made by envelope and verified by the congregation are acceptable to the Internal Revenue Service.*

*Some pastors prefer to know what each member has given. The use of envelopes makes that possible. And statistical information about giving patterns, as needed for reporting or projecting, is easily available from offering envelope records. Offering envelopes are especially useful when members insist on giving cash rather than writing checks. But either way, the envelope is useful. For their own record and protection of the gift made, all members should be encouraged, where possible, to make their contribution to the church by check.*

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We have not pushed for offering envelopes for several reasons. One is that they make a lot of extra work for the Financial Secretary. In addition, they turn out to be rather expensive, considering the number which actually get used. Canceled checks are acceptable to the IRS. People who only put a few dollars in the offering each year are probably not concerned about a tax break. The issue of the pastor preferring to know what each member gives is a taboo in our church. We do not believe that anyone should know what anyone else gives. Obviously, the Financial Secretary knows when people give by check. He is obligated not to divulge this information.

*5. Don't let just anyone have access to the offering and to the checking account. Just the same as the same person should not have access to receipts and to the checkbook, access to cash should be carefully defined and limited to only certain persons.*

*Perhaps many people do assist with the counting of the Sunday offering but if there is any confusion in the procedure, proper controls may be lacking. A selected group of people, thoroughly familiar with the controls and the procedures can count efficiently and accurately. Controlling cash receipts involves careful screening of those who count the cash.*

*It is better to limit the number of those authorized to sign checks. There may lack of control when only one person signs the checks, as well as when the same person counts money and signs checks, too. But six authorized signers is generally unnecessary. Since any two of these could presumably be authorized to sign, the other four, and notably the treasurer, may be unaware of checks written by the other two. Three authorized signers should be sufficient, with the treasurer always in charge of the checkbook.*

This section deals with several issues which are taken together. People who collect the money should not be the same as the people who are charged with spending it. The only people in our church who have anything to do with the money received are the Financial Secretary and his assistants. They receive the money and bank it. Cash receipts are not at issue in our church since, in general, they are not requested and can not be given when offering envelopes are used.

With respect to checks, we have four people who can sign checks. A check must be signed by two people. Two of the four are the Treasurer and Assistant treasurer. The other two are Elders.

*6. Insist that all payments be by check. Adequate supporting documentation should accompany each check. The purpose of this control is to be certain that a record of all disbursements is kept and that only those authorized to make payments have done so. A check is a permanent record of a payment. It verifies that a payment has been made, when it was made, to whom it was paid, the amount paid, and even the purpose of the payment.*

*The only payments made by cash are those from the petty cash fund. Everything else should be paid by check. The supporting voucher designates the authority for the payment. The check signer verifies that authority by writing the check.*

All of our payments are by check. Since every cent of money collected is banked, it is necessary and correct that all payments be made by checks. Not only are the cancelled checks maintained for

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records of purchase but the bills and invoices are also maintained in the files.

Even petty cash expenditures are made by check. The church has four "official" checking accounts - General Fund, Missions, Building Maintenance, and Office Petty Cash. The use of multiple accounts accomplishes several things. Having the missionaries and related mission expenses paid from the missions account relieves the treasurer from the work of issuing these checks and puts the job in the hand of someone whose interest is in missions - the missions treasurer.

The building maintenance and the office petty cash accounts provide a means for small quick purchases necessary in the day-to-day operation of the church. Tracking of these expenditures and control over the money spent still lies in the hands of the treasurer since money in these accounts is not replenished until justification is provided for the expense.

*7. Require two signatures on every check. Since the treasurers of many congregations generally keep the financial record books and prepare and sign the checks, too, a second signature should be required. Anyone signing a check should examine carefully the support documentation and ascertain that the check is properly authorized.*

*This control also prevents the treasurer from writing a fraudulent check, absconding with the proceeds, and covering up the act by necessary entries in the records. The second signer must verify the authority. Invoices are marked paid when signed to avoid a duplicate payment and another chance to misappropriate funds. Obviously, blank checks should not be signed in advance by anyone.*

*A check protector machine and the use of prenumbered, imprinted personalized checks are desirable control features.*

We do all of this except for the check protector. In addition, neither the treasurer nor the Elder who signs the checks maintains the financial records. This is done by the book keeper.

*8. Assign someone other than those who handle cash or keep the financial records the responsibility for receiving and reconciling the bank statement.*

*The purpose of this control is to prevent the treasurer from writing a fraudulent check, covering up the fraud in the books and destroying the cancelled check when it is returned by the bank. Another person designated by the finance committee should have the statement mailed directly from the bank and immediately reconcile that bank balance with the checkbook and journals of the congregation. It means securing the records from the treasurer verifying all checks cancelled as those authorized, accounting for outstanding checks, and verifying all deposit slips with deposits shown on the bank statement.*

*The treasurer of a congregation should insist on this procedure, as inconvenient as it may be, if for no other reason than to prevent suspicion of wrongdoing.*



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Again, it is the responsibility of the book keeper, who has no authority to spend money, to reconcile bank statements and keeping the records.

*9. Use a church budget effectively. The church budget can well be one of the most effective internal controls available to a congregation. By comparing budgeted amounts with actual expenditures, church officers can detect whether funds are being spent as authorized. Any deviations can be immediately investigated.*

*This kind of regular review is very important. Every member of the official board should examine the financial statements and be prepared to question any serious deviations. frequent and constant probing often uncovers potentially serious problems.*

*Of course, the effectiveness of this control depends upon timely financial statements, monthly and as soon as possible. This control also presumes that reports will be prepared in such a manner that comparisons can be made and marked deviations quickly noted, questioned, and explained.*

This advice is followed rigorously. A financial report is presented to the Board of Elders each month. This statement shows how much has been spent so far for the year and how much was budgeted and the difference. The report also contains the balances in all church accounts and any recommendations or comments that the book keeper feels the board needs to be aware of. Such statements are also available to any member on request.

*10. Do not let any financial officers write off any unpaid pledges. If a congregation records pledges as receivables, none should be written off without the explicit approval of the official board.*

*To permit such receivable write-off at will allows those with access to the records to cover up offerings received and not recorded. The write-off quite conveniently obscures the perpetration of that kind of fraud.*

This does not apply to our church since we do not take pledges.

*11. Keep marketable securities, notes, valuable personal property, cash (coins, bills, or checks) in a safe place. If a congregation has securities, notes, valuable jewels, coins, or other objects, they should be kept in a safe deposit box. Keep cash in a check or savings account.*

*The purpose of this control is to protect those assets from theft, fire, or improper appropriation. For greatest protection these should not be kept in a safe on the premises but in the custody of a bank. A bank safe-deposit box requiring two signatures for entry is recommended, thus preventing any one person from making an unauthorized entry.*

We have nothing other than cash to protect. All cash is banked.

*12. Maintain an inventory of assets. This control is necessary to be certain that the*

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*congregation knows at all times precisely what assets it has and where they are located' A periodic count to verify the location of all items will determine which, if any, are missing.*

*Such a record should include a description of the item, cost, date of purchase, location, intended use, and eventual disposition and sale. Such information is not only valuable in keeping track of the assets but, in case of fire, will provide replacement cost information quickly. Such a record is also important in a congregation because employees and volunteers using that equipment come and go. A written record helps to verify what is available.*

Such a record exists and was updated recently. We really need someone, other than the book keeper, to maintain this inventory.

*13. Make sure an annual audit is conducted. The purpose of this control is to have disinterested persons (persons not involved in the financial record keeping procedures) attest to the accuracy of the records and adherence to authorized and generally accepted procedures in the record keeping Process.*

Our church Bylaws call for an audit committee. Unfortunately, the board frequently does not get around to forming such a committee each year.

