

BIBLE STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON

II CORINTHIANS



WALLACE WARTICK

**STUDIES IN
SECOND CORINTHIANS**

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Bible Student Study Guide

STUDIES IN
SECOND CORINTHIANS

A Student Book
For Thirteen Weeks
Of Study

by

Wallace Wartick

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On the cover: Ruins of the temple of Apollo at Corinth. Apollo was the Greek god of music, protector from dangers and illness, and symbol of masculine beauty. The temple was built about 540 B.C., and had thirty-eight columns. It was destroyed by the Roman general L. Mummius in 146 B.C. Paul told the Corinthians that they were the true temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelt in them. I Cor. 3:16

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How To Use This Book

Welcome! We are happy that you are considering the study of II Corinthians—God’s Word through Paul to brethren in Corinth, Greece (and also to you and me!). This book is like all other books from God: encouraging, enlightening, challenging; timeless in its principles and the application thereof.

You are interested—would you take a couple of minutes and read this section?

We’d like to do the following:

- a. explain the book a bit,
- b. outline and summarize the thirteen (13) lessons,
- c. encourage you to read the introduction.

The lessons:

1. Ch. 1:1-22
 2. Ch. 1:23 — 2:17
 3. Ch. 3:1-18
 4. Ch. 4:1-15
 5. Ch. 4:16 — 5:10
 6. Ch. 5:11 — 6:2
 7. Ch. 6:3 — 7:1
-

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8. Ch. 7:2-16
9. Ch. 8:1 — 9:15
10. Ch. 10:1-18
11. Ch. 11:1-15
12. Ch. 11:16 — 12:18
13. Ch. 12:19 — 13:14

In an effort to encourage you, may we suggest some points that are important in each lesson? Would you note the following ideas in each lesson, keeping in mind the overall theme of the book, and express aim within it. (Do check the outline in the introduction from time to time, OK?)

Lesson 1, 1:1-22 — The comfort that comes from God, in spite of or because of any circumstance of life. The blessing of a clean conscience as one allows God to lead, and lives in that way.

Lesson 2, 1:23 — 2:17 — Faith is individual, and voluntary. The body of Christians in a given place may need to discipline severely a member, keeping in mind the purpose of Satan, knowing that each member is God's representative of death and life.

Lesson 3, 3:1-18 — God in Christ brought into being a new will (covenant, testament) that became effective at Jesus' death (Heb. 9:15-17). The infinite differences between the old will and the new will, with some of the effects of each.

Lesson 4, 4:1-15 — The essence of the new will: Christ Jesus as lord, Christians as servants, earthen vessels with a heavenly treasure.

Lesson 5, 4:16 — 5:10 — God's eternal home, prepared for those who love him and keep his commandments.

Lesson 6, 5:11 — 6:2 — Paul as an apostle was God's ambassador of a new will. In a lesser but similar way, Christians represent God to men, working together to entreat all men everywhere, whether Christian or non-Christian, to be reconciled to God.

Lesson 7, 6:3 — 7:1 — The apostles, as God's ambassadors, were subjected to much that men might accept the message of the new will. As members of Christ's body, Christians are to be members of it, not members of the "other" body.

Lesson 8, 7:2-16 — The change of mind: the joy of it, the blessings in it.

Lesson 9, 8:1 — 9:15 — An expression of Christian brotherhood from the brethren in the "west" to the brethren in the "east." Paul's special part in this special offering.

Lesson 10, 10:1-18 — The aim of the Christian life: a mind totally enslaved to Jesus, no longer comparing by worldly standards, commending and commended by God's standards.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Lesson 11, 11:1-15 — Paul's description of the church as Christ's bride, and his true apostleship in contrast to some who were false apostles.

Lesson 12, 11:16 — 12:18 — The marks of a true apostle as seen in Paul's life, summed up in a total dependence on God, man's weakness made complete by God's strength.

Lesson 13, 12:19 — 13:14 — The ever-present need for self-examination in the Christian's life, the test being that of a true relationship with Jesus. The awesome fact that nothing man can do will change truth, especially as that truth is in Christ.

Please use each lesson well. Each section chosen has something specific all of us need. Use the comments and questions as you can but remember this: nothing written or said is in any way as important as what God has said. Know the text of II Corinthians — there is an infinite difference between knowing God's Word and knowing what some human said or wrote about it.

About the comments: they were written following the outline in the Introduction. The thirteen (13) lessons were chosen, as best we could, to give each lesson a distinct point or points. You will not have any problem — just be aware of the matter. You may ignore the lesson divisions, and use the book as a brief commentary if you wish.

May God bless!

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Introduction

We should embark upon the study of this epistle with much anticipation, and the reasons are many. No epistle sets forth more clearly (even if not so systematically) the person of Paul, nor the apostleship of which he was a part, nor the preaching ministry (it is necessary to specify "preaching" since many kinds of ministry [deaconship] existed then and now) of the church, nor the authority under which the church stood, as well as the life and perils of its members.

Certain it is that no finer apology (i.e., defense) for the place of the preaching ministry exists than in this book. In chapters 1-7, the basis of the message (a new covenant, chapter 3); the urgency of the proclamation (5:11—6:2); and the expected result (7:1, 10) are presented. The oft-quoted section of chapters 8-9; and a sort of parenthesis in the book, presents the best reasons for giving to be found anywhere, and indirectly relate to the "apology." Chapters 10-13 continue the theme and argue with unsurpassed eloquence the place an apostle filled in the church life at Corinth (and for us, how we should relate to an authoritative revelation from God). It especially deals in "ultimates" in that 13:8 reminds us all that we can not do anything against "the truth" but only for it!

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For all these reasons above, and for others to be mentioned throughout the comments, we are in for a fascinating experience as we start on II Corinthians. We would remind ourselves that though the above remarks seem to present the idea that the whole epistle is defense in behalf of Paul's apostleship, that was not the primary reason for its being written. Chapter 12:19 states that the primary reason it was written was to build up the whole church. So it is only in a secondary sense that it "defends" Paul and his apostleship.

As stated above, the epistle is viewed as a coherent whole. It is recognized that many over the years have held contrary views, especially in regard to chapters 10-13. We do not agree. There is no manuscript evidence for the position. The Greek manuscripts have the epistle basically as it is. From the internal point-of-view, it is granted that there are seemingly abrupt changes in thought, such as between 6:13 and 6:14; 9:15 and 10:1; etc. However, it is entirely possible to read such sections as 6:14—7:1 in context and read them as being where they were intended rather than parts of lost letters, scribal blunders, or whatnot. It is purely a subjective matter, in the final analysis, and from our perspective, the letter is good as it stands. It makes sense as it is (that is what the criterion of judgment must be) and we so accept it.