*14. Put all of your cash handling procedures into writing. The purpose of this control is to assure continuity in record keeping procedures and to provide an explanation to those assigned responsibility.*

*Consistency in record keeping and reporting is important in order to note and examine deviation. Control is maintained best by persistently using those procedures approved by the official board.*

*15. Get a fidelity bond for all cash handlers! The purpose of this control is to make certain that the congregation will, in fact, be reimbursed if an embezzlement does occur. The insurance may also act as a deterrent to misuse because employees will be aware that an insurance company may press more severely for recovery of its loss than may the congregation.*

*Don't be lulled into an unrealistic dependence on this type of insurance, however. Good records are essential to prove a loss did occur. A suspicion of loss is insufficient for recovery.*

We have not bonded our cash handlers. It is not practical to do so for a church our size. Our general church insurance policy (I believe) provides limited coverage of the type listed above.

What safeguards a church uses depends of the circumstances of that church. Suffice it to say, the establishment of safeguards has its Biblical precedent in the situation described in this passage.

*In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. Who this third person was, we do not know. He possessed the same qualities as the other two. we have already noted the*

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Biblical precedent for three people.

*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.* With these three men Paul sends his instructions to Corinth, stressing their character and importance and asking the church to receive them accordingly.

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## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER NINE

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*There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. But I am sending the brothers in order that*

*our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to say anything about you--would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

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2 Corinthians 09:01-05

It is unfortunate that someone saw fit to split the chapters as has been done here. This passage is a continuation of what we were studying in Chapter 8. It is dealing with the three men that Paul is sending to Corinth to prepare their offering. Paul says there is not need for him to continue writing to them about this gift as they already knew what needed to be done.

Have you ever had a Christian friend, or know a Christian group, who started an important work for the Lord and had great zeal for it? Has it turned out that, after telling all of your friends about this, the work began to slide and was never completed? If you have never experienced this, you are most fortunate. All too often, Christians will start out on an endeavor with great zeal and then get caught up in other things. Their zeal diminishes as does their work toward the completion of the work.

This was, apparently, the case at Corinth. They had decided to take up a collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. They had, most likely, established some sort of goal and began working toward it. Paul had observed it and was very impressed by their zeal in this endeavor. As he told Christians in other places about this endeavor, other Christians became inspired to do the same thing. The churches in Macedonia had begun to take up a collection. They had caught the zeal of the Corinthians.

Now, however, Paul apparently had reason to believe that the collection of this gift had been neglected and the goal was still a good ways off. He was concerned that when he reached Corinth, ready to take the gift to Jerusalem, it would not be ready. Was Paul trying to shame them into completing their giving? Note his words carefully. *I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will*

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*be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.* No, he knew that he would receive the gift in one way or another. Either they prepared for it in advance or they would scrape it together in a hurry when he came. In either case he would receive it.

The difference is in how it would be given. He wanted the giving to be an **eulogian** (εὐλογίαν) and not a **pleonezian** (πλεονεξίαν). The first word translates, literally, as good word. It is the source of our word eulogy. It is usually translated as blessing because that is usually how someone is blessed. We are blessed by the things that God tells us. We can be a blessing to others by speaking encouraging words to them. But, as in this case, we can also be a blessing by giving to their needs.

He wanted their gift to be a blessing, not only to the Christians in Jerusalem but also to the givers, those in Corinth. He wanted them to be able to give cheerfully, because they wanted to. He did not want them to feel obligated to give. The second word is usually translated as covetness. He did not wish them to take from the money they coveted and give it to him. He wanted them to be willing givers, not grudging givers.

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*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

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2 Corinthians 09:06-11

We have already dealt with verse 7 and God loving a hilerous giver. The part of this passage that remains of importance is the concept that Paul presents. He uses the sowing of seed as a metaphore. Jesus often used this picture. He used it for the spreading of the Gospel. Giving of our substance is one way in which the sowing is done.

*Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* This is brought out on one of Jesus's parables.

*"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been*

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*faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.*

Matthew 25:14-17

Someone has said, "Give according to your income lest the Lord make you income according to your giving." The principal which Paul lays down is not that we should give a tithe. What does the Bible say about tithing?

*and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*

Genesis 28:22

*"Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD'S offering.*

Numbers 18:26

*When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.*

Deuteronomy 26:12

*He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants.*

1 Samuel 08:15

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.*

Matthew 23:23

*"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.*

Luke 11:42

*I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

Luke 18:12

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

All of the verses except the last three are in the O.T. The three in the N.T. do not commend tithing. Tithing is not a N.T. principal. The principal which Paul lays down is that you should give what the Lord puts in your heart to give. This may be only 5% of your income or 50%. This is not to say that a tithe is not a good starting place in deciding what to give.

Let's take an example. There are about 120 active families in our church. If only one member of each family worked (or received retirement) and he or she received only minimum wage (\$4.25 per hour), and if a tenth of this was given to the church (forty-two and a half cents an hour), the annual giving for the church would amount to \$106,080. This would have been more than enough to meet the budget for the year. Given that some families make considerably more than this, it is safe to conclude that the majority of Christians in our church, or any church, do not even give a tithe.

There are some who believe they tithe. After the payroll deductions have been made from their checks they give 10% of what is left. Some go so far as to give 10% of what is left after outstanding bills have been paid. The Biblical principal is that the Lord's ten percent comes off the top - 10% of your gross pay.

But, again, that may be a guideline for us and only a guideline. Paul says we are to give what the Lord lays on our hearts to give. In verse 8 he adds to this. He denies the principal that we can not give what we do not have. Rather, we will not have what we do not give. If the Lord lays it on your heart to give \$500 a month to the church and you do not have \$500 to give, what do you do?

According to Paul you give it anyway. If you are faithful in giving what the Lord puts in your heart to give, the Lord will also provide the means. There are some churches and organizations who operate differently than we do. Some have the members make pledges at the beginning of the year. It usually doesn't work out very well because members are not very good at keeping their pledges. Then there are organizations who use the "Faith Promise Giving." In concept it is what we have been talking about. If the Lord lays in on your heart to give \$500 a month in 1993, you pledge that you will give that amount, even if you have no idea where the money will come from. The concept is fine but the practice is not. The pledges are usually taken, on the spot, after a very inspirational message and many of those who pledge are caught up in the spirit of the affair and pledge, not according to what the Lord has really put on their hearts to give, but what the spirit of the moment prompts them to give.

The other problem is that pledging is not Biblical. What you decide to give is a matter between only you and the Lord. I see not instances in the Bible where people promise (to people or organizations) to give a certain amount during the year.

Paul concludes this passage with the principal that giving in this manner constitutes a regenerative feedback system. If you are not an engineer, that means nothing to you. If you have ever sat in church (or some other gathering place) and someone has turned the sound system up too far, you have experienced the results of such a system. A small sound enters the microphone and is amplified and comes out of the speaker. This amplified sound reaches the microphone louder than the original sound and so is amplified even louder ... and louder ... and louder until you can't hardly stand the screeching noise! If you give according to Biblical principals, the Lord will bless you to the extent that you can give even more and, if you give even more, the Lord will bless you more still. That's a better deal than the lottery!

*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.* It should be made clear what this verse does not say. We often talk about spiritual riches which we have in

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Christ. Paul did previously . . .

*. . . sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

2 Corinthians 06:10

The word which Paul uses here can refer to spiritual riches, as above. It usually refers to material riches as below.

*The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.*

Luke 08:14

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*

1 Timothy 06:17

*Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.*

James 05:02

In this passage, Paul is not speaking of spiritual riches, he is speaking of material riches. He is promising that if we give as the Lord leads us, He will reward us with riches.

What we have been talking about sounds nice, but does it really work? I can testify from personal experience that it does. Someone has said, "You can not outgive the Lord!" My wife and I have found that whenever we give what we feel the Lord puts in our hearts to give, we end up having more than we began with. Others who have practiced this have testified the same thing.

The final point in this passage is this. *Through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.* Not only are we blessed when we give, but what we gives proves to be a blessing to others as well. It is sometimes very difficult to handle the emotions involved when some missionary writes and tells you that the \$50 you sent them made the difference between being able to stay on the field or returning home when the \$50 meant very little to you. You think, "I'll send \$50, that won't hurt me and maybe it will do some good." Then you learn of what good it really did.

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*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

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2 Corinthians 09:12-15

Paul concludes this chapter and passage with an extremely gracious praise for the gift of the Corinthian church. He speaks of the surpassing grace God gave them. The word surpassing is from the Greek



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**huperballo** ('ψπερβαλλω) which is found in five places in the N.T.

### GOD'S GLORY

*For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.*

2 Corinthians 03:10

### GOD'S GRACE

*And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.*

2 Corinthians 09:14

### GOD'S POWER

*and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,*

Ephesians 01:19

### GOD'S RICHES

*in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 02:07

### GOD'S LOVE

*and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Ephesians 03:19

All this surpassing grace because of their material generosity!

He ends the chapter with thanks to God for this indescribable gift. This comes from a very interesting Greek word found only here in the Bible. It is **anekdiergomai** (ανεκδιηρογομαι) which is made up of a Greek root with no less than three prefixes. The verb, ergomai, which means to go before or to be a leader. Then the prefix di is added. This narrows the meaning to to lead or carry a narration through to the end.

*In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."*

Acts 08:33

To this is added the prefix, ek, which gives it the meaning to tell the entire story

*"Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."*

Acts 13:41

Finally, the prefix an is added which negates the meaning. It thus refers to something that is so extensive that one could never relate the entire story. It refers to something which is totally incomprehensible to the human mind and this can not be told.

What more can we say than what Paul leaves us with? The results that proceed from our opening

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our hearts to God and becoming willing to give of our substance for His work lead to blessing which can not be described. The degree to which you and I experience these is proportional to the degree in which we respond to God's calling.

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### CHAPTER TEN

*By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you--I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*



2 Corinthians 10:01-06

Paul leaves of the specifics that he has been discussing in the last few chapters and begins another line of thought. In beginning this new line, he asserts that he is doing it in the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*. Perhaps we should be sure we know what this means. Was Christ being meek when he overturned the money changes tables in the temple? The term for meekness was used in 1 Corinthians 4:21. It is the Greek word **praiotes** (πραϊοτης) and is found in a number of places, especially ...

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 05:22-23

The second term, gentleness, id from **epieikeia** (επιεικεια) which is found in only one other passage.

*But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.*

Acts 24:04

It is somewhat strange that the first Greek word, meekness is translated as kindness in Galatians. The BASB translation of Galatians 5:25 has the following:

*... gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (NASB)*

Galatians 05:23 NASB

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Where the word is translated gentleness. The NASB translates ACTS 24:4 as below.

*"But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.*

Acts 24:04 NASB

So we have the following:

KJV	NIV	NAS
meekness	meekness	gentleness
gentleness	kindness	kindness

From this it would be reasonable to assume that the words are synonyms and are placed together for the purpose of emphasis. The combination does not refer to meekness in the sense we use it today. The expression refers to one who consistently seeks to do what is most beneficial to others. Kindness fits this description well as well as the NAS's translation gentleness. It would refer, for example, to correction a person who is doing wrong in a very gentle and kind manner. This, then, is what Christ does and what Paul emulated.

*I appeal to you--I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away!* As Paul appeals to them, he uses a contrast. He says he is one way when he is face to face with them and another when away. This contrast is:

	With Them	Away From Them
NIV	timid	bold
NAS	meek	bold
KJV	base	bold

All three translations agree on the later. The first is from the Greek **tapeinos** (ταπεινος) which has a base meaning of low or lowly. Perhaps timid is its best translation. It is consistent with what we looked at above. Paul was gentle when dealing with others. The second term is from **tharrheo** (θαρρῶ) and, as indicated by the three translations, is best translated by bold.

Paul explains what he means by this when he explains that he is bold when he deals with those who are antagonistic with him. With those who are sympathetic with his, it is his preference to be timid. When he shows up in Corinth, he wishes the people to be sympathetic with him so that he may be his usual timid self rather than speaking boldly and harshly as he would to antagonists. *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*

Paul reminds those in Corinth, and you and I as well, that we live in the world. This phrase is rather common in the N.T.

*He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.*

John 01:10

*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*

John 01:10 NASB

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Christ, for some 30 years, was in the world as you and I are. He told us that, because we live in the world, we will have tribulation - tribulation apart from Christ.

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

John 16:33

*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

John 16:33 NASB

When Christ left, he said,

*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one.*

John 17:11

In spite of the fact that we still remain in the world, we are not to wage war the way the world does. We do not use the weapons of the world. In Ephesians Paul listed the armor and weapons that we are to use and they are spiritual. This statement should cause a Christian to wonder if some Christians have not heeded this advice. There are a number of causes today over which we should have much concern. But should we, as some Christians do, fight for these causes the same way that the world fights against them?

Paul then has this to say about the weapons we are to use. *They have divine power to demolish strongholds.* Perhaps the KJV translates this the most accurately.

*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*

2 Corinthians 10:04 KJV

We have the following notices in the Scriptures.

*For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.*

Psalms 135:14

*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

Romans 12:19

*For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."*

Hebrews 10:30

In Ephesians Paul writes . . .

*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of*

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*righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Ephesians 06:13-18

We shall ignore the defensive parts of the armor and look at the offensive parts. Most of the parts are defensive. There are only two offensive ones listed here. One is the sword of the Spirit, the other is praying in the Spirit. God intends us to fight through prayer! He does not expect us to fight (primarily) on our own. Consider Joshua and David.

*"... but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the LORD'S army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

Joshua 05:14-15

*David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give all of you into our hands."*

1 Samuel 17:45-47

When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, it was not Israel who had to do the fighting, it was the Lord and His army. David did not fight Goliath in his own strength, it was the Lord who won the battle.

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. When Paul fought for the cause of Christ, he did not use physical weapons, he used the Word of God to put down the arguments of the unsaved.*

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*You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he. For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.*

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2 Corinthians 10:07-11

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Again, Paul points out that we are to deal with spiritual matters. There is the old saying that "beauty is only skin deep," but the Christian's beauty is underneath the skin. Paul says *You are looking only on the surface of things.*

*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

1 Samuel 16:07

Having said this, he approaches a problem that has existed through the ages. Have you known Christians who thought that they were about the only true Christians around? Have you ever thought that way yourself? There are some denominations and church associations who believe that they are the only ones who are true Christians. Paul teaches us that, if we think that way, we had better consider our own position in Christ because a true Christian does not think in this manner.

Paul moves on and defends the things he has written in his letters. Some, according to Paul, have said, *"His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."* Peter said,

*Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

2 Peter 03:15-16

What is Paul saying. He is saying that some people say that he writes nice sounding letters but, when you meet him in person, you find out that he is a nobody. I suppose, in a sense, we have all had such an experience in our lives. We may have read someones writings and visioned what that person might be like. Then we actually meet him (or her) and are disappointed that they look and act just like everyone else. It is thought that Paul was short of stature and not especially good looking. He may not have been a terribly impressive speaker. The important thing, however, is not what a person looks like, or how eloquent a speaker he or she might be. It is important what that person has to say, especially when it is the Holy Spirit speaking through that person.

He then concludes this with *such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.* Paul may not have been good looking. He may not have been a polished speaker. The one thing he was is consistent. He lived what he taught in his letters. He may not have been good in telling people how to live the Christian life but he showed them by his own manner of living.