The Revised Standard Version is quoted (unless otherwise noted). The questions will follow various sections. See the following outline for the whole epistle.

OUTLINE OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

General Theme: Upbuilding of the Church, 12:19.

Express Aim: Establishing of Paul's Apostleship.

Each of these are developed through discussion of the following "topics" or subjects:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| I. 1:1-2 | Greeting |
| II. 3-11 | The purpose of God's "comfort." |
| III. 12-22 | The integrity of Paul. |
| IV. 23-2:4 | Paul's reason for a change of plans. |
| V. 2:5-11 | A specific case of repentance and forgiveness. |
| VI. 12-17 | Paul's pure ministry. |
| VII. 3:1-4:15 | The new covenant and its servants. |
| VIII. 4:16-5:10 | A ministry with eternal hope. |
| IX. 5:11-6:13 | Reconciliation by Jesus Christ through Paul. |
| X. 6:14-7:1 | The reconciled manner of life. |
| XI. 7:2-16 | Some results of reconciliation. |

INTRODUCTION

Chapters 8 and 9 are a sort of parenthesis to the general letter, though yet related to the express aim. Titus had been sent to Corinth (in place of Paul?). At the subsequent meeting with Paul, he told Paul about the good reactions among the Corinthians. This led Paul's thinking to the special offering in the process of being received. Chapters 8 and 9 discuss that special offering.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| XII. 8:1-15 | Examples of giving. |
| XIII. 16-24 | Careful handling of the offering. |
| XIV. 9:1-5 | Promises to be fulfilled. |
| XV. 6-15 | Results of the offering. |

Chapters 10-13 take up where chapters 1-7 left off, with special reference to those who were opposing Paul.

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|--------------------|---|
| XVI. 10:1-18 | Paul's specific apostolic commission. |
| XVII. 11:1-15 | Comparison of Paul and his opposers. |
| XVIII. 11:16-12:10 | Forced "boasting" but of "weaknesses" not "strength." |
| XIX. 12:11-18 | A true apostle. |
| XX. 19-13:10 | Examination in the light of truth. |
| XXI. 13:11-14 | Conclusion. |

The epistle was written from Macedonia where Titus met Paul with good news from Corinth, 2:13-14; 7:5-16. It was written probably in the winter of A.D. 56-57 (or any time following the three-year stay at Ephesus), following the evangelization of the city on the second journey, Acts 18:1-18, which probably occupied the years following A.D. 50 and the Jerusalem conference.

Lesson One

(1:1-22)

SECTION I 1:1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.

To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia:

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

V. 1 — The description of himself as 1) an apostle 2) by the will of God was done by Paul essentially because some saints at Corinth were challenging these facts. This facet is dealt with at length in Chapters 1-7 and 10-13. Timothy was apparently with Paul at the time of writing, and well-known to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:17) since he had spent time there, Acts 18:5.

Church of God — as clearly a name for the “church” as any other name given, and there are several in the Scripture (see Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 2:10). Of course, it is here quite appropriate because of the

effect it was intended to have upon those in Corinth.

saints — The common term in the New Testament for Christians; here including those in Cenchrea, Athens, etc. The term has in mind those who belong to God because they are in Christ Jesus.

V. 2 — The common but meaningful salutation. Grace is from God, who is the ground of all Christian existence. Grace, as a term, began its existence as referring to the property of a thing that would bring joy to the one possessing it. It grew as a concept to encompass the thoughts and acts bringing joy, especially since said thoughts/actions had no selfishness involved, being done simply because of the "heart quality" of the doer. Peace is the result of being in Christ (Rom. 5:11), and also the fruit of reconciliation (5:19). It denotes a state of mind wherein "all is well" since enemies have "kissed and made up."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Paul described himself as he did in 1:1? Do his other epistles begin the same way?
2. How was the congregation in Corinth described? Is this a typical description in the New Testament?
3. Could you give a "thumbnail" sketch of "grace" and "peace"?

SECTION II 1:3-11

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; 10 he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on

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him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.

V. 3 — **blessed be** — This is equal to "Praise be"

Father — It is well-recognized that such terms are "humanly" understood. Yet that is true of anything in the Scripture. It is the revelation of a God who is past our understanding to a very limited creation known as man. We as "man" are so restricted in our ability to comprehend a being so unlike ourselves in so many ways. Because this is true, God attempted to "bridge the gap" by relating what was unknown through means of the known (as any analogy is to do). Hence, he picked terms that are known to his creation, man, to help us comprehend our creator (God). Furthermore, he in his wisdom chose the terms that best present what is unknown. We do well then to remain as close to the concepts used as we can, even if there are limitations in them. We are limited, and any term we would choose would be limited. So, let us assume that God in his infinite wisdom reflected in his selection of words those which best present the truth to us who are finite.

mercies — Compassion is a good synonym. This word was very common in the Jewish liturgy. See also Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:1; Hebrews 10:28. It will be seen in vs. 8-11, where God's mercy allowed Paul to be spared death.

comfort — This English word is rather too "blah" to express the idea meant. The root is seen many times in this epistle (2:7, 8; 5:20; 6:1; 7:4, 6, 7, 13; 8:6; 9:5; 10:1; 12:8; 13:11; besides in our text) and often in the New Testament, since it is a name for the Holy Spirit (John 16:7) and for one who "comforts" another (Romans 12:8). It has more the idea of strength and sustaining help from someone with all the effects of such help. Hence, though "we" (v. 8) felt hope of living was gone, yet God gave us all the "life" we needed.

V. 4 — **affliction** — This word has the idea of pressure, intense and disruptive. The word is used in Romans 5:3; also Matthew 7:14; Acts 11:19; Hebrews 11:37; James 1:27. Evidently it is a general word somewhat equivalent to or inclusive of "sufferings" as in v. 5. Note Jesus in Hebrews 2:16-18.

comforted by God — At no time is the "saint" to consider that his/her life is to be lived only for self. Rather, as even is God, whatever we are or have, should be for the good of self and others also. In this respect, we are to be like God (see Matthew 5:44-48). So, though God comforted him, it was not just for his sake. We are to take note.

As this section develops, we will see that the specific point of strength in Paul's experience (vs. 8-10) was that God raised the dead. From this particular fact about God, all those with Paul (and Paul himself) found the courage to endure the prospect of dying in some unnerving (I so assume, since the idea of death, per se, did not seem to bother Paul, as evidenced in chapter 5, and Philippians 1:21-23) way. However, for the Christian, the sustaining power is that life lies beyond death.

V. 5 — Whether Paul means sufferings identical to or similar to those of Christ, the fact remaining is that Christians partake of such, and for a reason: to reveal the overflowing strength and sustenance from God. This, as v. 6 shows, has its purpose too. (See Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; I Pet. 2:21-24.)