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*We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your*

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*faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory. But, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.*

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2 Corinthians 10:12-18

Paul goes on to speak about how he rates himself with respect to others. To be specific, he does not do so. He neither classifies nor compares himself with others who claim to be great Christians. The two Greek words are **egkrino** (εγκρινω) and **sugkrino** (συγκρινω), both words having the same root, meaning to judge. Neither word is used outside of this passage in the N.T. The prefix on the first has the sense of in or among and the prefix on the second with. Classify is a good translation of the first since making a judgement as to how something or someone fits in with the rest of the group is the act of classification. Judging how good something or someone is with respect to others is comparing and hence compare is a good translation of the second.

*Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?*

1 Corinthians 12:14-17

Comparing or classifying oneself with respect to other Christians is not proper. According to the above passage, no two people have the same function in the body of Christ. All too often, Christians attempt to emulate some other Christian they know. This is wrong because God did not make you to be like him or her, he made you to be like you. As the song goes, "I'm the only one of my type."

There was a specific type of Christian(?) whom Paul especially avoided comparing himself with. These are the ones who *measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves*. Now this is a neat thing to do. If you make your own yardstick and call that the standard, then you will be the only one whose measurements are "correct." If you compare the way other Christians live by the way you live, no one will come up to your standards except you.

*We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits.* We have considered boasting previously. If you say something good about God, it is praise to God. If you say something good about yourself, it is boasting.

*My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.*

Psalm 34:02

*In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever. Selah*

Psalm 44:08

*This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who*



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*exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.*

Jeremiah 09:23-24

*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Galatians 06:14

It is not improper to boast as long as it is to boast about what the Lord has done through you. If you boast about what you have done in your own strength, it is wrong. It is wrong to boast beyond what God has done for you. Paul goes on to say the we *will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us*. He says he will only boast about what the Lord has assigned him to do.

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### CHAPTER ELEVEN

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*I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.*

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2 Corinthians 11:01-06

As Paul moves on in this letter, we see the concern he had for other Christians, especially those whom he was responsible for leading to Christ. You and I also need to have this concern. He says that he hopes they will put up with a little more of his foolishness, noting that they had already been doing this. Was what he had to say and now has to say foolishness? Of course not. He is going out of his way to humble himself so that they might accept him and, having accepted him, accept his message. The word he uses means, literally, mindless.

*I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.* In Ephesians Five, Paul speaks of the church as the bride of Christ. Those at Corinth made up part of this body. When Christ returns for His church, Paul had no desire that the Corinthian (or any other) part be blemished. He wanted the bride to be pure and clean, as any bride ought to be. The word jealous comes from the Greek word which is transliterated as Zealot - one who has an intense desire for something. In Paul's case it is a goodly desire since it was a godly jealousy.

He proceeds with a very good analogy.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." . . . God saw all that he had made, and it*

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was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.  
Genesis 01:26-28,31

Originally, the creation was good. When man was created, it was very good. It was that way until the Serpent tempted Eve and she, along with Adam, sinned. It is reasonable to assume that both Adam and Eve had at least average intelligence and knew right from wrong (not "good from evil"). It is reasonable to assume that they knew their place in the garden, to take care of it for their master - God. They knew that they were to be devoted to God. In modern day terms, we might say they were very good Christians, even "saints". In spite of all this, the Serpent was crafty enough to lead them astray.

Now, Paul was concerned that Satan's servants might do the same with the Corinthians. Remember what Jesus said,

*"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.*

Matthew 07:15

Remember also that, as we shall see a little later,

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

There are many who would lead us astray and there were many to lead the Corinthians astray. Not the subtle manner in which it is done.

*For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted. A good Christian will not be led astray by someone who claims there is no God or that Christ was only a man. Just about any good Christian will not put up with that teaching. What you have to be careful of is those which say, "we believe in Christ too," but then talk about a Christ other than the one in the Bible. There are those whose translation of John 1:1 goes . . .*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.*

John 01:01 Jehovah's Witnesses

All they do is add one little letter, a, and change the G to g. There are many who accept that there was a man named Christ. They have differing views with respect to who he was. If their viewpoint excludes Christ from being God Himself in the flesh, then they come to you with another Jesus.

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

Acts 04:12

If someone teaches that one can be saved in any manner other than through Jesus Christ, they are trying to lead you astray.

Then there are those who claim to have a different spirit than we do, or, at least, a different

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

manifestation of it. There are those of the charismatic persuasion who claim that if you do not speak in tongues and show other such evidence that you are filled with the Spirit, you are not a Christian. Watch out for these also. We all receive the Spirit when we are saved. We do not all demonstrate certain Spiritual Gifts. Some do not exhibit any. Some do not demonstrate any of the fruit of the Spirit. That does not mean that are not filled with the Spirit for Paul says,

*Do not put out the Spirit's fire;*

1 Thessalonians 05:19

One may possess the Holy Spirit but allow it to have no control in the life. They are still Christians - not very good ones, but Christians. We have already considered in detail the fact that we all have different ministries and hence different manifestations of the Spirit.

Finally Paul comes to a different Gospel.

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

Galatians 01:06-09

There is only one Gospel. There are those who may come to your door and insist that there are different interpretations of the Scriptures. They are correct - there are many different interpretations. Only one of them, however, is correct, the rest are all wrong!

*But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. Who are these "super-apostles?" The Greek adjective is **hyperlian** (ὑπερλιαν) a compound of the adjective meaning "above normal" such as hyperactive children and the word for exceedingly. This later word is found in the following:*

*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.*

Matthew 02:16

*When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.*

Matthew 08:28

*Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.*

Matthew 02:16 NASB

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*And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road.*

Matthew 08:28 NASB

The adjective is combined into the word it modifies in the NIV. The NAS translates the adjective separately, as above.

So, then, the word means super-exceedingly great. We have all known some super saints who were so much better than the rest of us that they could hardly associate with us. There are such super apostles who, by virtue of their charisma and stature, are able to lead Christians astray. How do you defend yourself against these?

*I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. Paul did not claim to be a suave speaker. We have discussed this before. He was not the type of speaker who would attract people just to hear him speak. His message was his only strength. If someone does not come with the Gospel to you with humility, watch out! Watch out for those who know all the answers and if someone else disagrees with them, the others are wrong. In Acts we read,*

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were un schooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

Acts 04:13

*Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

Acts 04:13 NASB

Peter and John were fishermen, they were not trained speakers. Paul was a well strained man but, perhaps, he still did not have the gift of public speaking. When someone speaks to you about the Gospel, watch rather they are using big terms to impress you or are simply giving out the Gospel message as it is written.

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*Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.*

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2 Corinthians 11:7-12

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Paul now says something rather curious. He says that he robbed other churches in order to serve those at Corinth. The term is not used elsewhere but its sense should be clear. It is especially clear in the following:

*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."*

1 Timothy 05:17-18

It is a Biblical principal that, if a person is called to minister to a group (a church, a flock), that group should set to it that he receives sufficient support. But in the case of the Corinthians, Paul was afraid that he would be accused of preaching for pay and not because of his love for the lost.

*When I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. Even when he didn't have enough, he did not ask them for a thing! He waited until the Lord provided for him through the brothers from Macedonia. Things have not really changed. When a missionary goes out to the field, he or she does not expect to receive provisions from those ministered to. Churches at home provide for the needs. This, indeed, is as it should be. It is a fact that the world is ready to accuse missionaries of about anything that it can. Missionaries are said to mess up the culture to which they go. It makes no difference that the people are better off, both spiritually and physically. If they were to receive wages from them, they would be called mercenaries instead of missionaries (if you will excuse the play on words).*

Paul sums it up by saying that he will continue this type of ministry so that these others who teach false doctrine can not accuse him of ministering for any reason but the love of Christ.

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*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

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2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Paul uses some strong terms for his opposition. He calls them:

- a) false prophets                      **pseudapostlos** (ψεψδαποσταλος)
- b) deceitful workmen    **ergatos dolios** (εργατος δολιας)
- 3) masqueraders                      **metaskematizo** (μετασχηματιζω)

The Greek has one word for false prophets. There are numerous references in the N.T. to the fact that false prophets will be on the seen. There will be more and more as we approach the time of the end.