V. 6 — The Scriptures present the Christians as a body, spiritual in some ways, yet like unto a physical body (I Cor. 12; Rom. 12) which necessarily involves each member of that body. This verse shows how, in one way, such is true, as each member helps all other members.

patiently endure — The Greek term means to stand fast, or to be steadfast. See Romans 5:3-4; James 1:3, 12. The word describes the veteran, not the recruit, the bristlecone pine, not the Mimosa tree.

V. 7 — As Romans 5 says, hope comes from character, which comes from endurance in affliction. But more than that, all is produced because of God, the sustainer. Perhaps no epistle more clearly removes the Christian from the position of trusting in things mortal to things eternal than does this epistle. It will teach us well that our hope is only and ever in God.

you share — The Greek term is our "koinonia." See here Hebrews 12:3-11.

V. 8 — What the experience was is anybody's guess. It does not seem to have been just the thought of dying, per se, but rather some circumstances connected with such. It may be that others were involved, since Paul said "we." This particular event must be seen with 4:8-12 and 6:3-10 as backgrounds. Ref. I Corinthians 15:32; 16:4, 9.

V. 9 — The realization that those involved could no longer trust in themselves, but, being helpless, were driven to trust in God alone was the effect of that event. That God was a fit subject to trust in rather than oneself or others is because God raises the dead.

V. 10 — **so deadly a peril** — The Greek is "such a great death." Such verses as these, and others, are to lead Christians to think that death is to be viewed as something to see God in, and realize the importance of man in that God is vitally interested in every man. If he knows the hairs of our head (Matt. 6) he is verily concerned about the head!

V. 11 — Somehow, not explained here by Paul, nor necessarily

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anywhere in the Scriptures, prayer could play a part in his circumstance, and redound unto the benefit of many. Rather than try to explain just how prayer "works" for us, the Scripture just enjoins us to do so, and allow God to do as he knows best. As was illustrated in the lives of many people, in both the old and new histories of God's people, prayer played important parts in many varied circumstances.

many (1st occurrence) — The Greek term is commonly rendered "face." It sometimes means the person, and sometimes just the face or front. See 2:10; 3:7, 13, 18; 4:6; 5:12; 8:24; 10:1, 7; 11:20. It might be translated "out of many faces/persons."

QUESTIONS:

4. Why does God "comfort"?
5. How do you understand comfort?
6. Does God "make up" for sufferings?
7. How difficult was Paul's situation in Asia?
8. What did the circumstances cause Paul to do?
9. What was the basis of Paul's hope in God?

SECTION III 1:12-22

12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthy wisdom but by the grace of God. 13 For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully, 14 as you have understood in part, that you can be proud of us as we can be of you, on the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure; 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. 17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. 20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the

glory of God. 21 But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; 22 he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

V. 12 — **boast** — This word and the various concepts behind it will appear often in this epistle. There is, certainly, a line between what is a proper boast and what is an undue boast, which becomes aggrandizement. Here, Paul speaks concerning himself. As subsequent verses show, it is part of an argument on his part for his defense against those who were accusing him of deceitfulness. Much depends upon the motive for said boasting, perhaps even more than the boasting itself.

testimony — witness, and our familiar word “martyr.”

conscience — Paul will argue that his basis for judgment concerning himself, and his actions, was not like that basis which is “worldly” (v. 17) but rather as that of a Christian, whose life is guileless, and that because his god is of such nature.

The particular facet of man’s personality known as conscience is just one of the several facets of personality (or consciousness). It is, thus, a part of every personality, and like the rest of that personality, created by God. It is definitely fashioned to function upon the individual’s concept of right and wrong, whatever that may be. Hence, one’s conscience is quite subject to change as one’s concepts of right and wrong change. These are reasons why people can disagree about matters of conscience; their standards differ. It is, of course, possible to have a conscience that is based upon eternal truths, or entirely otherwise (so that it might well be said that such a person has “no conscience”). The conscience is thus a “creature of education” in the sense that the basis for its operation is provided by education.

It will be well to state that the same Greek term was used to denote both “conscience” and “consciousness” in respect to humans, with the last term being much more inclusive than the first. Such texts as Hebrews 10:2 and I Peter 3:21 would be as easily, if not more so, understood if the Greek term were translated “consciousness” rather than conscience.

we have behaved — K.J.V. will translate this word as “conversation” which then meant how one lived, and not what we mean by the word in our time.

holiness — Some versions will read “simplicity” since the Greek texts vary between two similar Greek terms. In either case, the argument is: “my conscience is clear!”

godly sincerity — The concept here is that Paul’s actions were unmingled and pure, thus godly in nature. See this word in I Corinthians

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5:8; II Corinthians 2:17; Philippians 1:10; II Peter 3:1.

earthly wisdom — wisdom of a fleshly nature (note v. 17). See the idea in I Corinthians 1:20; 2:6; 3:3, 19.

V. 13 — If we read between the lines of this text, there seemed to have been this accusation against Paul, that his letters, as well as his words, were capable of double meanings, and that intentionally so. This the apostle denied, saying that such was far from the truth. The whole epistle is an attempt to set the record clear.

understand fully — The same Greek term as just translated "understand." There is no particularly good reason to translate two different ways.

V. 14 — **you can be proud** — The Greek term is the same term as in v. 12. Perhaps the meaning is: some of you have stood up for me, as I for you; and the case is such that even when Jesus comes, our ground/reason for so doing will be both unchanged and appropriate (thus "You can boast"). Read Philippians 2:16-18; I Thessalonians 2:19-20.

V. 15 — This verse is probably to be understood in the light of I Corinthians 16:3-11; and then reading v. 16 of our text. As time went by, and circumstances changed, his plan changed. Evidently, some took this fact and used it against him.

V. 16 — The special offering for the Judean saints which was mentioned in I Corinthians 16:1-2 and II Corinthians 8-9, and is the occasion for these various comings and goings.

V. 17 — Jesus will teach that the Christian ought to be of such nature that his affirmation will not need additional confirmation (Matt. 5:33-37). Of course, the Old Testament idea is in the word "faithful" which implies that one's character is dependable. Hence, the Christian's "Yes" is to be understood as such, since it comes from a person of integrity (recall that Rom. 1:31 described some as "faithless"). Here, Paul had said something, and had meant it, even though he had had to change his mind later.

fickleness — From a word for "light" or not "heavy" (i.e., solid vs. erratic).

V. 18 — God's character is consistently pointed as in the words of James 1:17, where no variance in him is found. Here, faithful/trustworthy/credible/just is the idea to describe God, and then Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit, who is God's guarantee of Paul's character, in that Paul's plans were always based upon God's will, and not otherwise. Hence, if God so willed circumstances, Paul's plan might change. Moreover, if God did not reveal anything to Paul, and Paul's plans were made in the "normal" human way, then as events developed, different actions might be required. Either way, one's life might be

open to criticism, even if unjustly so. But further, the best-laid "human" plans might be discovered to have been based upon less than the best motives, which, when discovered to be so, would surely call for an examination of announced activities, and perhaps changes of said activities. All of us today need to keep these things in mind as we make our plans, or sit in judgment of others. God may will otherwise (James 4).

V. 19 — Paul had called God to witness for him, verse 18. He then established the fact that God's faithfulness was evident in Christ, v. 20. The Holy Spirit, v. 22, made the circle of testimony complete and also reliable. Upon this basis, the apostle argued that his word was likewise trustworthy (i.e., if God is a being of integrity, and I am like God, then I am a being of integrity).

V. 20 — **Amen** — This comes from the Old Testament word which meant reliable, trustworthy. The Hebrew word was used to characterize God in Deuteronomy 9:7; Isaiah 65:16. When the Jews translated the O.T. into Greek, the Greek word *ἀμήν* was used for the Hebrew term. So, in the N.T., Jesus often used it to preface important ideas, as in Mark 14:18, 25; John 3:5; etc. Hence, when our Hebrew writer (Paul) stated that Jesus was God's "Amen" he had this background in mind. God kept his promise/word in Christ. Our "amen" should convey the idea that the thoughts uttered are true and verifiable. Consider especially the character of God and Christ as truth (= the real thing!).

V. 21 — **establishes** — Some versions will have guarantee. The Greek term was a common term for that which made a transaction sure or certain. Note then v. 7, where it was used in reference to hope. See also Romans 4:16; 15:8; I Corinthians 1:6, 8; Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 2:2, 3; 9:17; II Peter 1:10. We should consider that Paul believed that if his character was impugned successfully, then his message would be disbelieved. The reason for this is that Paul would be considered as self-centered, and his preaching thus. Obviously, the center of his message (Christ) and creator/revealer (God) would also be involved. Therefore, attention has been directed from Paul to God, thence the God's Son, and back to the message, since all are integrally related. This is one reason why he used the Greek term to describe God: it is well-known, and conveyed the idea of believability, etc.

us — The people here would be Timothy, Titus, Silas and Paul. This idea that these men were all reliable will come up again in ch. 12.

commissioned us — The Greek term is a verbal form of the same word that is translated "Christ." Of course, Christ means "annointed" and thus sent, etc. Hence, in a subtle play on terms, the apostle

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argued that God had established/confirmed both the Corinthians and Paul's company by means of God's anointed one (Christ) whom God had sent as his "yes." From this idea, God is said to have also anointed/sent them all. It is a comprehensive argument, intended to allay any aspersions on his character, his apostleship, etc.

V. 22 — God is said to have placed his stamp of approval upon them all by means of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is an additional thrust against those who were asserting falsehoods against him.

guarantee — The Greek term was a common word for that which would confirm an agreement, our idea of "down payment."

QUESTIONS:

10. Is boasting always wrong to do?
11. Did Paul want the Corinthians to boast about him?
12. Define conscience and its place in one's life.
13. What had Paul planned in regard to the Corinthians?
14. Upon what basis did Paul argue that he was not vacillating?
15. What part did Jesus play in respect to God's truthfulness?

Lesson Two

(1:23 — 2:17)

SECTION IV 1:23 — 2:4

23 But I call God to witness against me — it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy; for you stand firm in your faith. 1 For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. 2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? 3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not be pained by those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. 4 For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

V. 23 — **God to witness** — Many times a similar expression occurs in Paul's epistles, as Romans 1:9, 9:1; II Corinthians 11:31; 12:19; Galatians 1:20; Philippians 1:8; I Thessalonians 2:5, 10. This should

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cause us to think that God does know the heart of man, that our lives should be so lived that we would not be adverse to having God testify about our actions, and that it is right and proper to "swear" that what we have done/said was as it has been presented.

We should remember that this is still Paul's defense concerning his change of plans, for which cause some had accused him of being fickle. The section runs through 2:11 in particular.

V. 24 — Some consider this verse parenthetical.

lord it over — The Greek term is, in its noun form, translated as "lord." No one, not even the apostle, should "rule" another's faith, since by such action faith ceases to be faith as God desires it. Even God does not force anyone to do/be other than said person wills. Of course, "will" is the point: if one does not, of free will, have faith, then said person has no salvation.

you stand firm — The point is, by virtue of their faith they now stand, and not by means of anything else. Hence, though some might blame Paul or others for lapses in faith, in reality, "every tub must stand on its own bottom."

Chapter 2:1 — This verse presents a problem, not significant in some ways, about how many times Paul visited Corinth other than what is recorded in Acts. Two options are present: 1) that Paul had gone to Corinth with grief because of a problem there, or had gone because of a problem and the visit was upsetting, 2) that because of circumstances, Paul had decided not to go, since the visit would have been with sorrow. Neither position has much bearing on our understanding of the epistle in general. It seems from chapter 13 that Paul had visited twice, even if the Acts history doesn't show it.

I made up my mind — As a point of interest, the Greek term is commonly translated "judge." Many times in the N.T. the idea will be found that judging is common to everybody, and quite necessary to life. The only reason for these remarks is that some people are always quoting Matthew 7:1, and taking the sentiment expressed there and applying it to life in general, rather than in the specific situation involved in Matthew 7. It is only those who have not examined themselves or the New Testament who say people are not to judge. We do judge, and that constantly, since any determination we make about anything is a judgment. The concepts of people judging others are seen in the Old Testament, as in Genesis 9. God instituted judges to help Moses in Numbers 11. Throughout the book of Judges he set up both men and women to judge. So it is in the New Testament, since Jesus enjoined judging, John 7:17, 24. The idea of the Greek term itself is basically that of discernment, and then choosing on the basis of discernment. It is pertinent to remark that this

argument is not intended to insist we take God's place. It is intended to say that we should get involved in life rather than excusing ourselves from situations by hiding behind a misapplied Matthew 7:1.

Vs. 2-4 — These three verses are further explanation of Paul's change of plans: he had the "good health" of the whole church in mind, as well as his own personal feelings. So, as it has been pointed out, they are really independent of anyone as far as their individual faith is concerned, and yet quite interwoven with each other as members.

V. 4 — The problem in this verse (though, again, it is not crucial to interpretation) is about which letter Paul is speaking: First Corinthians or some other letter which we do not possess. Some argue for the one, some for the other. It is impossible to settle the matter.