*"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*my name through Baal worship.*

Jeremiah 23:25-27

*"Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.' Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD.*

Jeremiah 23:30-32

As seen above. there are references to such men in the O.T. as well.

The second attribute is deceitful workmen. The adjective comes for **dolios** (δολιος) which is found in the verses below.

*Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.*

Mark 14:01

*Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill Him;*

Mark 14:01 NASB

*After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.*

Mark 14:01 KJV

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*

1 Peter 02:01

*Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,*

1 Peter 02:01 NASB

*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,*

1 Peter 02:01 KJV

Giving us a list of synonyms: sly, stealth, deceit, guile. They all describe men who have motives for doing things other than the ones they espouse. Paul had only one motive - love. There was nothing anyone could point to other than this for a motive.

The last term means to take on another form. There are two Greek words for this. One is **metamorpho** (μεταμορφεω) which is found below.

*After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high*

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.*

Mark 09:02

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Romans 12:02

*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 03:18

This word, always used in a good sense in the N.T. refers to a permanent change. It has been brought into English with the metamorphosis which turns a caterpillar into a butterfly. The word Paul uses here, however, refers to a transitory change. Of the five occurrences of this word, three are in this passage. Masquerades is a good term to describe the transitory nature. One puts on a mask to deceive another and then, later, removes it. In other words, the false apostles are not what they appear to be.

*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.* Satan is the master counterfeiter and the false apostles are his proteges. It is comforting to know that, in the end, God will reward them for their evil doings!

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*I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! What anyone else dares to boast about--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast about. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*

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2 Corinthians 11:16-19



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Up until this point Paul has been rather tactful. Now he resorts to direct confrontation of the issue at hand - the defense of his ministry. He says "You think I am a fool?" and adds, "Fine, treat me as a fool - just listen to me anyway!" There are not many people who can take such insults and continue on wit the people who are making the insults. The he takes up the subject of boasting. Men of the world boast and think nothing of it. Paul's feelings, expressed here, are "OK, you like it when others boast, I'll do a little boasting too!" He is quick to add that they should not take his boasting seriously. He makes it clear that this sort of boasting is not what the Lord expects from a person. Paul is only going to do it so that the Corinthians can see that he has the ability to do so and that the whole idea of following someone because of their boasting is silly. Before he starts his boasting, he has someing vert strong to say.

*You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.* These words must have really stung when read by the Corinthians. He accuses them of following people who abuse them in all sorts of ways. There are still people like that today. There are some men who have had large followings and then convicted, rightly so, of fraud and decpetion. In spite of this, some of the people persis in following the,=m. What can they be thinking of. It was this way at Corinth.

*To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!* This is a rather interesting remark. Paul says that he and his fellow-workers were too weak to be included in this group of braggarts who were leading the Corinthians away. Then, Paul begins to boast. As we continue, keep in mind that Paul is doing this for the only purpose of pressing a point. He is not boasting out of pride. Nowhere else in the Scriptures does he make even one boast. In fact, we find Scriptures like the following.

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

Romans 07:24

*What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

Philippians 03:08

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.*

1 Timothy 01:15

So, let's start with some boasting.

*Are they Hebrews? So am I.*

*. . . circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;*

Philippians 03:05

Paul was a very good Hebrew. He was a very zealous Hebrew. He was so zealous that he presecuted the churches terribly - until Christ got a hold on him. If any of these false apostles were bragging because they were good Hebrews, they might as well stop. It would have been hard to find a better Hebrew than Paul was. We assume he continued to be a good Christian Hebrew after his salvation.

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*Are they Israelites? So am I.*

Not only was Paul a good Hebrew (i.e. serious about the religious aspects of Judaism, he was also a physical descendant of Israel.

*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*

Romans 10:01

He was true to his race and even though God made him the Apostle to the Gentiles, he still had a special place in his heart for Israel. Did any of the false apostles have more concern over the people of Israel than Paul did? I think not.

*Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I.*

*What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?*

Romans 04:01

Paul speaks of Abraham our forefather. He acknowledges Abraham as the head of his genealogy. But he also recognizes that Abraham was his father twice over.

*And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

Romans 04:12

Abraham was not a Jew. A Jew is a descendant of Israel. God never made the Mosaic covenant with Abraham. Abraham is the father of all of God's people, rather Jew or Christian. For Paul, he was both. In fact, the physical descendancy from Abraham is not what is important.

*In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.*

Romans 09:08

Just so that no one misunderstands either Paul nor me, Abraham is still the father of the Jew.

*I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.*

Romans 11:01

*Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more.*

Paul asks if the false prophets are really servants of Christ and then adds a parenthetical statement. out of my mind comes from **paraphroneo** (παράφρονεω) which means to be out of one's mind, to be insane. The word is used only here.

The previous questions could be answered very easily. They were questions of fact and Paul answered each, "so am I." We need to have some sort of definition of what it means to be a servant

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of Christ before we can answer this question. Paul knew what it meant and answered that he was more a servant than the false apostles. He then elaborates by listing a number of things he did or endured as a servant of Christ. There are twenty-one things plus one addition thing which he lists.

1) *I have worked much harder,*

The Greek term translated much harder is a very strong one. Some have translated it superabundantly. There are several references to this type of toil which Paul performed.

*Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.*

1 Thessalonians 02:09

*. . . nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.*

2 Thessalonians 03:08

No one worked hard than Paul. He was a tireless witness for Christ.

2) *I have been in prison more frequently,*

Paul spent a good deal of time in prison here and there.

*After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.*

Acts 16:23-27

This was at Philippi. But then later he was taken prisoner and sent to Rome.

*So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."*

Acts 23:18

Paul spent (apparently, a long time in prison in Rome for he writes of it in many of his letters.

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--*

Ephesians 03:01

*So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,*

2 Timothy 01:08

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*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker,*

Philemon 01:01

*yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul--an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus--*

Philemon 01:09

Some may interpret these last few verses in a spiritual sense and claim that Paul was a spiritual prisoner of Christ. He was. Yet, in most of these verses there is a double meaning. As a prisoner in Rome, he is Christ's prisoner. It would have been hard to find any of these false apostles who had spent so much time in prison.

3) *I have been flogged more severely,*

We know of one occasion in which he was flogged, and this was also at Philippi.

*After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.*

Acts 16:23

4) *I have been exposed to death again and again.*

He claims to have been exposed to death again and again. In the comments to follow he describes the ways he was exposed to death.

5) *Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.*

We have already noted the flogging at Philippi. Apparently, this was not the only time. Paul claims that there were five of them - from the Jews. The flogging at Philippi was by Gentiles who flogged people as much as they wanted. With the Jews, there was a reason for flogging a person 39 times.

*If the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that, your brother will be degraded in your eyes.*

Deuteronomy 25:02-3

If a Jew were to flog another Jew more than 40 times, he would be in big trouble. Just to make sure they did not get into trouble, they stopped at 39. Then one could not ask the question "Was it more than 40 times or forty times that was forbidden?" They played it safe.

In any case, Paul's back must not have been a very pretty sight to look at. None of the false apostles had backs like that.

6) *Three times I was beaten with rods,*

Paul claims he was beaten by rods. This was not a Jewish custom but a Gentile one. We know of one instance of this.

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*The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.*

Acts 16:22

This verse does not specifically mention rods. However, we have the following.

*And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.*

Acts 16:22 NASB

The reason that the NAS includes the term rod is that it is included in the verb. The Greek word is **rhabdizo** (ῥαβδίζω), taken from the Greek word for a staff or walking stick. The verb is found twice in the O.T. (LXX).

*The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.*

Judges 06:11

*So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.*

Ruth 02:17

In the O.T., the rod was used to thresh the grain. The noun is also found in a number of places in the O.T.