QUESTIONS:

16. Is it all right to appeal to God to be a verification for our word?
17. Does anyone have the right to "lord over" some other person's faith?
18. With what emotions did Paul write to Corinth?

SECTION V 2:5-11

5 But if any one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure — not to put it too severely — to you all. 6 For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

V. 5 — Some argue that the person in mind is the man of I Corinthians 5, while others argue for someone else. In either case, the congregation had evidently taken some action in the matter, with Paul's blessing (and perhaps because the apostle was in some way involved personally). Now, they need to follow up the matter by renewing the ties that had been severed, perhaps by excommunication,

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or some other way. The reason for the needed action to take place is that the person has profited from the discipline, whatever its nature, and was again fit for fellowship. Moreover, Satan would gain the advantage (vs. 6, 11) if they did not complete their obedience (v. 9) which was a by-product of the whole matter.

Obviously, this is a good example for any congregation, not only to test obedience, but to practice Christianity on the local level. Note especially verse 7, where the congregation is, upon the person's repentance, to extend grace and exhortation (as in Heb. 10:24-25).

Discipline as a concept in the New Testament is much broader than the term is commonly used, since it really involves the whole teaching/learning process of the Christian life. Its intended end is to bring the "new creation" (5:17) unto the likeness of Christ, Ephesians 4:13. A part of discipline is seen in Hebrews 12:3-17. Another part in the purpose of the law (i.e., to train us to come to Christ) or the purpose of instruction, Hebrews 5:11-14. The term itself can be seen in such passages as Luke 23:16, 22; Acts 7:22; 22:3; Romans 2:20; I Corinthians 4:15; 11:32; II Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 3:24ff; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 2:25; 3:16; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 12:5ff; Revelation 3:19.

Forgiveness is as much a necessity for the "one offended" as the "offender." If the "one offended" can not forgive, an essential facet of being like God is not in his/her life. Moreover, said person acts as if the sin committed is more unforgiveable than sin against God (and that is hardly possible!). Such a mind attitude makes reconciliation impossible (have you noticed that it is the person "offended" who is to be the reconciler? See Matt. 5:21-26). This creates an undue state of mind in the "offender" who can not find forgiveness, a most essential part of life. A person needs to feel forgiveness as a reality, both from God and his/her peers. So we are put on the spot to forgive others lest we find no forgiveness ourselves, Matthew 6:14-15; 18:15-35. See, of many texts, Luke 17:1-10; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13. Now read v. 10 and Paul's own example.

V. 9 — Obedience here was as much involved with their subsequent action as their past performance. The end of any discipline, as written above, was to bring a person to the change of mind necessary so that subsequently God's will is done. The Corinthians themselves accepted the discipline from Paul through Titus, and changed their minds/lives, ch. 7:ff.

test — A common Greek term (*δοκιμάζω*) with the basic idea of "checking out" or "proving" something, as the quality of a metal, or the character of a person. In this epistle, 8:2, 8, 22; 9:13; 10:18; 13:3, 5, 6, 7; elsewhere such texts as Luke 12:56; Romans 1:28; 12:2;

14:22; I Corinthians 3:13; 9:27; Titus 1:16; Hebrews 6:8; James 1:3; I Peter 1:7; I John 4:1.

V. 11 — **advantage** — Doubtless much of Satan's success in our lives is because we are ignorant of him and his ultimate goals for us, and so he has the advantage. We ought to read carefully such texts as Ephesians 6:10-17. In the case at Corinth, whatever punishment that was given was not to be for the ultimate destruction of the person. Evil was not to be overlooked, but rather "treated" and the cure effective.

QUESTIONS:

19. The person in this text was not named — wonder why?
20. Does the local congregation have an obligation to itself and the community to oversee its members?
21. Did their obligation stop after said action upon the person?
22. Why should every congregation "guard" its members?

SECTION VI 2:12-17

12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; 13 but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

◁ V. 12 — This verse resumed the thread of thought from v. 4, where Paul was discussing the thought of his great concern for the Corinthians, and presented the idea that he was so concerned for them even "open doors" could not deter him from finding out about them. Recall to mind that he had affirmed that his love for them had caused him to not come, rather than being simply fickle, as some had accused him of being.

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a door — Here is an interesting example of an opportunity to serve Christ that was, in effect, ignored because of other considerations that were deemed (by Paul) to be more important. All of us have had, and will continue to have, similar experiences in life. Many and varied are the opportunities that come to all Christians, and our priorities will determine which one(s) we choose. Hence, our concern for one thing may well cause us to pass up another thing (an open door). We must, then, strive to have the right priorities at all times, and be aware that many more demands (= doors) will be upon us than we can possibly fulfill. Now read Philipians 3:1-14 in this light.

V. 13 — Titus had been sent to Corinth with a letter from Paul. The letter (whether our I Corinthians or some other letter) was of such nature that Paul feared lest the Corinthians react negatively. Evidently a rendezvous at Troas had been agreed upon, which is where Paul went, expecting Titus with news of Corinth, as well as to preach, v. 12. However, Paul had to go on to Macedonia before finding Titus.

my mind — The Greek term is commonly translated as "spirit" in the New Testament. Comparison with 7:5 will show that the Greek terms for spirit and flesh overlap in some ways. The apostle could not find any rest, even though the opportunities to serve Christ were his, because of his concern for the Corinthians. (This is the point they were to get, that even preaching took second place in his love for them, which was another argument against those who were opposing him.)

V. 14 — **Thanks be to God** — As we can see, Titus brought good news (note 7:5ff) to Paul, which lead him into this short doxology, and also into an extended (through 6:10) presentation of the preaching ministry, as exemplified by himself, the apostles and others. The meeting with Titus is picked up in 7:5.

The word "thanks" is elsewhere translated "grace" as in 1:2; or "forgive" in 2:7, 10. Note 9:8 ("blessing"), 11, 13, 15.

who . . . always leads us in triumph — God always brings good gifts to those in his service, always can be depended upon to bring victory even out of the greatest tragedy. So it was here: Paul had had many moments of despair in connection to the Corinthians, but God had turned it into something good, and this caused Paul to break into this moment of praise.

The figure of speech is this: God in Christ always is triumphant, and those who go with God are in the triumphal procession with God — rather than being the defeated, Christians are among the victors — what more could one ask?

fragrance — As the victory procession went by, incense was burnt,

giving off a sweet fragrance to those standing by. So Paul likened those in the victory procession of God: they were even as incense, an odor reminding people of God and God's ways. Check Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 4:18.