*He said, "What pledge should I give you?" "Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand," she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him.*

Genesis 38:18

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'"*

Exodus 08:05

In any case, he was not only flogged, but beaten with rods which was not a customary punishment.

7) *Once I was stoned,*

This is not current day slang for being drunk! He was literally stoned. Christ spoke about stoning.

*Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

John 10:31-33

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There is one account where Paul is said to have been stoned.

*Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.*

Acts 14:19

He as stoned so badly that they thought he was dead. There was good reason to believe so for we read about Stephen being stoned similarly.

*dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

Acts 07:58-59

O.T saints were often stones as attested to by the autor of Hebrews.

*They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated--*

Hebrews 11:37

This Paul experience a stoning (at least) twice. He witnessed Stephen's and went through his own. Not very many people lived though stonings.

8) *Three times I was shipwrecked,*

We know of one one such occasion.

*"Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also."*

Acts 27:10

*But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.*

Acts 27:41

*The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.*

Acts 27:44

That he was ship wrecked on more than one occasion is not at all impossible for sailing in those days was a rather risky business. He goes on to say . . .

9) *I spent a night and a day in the open sea,*

This would not appear to be the case in the passage cited above since the ship was wrecked quite close to land. This must be a reference to a more disasterous shipwreck.

10) *I have been constantly on the move.*

Paul made three journies that we know of. He may have made more. He certainly traveled much

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

of the then known world. Paul wrote,

*After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also."*

Acts 19:21

The only thing that appeared to keep Paul off the road were his imprisonments. He then goes on to list the dangers that he experienced as he traveled so much. In each of these things he was in danger. The word is used in only one other place in the N.T. when Paul writes,

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

Romans 08:35

The word is **kindunos** (κινδυνος). The related verb is found in several passages.

*As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.*

Luke 08:23

*And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?*

1 Corinthians 15:30

The dangers he lists are as follows.

- 11) *I have been in danger from rivers,*
- 12) *I have been in danger from bandits,*
- 13) *I have been in danger from my own countrymen,*
- 14) *I have been in danger from Gentiles;*
- 15) *I have been in danger in the city,*
- 16) *I have been in danger in the country,*
- 17) *I have been in danger at sea;*
- 18) *I have been in danger from false brothers.*

There are two categories listed here. The first are locations. There were perils from the rivers, the sea, the city, and the country. Has Israeli Airlines been around in Paul's day, he would have probably listed the sky as well. He lists just about everywhere.

The second categories are of people. These are his own countrymen (the Jews), the Gentiles (which is just about everyone else), bandits and false brothers. It is interesting that the false brothers come at the end of the list. It is like he is saying, "most of all, I have been in peril from false brothers." He doesn't say this, however, since there was one group of people whom were even more of a problem to him.

- 19) *I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep;*
- 20) *I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food;*
- 21) *I have been cold and naked.*

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These last three things in the main group of 27 have to do with his personal needs. He has gone without food, sleep, and shelter. Jesus has told us,

*"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

Matthew 25:34-36

A Christian should not have to be hungry, thirsty, without shelter, or without clothing. He or she should not be but sometimes are. Apparently Paul did not always experience the Christian love that he should have. This leads into the subject which was worse than the peril from false brothers.

22) *Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.*

These twenty-one things make Paul's life a real labor for the Lord. All of these things are part of the lot of a servant of Christ. Paul expected them. The Bible promises them.

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

John 16:33

*... strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

Acts 14:22

*Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;*

Romans 05:03

*In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.*

1 Thessalonians 03:04

*Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

2 Thessalonians 01:04

In spite of all this, Paul concludes with the last statement above. His concern with the churches that he was responsible for was his greatest source of frustration. One can deal with a night or two without sleep or food. When can spend a day and night in the sea or get flogged. These are terrible at the time but they are only temporary and one has the hope that they will soon pass.

Concern for true brothers and sisters is more of a concern than peril from false brothers.

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*If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.*

---

2 Corinthians 11:30-33

This event is recorded in Acts.

*Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.*

Acts 22-25

Paul was gain more and more power in Damascus as he preached the Gospel. He had gained such power that the good devout Jews of the city wanted to kill him. The great and powerful Paul stood up to them and beat them. No! That is not what has been recorded. Instead, Paul fled from them. I knew a preacher who like to say, "Win an arguement, loose a soul!" Paul would not have further the Kingdom of Christ by standing up, being strong, and ausing an uproar in the city. he Gospel was better promoted by his slipping out of the city and letting the issue die. This is hard for some people. They have to have their own way. Paul was not like that, what he did was for the sake of the Gospel.

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### CHAPTER TWELVE

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*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows--was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.*

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2 Corinthians 12:01-06

As we begin this last chapter, several things must be born in mind. Paul continues the boasting he began in the last chapter. The boasting is of no value other than to show the foolishness of it. Our only boast is to be in Christ.

The last thing he boasts about has become somewhat controversial in several senses. He refers to a man who was caught up into the third heaven. Was this man Paul or some other person? This debate has gone on for years. The answer to the question (if one can obtain a definite one) must come from the context of his boasting. Is he boasting that he knew this man or is he boasting in the sense that he was that man. If he was the man, he tones his boast down a bit by being modest and not saying specifically it was him. If he was not the man, the boast is not much of a boast! We conclude with fair certainty that it was Paul -but not claim so dogmatically.

The other question is whether he (or the man) actually had an out of body experience and went to heaven or whether he simply had a vision. There is absolutely no way we can answer this question since Paul himself, twice in this passage said (1) *whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows*, and (2) *whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows*. Paul himself did not know. If he didn't know, how can we?

We can make some observations, however. We note Paul's words *I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord*. This is what we are dealing with. The term visions comes from the Greek **optasia** (οπτισια) and visions is a good translation of it. The term revelations comes from the Greek **apokalupsis** (αποκαλψπισ) and is the title of the last book of the Bible. Both terms are translated correctly and neither term is, of necessity, associated with an out-of-body experience. For example:

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*Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.*

Luke 01:21-22

*In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.*

Luke 24:22-23

*I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 01:12

*Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.*

Galatians 02:01-02

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

Ephesians 01:17

*Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.*

Ephesians 03:02-03

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,*

Revelation 01:01

Twice in this passage he used the Greek word **harpazo** (ἁρπάζω) which means to take away by force or to snatch. The word is used in this literal sense in the following passage.

*Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.*

John 06:15

The term is used in a more spiritual sense in the following.

*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.*

John 10:28

The term is, apparently used in a rather unusual sense of physical moving someone from one place to another in the following passage.

*When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip*

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*away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.*

Acts 08:39

Finally, there is the passage we all have our hopes set on.

*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

1 Thessalonians 04:17

The use of this word in this passage could be taken is a parallel to the last passage, but it need not be so. Let us then turn to some similar circumstances.

*I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." . . . After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.*

Revelation 01:09-11,04:01-02

John does not use the word "caught up". He does say he was in the spirit. This does not, of necessity, mean that one is out of the body. We find the same phrase in the following.

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Ephesians 06:18

*You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.*

Colossians 01:07-08

The NAS has many more occurrences of this phrase.

*He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,*

Matthew 22:43 NASB

*And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,*

Luke 02:27 NASB

*Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."*

Acts 19:21 NASB

*However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

Romans 08:09 NASB

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*With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*

Romans 06:18 NASB

*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*

1 Peter 03:18 NASB

*For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

1 Peter 04:06 NASB

It is clear from the proponderance of these passages that in the spirit means that the Spirit has control of our lives, not that our spirit is seperated from our bodies. In looking at John's words in Revelation, there is no reason to believe that he had an out of body experience - just a vision, a revelation.