V. 15 — This verse further developed the idea in v. 14, presenting the point that Christians generally, and preachers in particular, are representatives of something to everyone and either a reminder/portent of life or of death (even if some/most/all did not realize it).

being saved . . . perishing — This is the correct translation of the Greek text (the identical idea is in I Cor. 1:18). People are either saved/lost at any given moment, should they die; yet it is also correct to describe people as in the process of being saved/being lost, since physical death has not yet occurred and sealed their destinies. Hence, the text also instructs us that people can change their minds, thus changing their lives, even in the matters of salvation. Of course, this is the reason preaching is done, as well as all phases of "church work" in general: we believe that repentance can take place, people's lives reclaimed from the devil and returned to God, etc.

V. 16 — **death . . . life** — As these eternal consequences of preaching and the eternal destinies of people came to mind, hinging upon their relationship to the message preached by such as Paul; and then as he reflected upon the great responsibility of those who bore that message, he thought of who was sufficient for such an awesome task. The (implied) lack of sufficiency or worthiness on the part of any or all was directly related to the greatness of the message and the task. Of course, the God who sent the message was also able to make the ones sent sufficient for their task.

V. 17 — Continuing the thought of v. 16, the apostle seemed to have some in mind (perhaps those who opposed him, or others) who either openly or covertly presented themselves as sufficient for such tasks, but who were in actuality "watering down" the message and the task in such a way that they were totally unworthy/insufficient. Paul will argue in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 that God can make anyone a worthy messenger of the gospel, but only God can do so. Nothing else of man would suffice to accomplish it — only God.

men of sincerity — Contrasted to men who were, of themselves, acclaiming their own worthiness. The Greek term for sincerity was used in 1:12 in connection with Paul's conscience. Some then, as now, were in the preaching ministry for less than the right motives, not knowing that to God they were seen for what they actually were. Paul asserted throughout this whole epistle that his ministry was transparently clear and pure, that he was quite willing "to spend and be spent" in behalf of the church, because he loved them as a father.

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QUESTIONS:

23. Where was Paul when Titus went to Corinth? Where had he (evidently) planned to meet Titus?
24. Does life sometimes present us with more opportunities than we can use?
25. What determines which of several opportunities we will choose?
26. What sort of procession is the Christian in?
27. How did Paul indirectly describe the relationship of Christian to non-Christian? (The apostles may be the "we" in our text.)
28. Were some "peddlers" of God's Word then? Are some now?

Lesson Three

(3:1-18)

SECTION VII 3:1—4:15

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? **2** You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; **3** and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. **5** Not that we are sufficient of our selves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, **6** who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, **8** why

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should not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? 9 For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. 11 For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor.

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. 14 But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

V. 1 — This verse may be understood two ways: 1) take 2:17 as a commendation by Paul of himself, and his response thereto; or 2) it is an address to the accusation which some had made that he had (previously) commended himself on other occasions as a defense, and such a defense always borders closely upon self-commendation. Some consider that 2:17 was an indirect way to commend himself and also to put others down. As we shall note in chapters 10-13, he acknowledged that he had been driven to self-defense ("glorying" in self). As he well knew, 10:17-18, self-commendation is worse than useless. Hence, when he is driven to self-praise, it is in the weaknesses of his life so that God might still be exalted, 12:9, 10.

Letters of commendation were, as now, common (see Acts 15:25ff; 18:27; Rom. 16:1; I Cor. 16:10ff; II Cor. 8:22; Col. 4:10). There was nothing wrong with the practice, unless it were made so. Evidently some had come to Corinth with such letters, and either had compared themselves to Paul (who had no such letter) or had given others the opportunity to do so.

V. 2 — Paul, while denying an "official" letter to vouch for his credentials, nevertheless did affirm that he had a most evident means of commendation: the Corinthian congregation, collectively and individually. They did not make him an apostle, nor did his apostleship depend upon them—yet its existence was a most evident sign of his apostleship, thus making it quite impossible to affirm he was not what he claimed (note I Cor. 11:2). Since their existence was of

such nature, his "letter" could be known and read by everyone, in distinction to a letter on paper that only some could read. (Note here Rom. 1:8; I Thess. 1:7.) As the poet has expressed it, we are the (only) bible (some) men read.

V. 3 — Yet Paul would not neglect to point out that they were actually what they were because of belonging to Jesus Christ, of whom Paul was merely a servant, as 4:5 points out. The obvious contrast is between the work of Christ in their lives (= mind/heart, note carefully Heb. 8:8-13), rather than a letter from some human authority, be it great or small. But even more, as pointed out in v. 6ff, they were the products of a new and different "letter" which was to be contrasted with the "letter" that came on tablets of stone. This new letter, the product of the Holy Spirit working through men (I Thess. 2:13), was about Christ, whom Paul served (2:17). Hence, the complete circle is made: Christ to Paul to the Corinthians to Christ.

delivered — This is a translation of the common Greek term transliterated "deacon." See under Romans 12:7.

V. 4 — A valid and obvious conclusion, then, is that Paul rightly had confidence because of his means of commendation.

toward God — The Greek construction is like John 1:1, "with God." (*πρὸς τὸν θεόν*)

V. 5 — Yet, his sufficiency is directly and only traceable to God, without which sufficiency and help no one would be worthy of the task (2:16). Apparently, as 2:17 stated, some were not so sustained by God, and their ministry was consequently self-centered. Unless one's sufficiency is "reckoned up" from God, one has no sufficiency.

V. 6 — God made us worthy/sufficient, Paul affirms, using the same term as in 2:16, and as in Colossians 1:12.

new covenant — Although promised in passages like Jeremiah 31, this phrase leaped into plain view in Matthew 26, from the lips of Jesus. Henceforth, it referred to the gospel message, I Cor. 15:1-4. See the same idea in Romans 7:6, and also peruse Hebrews 8:8-13. This idea was in Peter's mind, II Peter 1:16, in the sense that the new covenant, under which he served, was that which could give all things that pertained to life and godliness, 1:3-11, which the written code (the Old Testament) could not do (see Acts 13:38-39; Gal. 2:21-22). When the law came in, it merely magnified the sinfulness of man, Romans 5:20, and through that sin, strengthened by the law (O.T. law, or any law system, for that matter), I Corinthians 15:56, death reigned, Romans 5:21. However, thanks be to God, his grace as expressed in Jesus Christ can set us free from the law of sin and death, and we can reign in life, Romans 7:24 — 8:3, 5:21.

V. 7 — **dispensation of death** — The Greek term behind dispensation

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(ministration, etc.) is the familiar word which is commonly transliterated as "deacon." There was and is no life under any law system, because no one keeps the law. This was so even in Old Testament days. It was only by faith that life came, Habakkuk 2:14.