In any case, Paul says that *he heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.* This reminds us of Daniel's experience which was in the spirit but certainly not apart from the body. He writes, after seeing some pretty marvelous things,

*But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."*

Daniel 12:04

Both men saw things that we are not permitted to know about. Moses spoke with God on the mountain but Israel was not allowed to hear the conversation. When Paul was met by Christ on the road, we read,

*As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.*

Acts 09:03-08

The people with Paul knew of the presence of the Lord but were not able to make out the conversation.

Some people believe Paul is speaking about the time he was stoned and left for dead.

*Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.*

Acts 14:19

This is possible, but it is only conjecture. In any case, whether in a vision or spritully actually

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present, The man was caught up into *the third heaven* or, as he says in the next verse, *to paradise*. The two terms must be synonymous and they both are synonyms for heaven. Paradise was, at one time, on the earth - the Garden of Eden (for which the LXX has the Greek word *paradise*). It was, for three days, under the earth (to whence Jesus took the thief when he said, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.'). It is now heaven, the third heaven.

If paradise is the third heaven, what are the other two? The first heaven is, apparently, the abode of the birds of the air and our source of life - oxygen.

The second heaven is beyond the atmosphere and, apparently is the abode of the 'Prince and power of the air.'

The bottom line in Paul's writing here is that he (or this man) had an experience that few have had. If one is going to boast, this is a tremendous thing to be able to boast about.

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*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

---

2 Corinthians 12:07-10

At this point, Paul leaves off his boasting, having ended up with his boast about *these surpassingly great revelations*. We again note that it was not Paul's practice to boast and he is only doing it to make a point. He is only doing so to make the 'false brothers' look silly. There is a serious side to this all. Why would one not boast about the things Paul has mentioned.

If the Lord uses you in a great way and accomplishes great things through a person, it is easy to take some of the credit and boast about it. It would have been easy for Paul as well. God, however, had to much work for Paul to do to allow this to happen. Instead, God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. The word here for thorn is **skolops** (σκολοψ) which is used only here in the N.T. It is used three times in the LXX.

*"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live.*

Numbers 22:55

*"No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbors who are painful briars and sharp thorns. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.*

Ezekiel 28:34

*Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.*

Hosea 02:06

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It is rather apparent that Paul is not speaking of an actual thorn. He appears to be using it of something that is terribly distracting to him. Perhaps it was his mother-in-law. Seriously, we have no way of knowing as Paul does not say. It is best that way because many of us have such 'thorns' but each has a different thing (or person) that is this thorn.

The thorn was most likely some sin in his life that he could not rid himself of. Perhaps it was some vice. Something that he was terribly drawn to even though he knew, as a Christian, he should stay away from. What ever it was, it would not go away, even when he prayed most seriously about it. Do you have such a thorn and the Lord will not take it away?

The answer Paul received to his three prayers was not "Yes!". Instead, it was "*My grace is sufficient for you*" To you that may sound like a put off. "Paul, why are you asking me for this, haven't I given you enough already?" It is not. What does the Lord mean by this? Let us take a specific example.

There are three types of people in the world: (1) Non-alcoholics, (2) Alcoholics, and (3) Reformed Alcoholics. Suppose you were in the second group. As a Christian you knew it was terribly wrong to be an alcoholic. You knew it was a terrible witness, it was destroying your home, and it was destroying you. You pray to God and say, "Please, Lord, take away my alcoholism!" The Lord's direct answer to this prayer is "No!". I do not know of any Christian alcoholics who have been made non-alcoholics. It is possible, all things are possible, but not necessarily what God wishes.

The other part of the Lord's answer is this, "I'll give you sufficient strength to join AA and become a reformed alcoholic." God does not cure you, He gives you the strength to keep this problem in control. One might think that you are now a non-alcoholic, but you are not. Ask anyone who is a member of AA if they consider themselves to be non-alcoholics. They are not. They are alcoholics who have had the strength to stop drinking and, with help and determination and total abstinence, no longer drink. They can not relax like a non-alcoholic. They have to be forever on their guard.

Turning back to Paul. God had no intentions of removing the thorn. God had it put there, via Satan, to keep Paul humble. God did, however, give Paul sufficient strength (grace) to endure with it and not have it hinder his ministry. Consider several Scriptures in this respect.

*"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*

Job 01:09-12

God allowed Satan to attack Job - He placed a hedge around him to protect him, but now God let the hedge down - but only to a point. Satan could not touch Job. Then later,

*"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must*

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*spare his life."*

Job 02:04-06

God allowed Satan to go even further, but he still protected Job's life. Turning to the N.T. we find the following.

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

Paul has provided us with an expansion of this.

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*I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. The things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles--were done among you with great perseverance. How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!*

---

2 Corinthians 12:11-13

Paul has run on at some length, out of character, boasting about his work. He now comes to a conclusion. He admits that he was acting the fool in doing this but it was needful for the Corinthians. They continually put him down and raised up the false brothers, claiming how great they were and, finally, Paul had to correct this situation. He then uses a clever expression. He says that he is really nothing and that he is not at all inferior to there other brothers. That means that they are, in reality, less than nothing!

He finally reminds them that he demonstrated his apostleship through various signs and there need be no further proof. He says that he did everything for them that he did for other churches - EXCEPT, he didn't take their support. He calls this a wrong. It was! It was wrong in that it did not teach them stewardship and he is now concerned whether or not they have followed through on the stewardship program they began.

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*Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?*

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2 Corinthians 12:14-18



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Here Paul sets a very good example for us. As the spiritual father of the Corinthian church, he felt that he had an obligation to serve them and take care of them. It was not to be the other way around.

Then Paul says something rather strange. He says, "*Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!*" What does he mean by this? Several other translations of this are below.

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

2 Corinthians 12:16 NASB

*But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.*

2 Corinthians 12:16 KJV

The word for crafty, common to all translations is **panourgos** (πανουργος) and is almost always (except here?) used in a very bad sense. Paul preaches against its use himself.

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*

Ephesians 05:06

*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

Colossians 02:08

*Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

2 Corinthians 04:02

*For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.*

1 Thessalonians 02:03

We note especially the passage from 2 Corinthians 4. Paul says we do not use deception. But in the last chapter, he spoke of those who did.

*You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.*

2 Corinthians 11:19-20

The false teachers were tricking them and all Paul is really saying here is, "I was trickier" in bringing you to the Gospel. He doesn't really mean he was crafty - he uses the term because of the tactics of others.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Well, Paul has gone on at length defending himself and his ministry. It seems like we have been through a number of chapters of this. Then Paul asks the following.

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*Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.*

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2 Corinthians 12:19-21

He asks a rhetorical question. Has he been defending himself? Not really, he has been saying this because it was what they wanted to hear. He confesses that his writing was directed by God. He has done this to strengthen them.

He fears that, in spite of his letters, he will find what he does not want to see when he visits them again. He lists these things.

- 1) *quarreling,*
- 2) *jealousy,*
- 3) *outbursts of anger,*
- 4) *factions,*
- 5) *slander,*
- 6) *gossip,*
- 7) *arrogance and*
- 8) *disorder.*

It would not be very profitable to look at each of these in great detail. What is significant is what is not on this list. He doesn't list adultery, fornication, murder, and a number of other things. What he does list are all social sins. Quarreling is two (or more) people bickering among themselves. Jealousy is one person quietly bickering about what others have. Outbursts of anger and the result of jealousy held too long. Factions are the result of too much quarreling and jealousy. Slander and gossip are the result of all of the previous mentioned items. And all of these finally lead to arrogance and disorder.

Is there disorder in your church. Are people arrogant? Is there gossiping and slandering? Paul was afraid that there was at Corinth. It will be in any church where people look at each other or look at certain people as leaders instead of looking at Christ. If the congregation is looking at different people for leadership, there will be divisions in the church. It is only as they have a single leader, Christ, that there can be harmony.