This section is replete with various descriptions identifying what Paul means by his phrase in v. 6, "written code." Only those who refuse to take the evident meaning can not perceive that the Old Testament, and specifically the ten commandments, the heart of the Old Testament, is what the apostle has in mind, contrasting it with the New Covenant.

Moses' face — As Exodus 34 reveals, Moses' appearance was visibly changed while in the presence of God. It may well be that such happened not only to convince the Israelites that Moses had been with God, but also to typify the non-permanent nature of the Old Testament law. If so, God was providing just such information as Paul was using in our text. Stated differently, the Old Covenant, even at its inception, was already passing away, typified by the fading glory on Moses' face.

V. 8 — **greater splendor** — The Greek term is normally translated "glory." It is worthy of mention that the "written code" came *with* glory, whereas the "dispensation of the Spirit" is *in* glory. One was simply attended by glorious things, etc., while the other was/is glorious, and this was/is so because of the very nature of the respective covenants.

V. 9 — **dispensation of condemnation/righteousness** — These contrastive ideas give the vital facts about each covenant. Jesus, the center and circumference of the dispensation of righteousness, is life, and came to bring such. Thus, all that the New Testament is, the message about Christ, bears testimony on this point. Note especially such texts as John 3:36; Romans 5:10; Galatians 6:8; Colossians 3:3-4; II Timothy 1:1, 10; Hebrews 7:16; I John 5:11, 12. The apostle clearly argued that the covenant of which he was a servant was, because of its intrinsic nature, far greater than the Old Covenant. One was temporary, the other permanent, one brought death, the other life.

V. 10 — Continuing the contrast, Paul showed that the glory/splendor/honor of the first was not even worth comparing to the second, such was the vast difference. The transfiguration scene in Matthew 17 is a good "commentary" on the two covenants.

V. 11 — The difference was not only in the fact that Jesus was the essence of the dispensation of the Spirit, and brought life, but by virtue of Jesus' nature (an indestructible life, Heb. 7) the New Covenant was permanent, not temporary. Consider carefully the argument substantiating this very point in Hebrews 12:18-27.

After all this is said, however, we should observe that the "written code" was "good, and righteous, and holy" (Rom. 7:12) and that it was the "flesh that was weak" (Rom. 8:3). Moreover, the essential quality of the new covenant is righteousness, which comes only from God (Rom. 1:17) and alone brings life, simply because it is from God in Christ, and not in man. Hence, though one should rejoice that God saw fit to replace the temporary with the permanent, the temporary was yet of God, and for a good purpose.

V. 12 — Moses had used a veil under the old covenant — Paul in contrast is very bold under the new covenant, primarily because of the hope that the new covenant produces.

V. 13 — **the end** — The problem here is what "end" does Paul have in mind: the end of the shine on Moses' face, or the end of the old covenant? If the first is correct, we assume that Moses had mercy on the people because of the temporary condition of his face (the Exodus account seems to say this). If the second is correct, then in some way, whether planned or not, Moses did something that kept the Israelites from "seeing" that the covenant they were receiving was even then "passing away" because of its temporary nature, and in the death of Christ was made null and void. The only "real" glory the Old Testament had was in the fact that God had given it.

The problem is not easy to decide, since the preceding context uses the phrase "that which was passing away" (or equivalent) to mean the covenant being received from God. Consistently, then, we should keep the same content in this verse. However, this in some way seems to indict Moses for keeping the truth (as mentioned above) from Israel. Perhaps the fact is that what Moses did was simply another shadow of what was to typify the new covenant, its "openness" and access to God, even if Moses did not know it.

V. 14 — **minds were hardened** — The difficulty with this is to decide the point in time when this happened, and the cause of it. If God hardened their hearts by some direct action, that is one thing. If they hardened them, that is another. Furthermore, if God hardened their hearts prior to the giving of the law, or even afterward, this would definitely put the Israelites in a different light than if they hardened their own hearts, either before or after.

What does remain is the fact that a "heart condition" remained at the time of Paul, since Christ (= the letter/spirit of v. 6) was the only means of clarification for the law and its intended end (that of pointing men to Christ, Gal. 3 and Rom. 10:4). The Jews were unable to see that the Old Covenant did not have any abiding "glory" and, because they could/would not see this fact, the veil remained.

V. 15 — This truth in this verse is really made evident in the gospels

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and as well as Acts—the Jews who refused to accept Jesus were definitely blind. This condition often caused trouble, as is manifest (see Rom. 9:1-5, 10:1ff) because the Jews were rather radical in their adherence to the law, and in their opposition to any who challenged them. “We are Moses’ disciples” was their battle cry, John 9:28, and yet Moses was to be their accuser, John 5:45-47, because they were unwilling (note Rom. 10:18-21) to hear him.

V. 16 — Of course, only in becoming Christian does a person perceive the truth stated in this verse. The Christian can understand, and much more clearly as years go by, the consummate plan of God in giving of the old covenant, and the many ways it “pointed” people to Christ.

V. 17 — **Lord is the Spirit** — This picks up the point in v. 6, and clarifies the intervening verses. Paul was a servant of the new covenant, which he called the “letter” and also the “spirit.” Its message was in a written covenant in letters, through the instrumentality of the (Holy) Spirit, with its center and circumference being Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus provided the means to seeing the real purpose of the old covenant, which was passing into oblivion even when it was being given on tables of stone. Whenever Jesus was accepted, the hardened “hearts” were changed because God’s new covenant begins at the heart (= mind) as Hebrews 8:8-13 shows.

Any such effect as was just stated is best described in the terms bondage/freedom, since these terms depict what was/is the result of the two covenants. Thus Jesus would say, If you know the truth (i.e., if you know/accept me, the truth) then you are free indeed, John 8:31-36.

V. 18 — **we** — That is, Christians, those who have turned to Christ which act removes the “veil.”

beholding — The Greek term means to look or to see, as in a mirror.

the glory of the Lord — In context, a glory (of the new covenant) that will abide, and that far surpasses the faded glory of the old covenant.

being changed — Our word “metamorphosis” is a transliteration of the Greek term. This word was used to describe the transfiguration of Jesus, Matthew 17:2. Paul used it in Romans 12:2 in regard to Christians. The idea here is a constant change, which is to occur as Christians grow from child to adult, from babe to the stature of Christ. To some extent, there is probably a play on words here, insofar as the imagery is concerned. The Israelites beholding Moses’ face could see some of God’s glory, even as Christians, looking into the perfect law of liberty with its abiding glory, can see God’s glory. Naturally, Jesus is the means to do this, as he through the “letter” of the “Spirit” is described as the exact representation of God (see Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15; John 1, etc.).