One might say that these are not mortal sins. Perhaps not. But what they lead to is. If there is not a singleness of spirit in the church, it will be ineffective in its ministry. Part of this ministry is to build up the saints. With division, the result will be *many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.*

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The church can not be effective in the spiritual development of the Christian if it is divided and facteous.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

*This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.*



2 Corinthians 13:01-03

As Paul concludes this letter, he becomes very serious and starts as he warns them about his third visit to them. He says that he gave them a warning the second time he was there. The word warning comes from the Greek **prolego** (προλεγω) which means, literally, to say before. Thus, when we find it into two other verses in the KJV, we find the following:

*Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 05:21 KJV

*For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

1 Thessalonians 04:04 KJV

But this translation is misleading. It is not to tell before in the sense than you have told again. It is to tell before it happens, to warn. Thus these two verses in the NIV are as follows.

*and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 05:21

*In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.*

1 Thessalonians 03:04

and in the NAS,

*envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the*

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*kingdom of God.*

Galatians 05:21 NASB

*For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.*

1 Thessalonians 04:04 NASB

Paul is writing a stern warning to Corinth. It may be directed to us as well. *On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others.* His use of the word spare is a strong one. Consider the other verses where this word appears.

*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*

Acts 20:29

In this verse he speaks of people like the false brothers at Corinth - men of Satan, who do not spare the believers.

Paul, on several occasions, used the term with respect to himself.

*But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.*

1 Corinthians 07:28

*I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.*

2 Corinthians 01:13

In both of these it is used in a good sense - good in the sense that he spares them from harm.

The most powerful use of the word is applied to the Lord Himself.

*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;*

2 Peter 02:04-05

He spared neither angels nor the ancient world. During this age, he has not even spared Israel.

*For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.*

Romans 11:21

But, included with Israel are you and me in the above verse. All of this is based on one final verse.

*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

Romans 08:32

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Paul will not spare those who are sinning at Corinth. If there ever was a passage in the Bible that would support the view of the Roman Catholic Church, it is this one. Here "Pope Paul" is going to go to Corinth and administer justice in that church. But you can not take it that far. There is no question that the Apostles held a high position in the early church and could do as Paul intends to do here. The apostles (i.e. persons who had had personal contact with Christ) are no longer with us. The present pope is not an apostle. Neither were any of his successors.

When he gets to Corinth he is going to hold a trial. Thus the need for witnesses. Are the false brothers telling the truth or is he? The matter will be put to rest once and for all.

Paul turns to the example of Christ. He states, *He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.* Now Paul has been talking about his weakness. But consider what he says. *For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness . . . Likewise, we are weak in him, and yet he lives by God's power. . . yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.*

Christ gave up all, "became weak" to be crucified for us. As a result, He is powerful. Paul has stated that he is weak. He has boasted about this weakness. But he is not really weak either. God's power flows through him to give him strength.

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*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority--the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*

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2 Corinthians 13:05-10

In the 35 times that the Greek word here translated examine is found, it is translated with some form of the word tempt. There are two Greek words which are translated to test. These are **dokimazo** (δοκιμαζω) and **peirazo** (πειραζω). The first word (not used here) is the kind of test one uses to show that something is good. It is the sort of test one uses to prove to another that something is correct. It expects a positive result. The word used here, on the other hand, is the test you perform when you suspect something is not what it is supposed to be. It may be, but it may not.

Let's take a look at some of the places where it is found.

*When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*

John 06:05-06

Philip failed the test when he said they didn't have the means to feed the people.

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*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,*

Hebrews 11:17

Abraham, on the other hand, passed the test.

*I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.*

Revelation 02:02

The members at the church in Ehesus were suspicious of some who claimed to be apostles. They failed the test.

*Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Revelation 02:10

It is presumed that the members of the church at Smyrna (at least some of them) passed the test the devil gave them. It is reasonable to assume they passed.

Then, in the same breath, Paul uses the other word. I would assume that Paul felt that there were some in the church who would fail the test. He felt that most would prove themselves. In the end, the ones who failed would be weeded out and the church would be purified.

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*Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

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2 Corinthians 13:11-14

Paul concludes this letter with some good advice for us. *Finally, brothers, good-by.* He concludes several of his other letters in the same manner.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*

Ephesians 06:10

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.*

Philippians 04:08

*Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*

2 Thessalonians 03:01

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

Here he adds the words good bye. The KJV has fairwell. The NAS reads entirely different.

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

2 Corinthians 13:11 NASB

The Greek word is **chairo** (χαίρω) which is a very common word and is translated in various ways. The difference between the NAS translation rejoice! and the others is due to a difference in whether one reads the verb is being in the imperative mood or not. It seems nature to assume that it is and, if so, would mean rejoice! Assuming this the case, there are five things we are to do.

NAS	NIV	KJV
<i>rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace;</i>	<i>aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace.</i>	<i>be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace;</i>

First is rejoice. As Christians we should always rejoice.

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

Philippians 04:04

How can we have a good testimony among the unsaved if we are "Gloomy Guses?"

The second is different in each text. The NAS says that we should work at being complete. The NIV says that we should work at being perfect. The KJV says we should be perfect which is not possible. In the Greek it is but one word, a verb. **katartizo** (καταρτιζω) which is in the middle voice and an imperative. The word is found (among other places) in the following.

*When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.*

Mark 01:19

The KJV has mending as does the NAS. Now they were not making their nets perfect. They were simply repairing the parts that were not right.

*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

1 Corinthians 01:10

Here he is simply asking them that they unit themselves without any divisions or cliques.

*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

Galatians 06:01

This person who is sinning needs to stop. Paul asks that they should restore him by convincing him not to continue in his sin. Finally,



## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

*Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

1 Thessalonians 03:10

Paul is concerned that there are things that those in Thesalonika needed to know and he wanted to teach these to them. Paul is not commanding us to become super saints. He is merely asking us (the middle voice means that we are to do it for ourselves) to seek to live as Christians should. He is asking us to keep from sin and to seek God's will. The aim at perfection in the NIV is good. We will never get there on this earth, but we should try.

Next is the command to be comforted (KJV, NAS) or listen to my appeal (NIV). The command is, again, in the middle voice and means, then, to comfort oneself or to take comfort. The NIV translators have interpreted this to mean that they should take comfort in Paul's words. Whether or not this be so, we can not say. However, the thought is good. We are to be comforted by the word that God has given us - His Word.

The last two things are common in all translations. They all speak of what is needed in every congregation. The body of Christ must be united and of one mind and, hence, at peace with itself. The Church will never grow if this is not the case.

*Greet one another with a holy kiss.* When I was in high school, I could never convince the high school girls that we are to take this advice literally. Paul, and the others, apparently used this expression frequently.

*You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.*

Luke 07:45

*but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"*

Luke 22:48

*Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.*

Romans 16:16

*All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

1 Corinthians 16:20

*Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*

1 Thessalonians 05:26

*Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*

1 Peter 05:14

The word is **philema** (φιλεμα) from one of the Greek words for love. It is not the Greek word found in the Song of Solomon (LXX). It is the word often associated with fellowship and brotherly love. Then, note also, that in that culture (even today) it is the equivalent of our shaking hands. But not quite! The Living Bible has greet each other warmly. Whether it is a kis, a hug, a good hearty handshake is not important. It is the attitude of the heart that matters.

## PAUL'S LETTERS TO CORINTH

The final words are: *All the saints send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* Paul has just finished admonishing them to be single minded, to be at peace with each other. He has told them to greet each other warmly when they meet. This closing adds to this. The unit of mind, the peace, the warmth, extended beyond the Corinthian church. All the saints send their greeting as well. It extended to them. Finally, the grace, the love and the Spirit of God was also to be in mind with them, they were to be at home with them. They were to be welcomed warmly. Paul has not been dealing with the Church at Corinth. More importantly, he has been dealing with The Church of Christ, the Universal church. There should be no more divisions amongst local congregations than there should be between members of one. Unfortunately, the prerequisite for this is to be like-minded. This is why there is not the unity there ought to be.

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