Lesson Four

(4:1-15)

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but

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not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body of the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

13 Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. 15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Chapter 4 — Paul began a discussion of his general ministry back in 2:14-17 as compared with an unnamed number who had made claims, etc. Progressing through chapter 3, the ministry of the apostle(s) was what it was because of the nature of the covenant under which he labored (since the covenant was glorious, so was his ministry — and by extension, that service which every Christian could render). Now, chapter 4 continues to develop (note the "therefore" in v. 1) this idea, especially about the greatness of the message, though the instruments of the message are somewhat insignificant; but this is so in order that the fact may be evident to all that God is the power in the message, and he alone makes the messenger sufficient. Our text will then treat the points: why some don't believe and how God cares for the apostle(s) in his ministry. Paul then led into the final glorification which God had yet to give: a heavenly home (4:16 — 5:10).

Of course, in some senses, the principles of sufficiency and honesty, the message/messenger relationship, etc. are applicable to any who bear the good news, since the same general things will need to be recognized, and are even today yet true.

V. 1 — **therefore** — Indicates a conclusion from the preceding thought(s), which actually extends back to 2:17.

ministry — The Greek term *διακονία*. In the text, probably best taken as referring to the apostle (and the other apostles as well) since the whole discussion revolved around Paul's relationship as an apostle/preacher to the Corinthian brethren. Indirectly, the "preacher" and his special task is in mind, so, many principles Paul mentioned will apply to "preachers." See I Corinthians 7:25; I Timothy 1:13, 16; II Timothy 1:7, where Paul described himself as receiving his "ministry" through God's mercy.

do not lose heart — Recall here the opening chapter, and the discussion there. Note also the idea in 3:16-18. The text in vs. 7-15 helps reinforce the idea by pointing out just how God keeps sustaining Paul

in such ways as can be recognized by Paul. (You should note that v. 16 repeats the idea here, and uses the same words.) Often the most discouraging point is the rejection of the message; but the charge is not to get results, but to proclaim. The harvest is God's.

V. 2 — Christianity, at its best, is to produce just such results as Paul lists in this verse. It is at times true that Christians (even apostles) are not at their best (i.e., God has not finished his work in them yet, Phil. 1:6). However, Paul has renounced such things, attempting to be honest and irreproachable in every man's sight. Doubtless, the goal was not attained, but he was attempting to do so (i.e., present himself as commendable to every person). He does not imply that he had previously preached in such ways.

disgraceful, underhanded — See Paul's advice in Ephesians 5:3-15. Recall John 3:18-21.

veiled — The figure now is shifted from the Mosaic law and applied to the gospel message. The reason was evident: some were not seeing as they should, and if the law (chapter 3) wasn't the reason, then v. 4 states what was the reason. Note here I Corinthians 1:18ff, and I Thessalonians 2:1-12, where somewhat the same ideas are expressed.

those who are perishing — The emphasis, as in 2:15, is on what was then true, and happening in the lives of some. Of course, a change of mind (i.e., repentance) could make the matter different, but only if the change took place. Note v. 4, where the "perishing" are unbelievers.

There seemed to have been a great problem in Corinth with this issue of "will the real apostle(s) please stand up." Here Paul asserted that he was presenting the truth, and if anyone could not so agree, then the reason could not be blamed upon Paul's message (which, by the way, was the basis for his ministerial/apostolic claim) but rather upon another reason. Reference also Acts 28:23-28; John 5:39-44.

V. 4 — **god of this world** — Some take this to mean that Paul called Satan a god. To some extent, people were worshipping Satan, though perhaps not knowingly so. This is one of the difficulties of being "under sin" (Rom. 3:9): we may not perceive that we are worshipping Satan. Certain it is that, if not Christian, one is a slave to sin (Rom. 6:16) because to whom one yields and is thus overcome, to that is one brought into bondage (II Pet. 2:19).

It may be that Satan did/does not have the quality of deity that would actually establish him as a "god being" but to many blinded by him, he was anyway. Paul said in I Corinthians 8:5 that there were many "gods" and "lords" then, and so it has ever been.

light of the gospel — John 3:18-21 depicted the reason many would not come — they loved darkness. . . . As remarked above, Paul

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attributed the blindness of the people to Satan — but it is also evident that one's will is involved in any such circumstance, since unbelief is a matter of the will. One yields oneself to obey; blindness is one result of yielding to the wrong master. In the case of those opposing Paul, they were slandering him, and opposing him on false grounds. Hence, they had a moral problem, and Satan "had" them. In the Jews' case, religion was the problem; and in the Gentiles' case, the "god of this world." So it is yet today: religion and/or the world keeps people from being Christians.

likeness of God — The Greek word is normally translated as "image" as in Romans 1:23; 8:29; I Corinthians 11:7; 15:49; Colossians 3:10. The word in Hebrews 1:3 is transliterated into our word "character."

V. 5 — One of the reasons Paul gave to lend credence to the indictment in v. 3 and 4 is found here — he asserted that Christ preached and believed did not make one blind but rather brought sight. The "preaching" of anything but Christ would do the contrary however. It was likewise true that if Christ was not accepted, the resultant state would be like blindness (cf. Acts 28:23ff).

Christ Jesus our lord — Many in the Corinthians' society were "lords" of some sort, since many had servants and were therefore masters. Some tried to "lord it over" the flock as did Diotrephes, III John 9; and which Paul did not intend to do, 1:24.

Servants — Every effort was being made to establish the fact that Paul did not preach himself in any fashion except to assert he had been called by God to the apostleship, and was a servant of Christ. If one was only a servant, no great claims could be made about oneself; yet to be an apostle involved certain distinct claims to be presented as credentials — hence, Paul's position was not easy to maintain, and certainly subject to criticism by those who didn't accept the same things he did.

As an observation, it is a hard thing not to preach "self" even if the words are of Christ. So much of the world is in us all, its methods, thinking, motivation. But what a horribly poor thing to preach: self!!

V. 6 — This verse enunciates the absolute base for what Paul was as an apostle: God had chosen him, the same God of Genesis 1, etc. Hence, he was under God's authority, and served because of that fact; yet it was also true that he served those whom Christ had redeemed, but served only because of Christ, not otherwise.

light of the knowledge — We are "back" in 3:18, where that which we behold brings about the transformation of life, and all that is done through God; whose nature remains ever the same, in distinction to man.

V. 7 — **treasure** — Referred to the message in its totality, and

presented again the reality that whatever greatness abounded, it was not in the messengers. Again, a slap at any who presented imposing credentials and not the message of Christ. Here is reflected God's wisdom: if the message is placed in anything except an earthen vessel, some glory would doubtless need to go to the vessel; but in God's good wisdom, the glory belongs to the message alone (at least in reality!).

V. 8 — This verse, through v. 11, is but a way to describe the vast chasm between the message which was all-important and the vessel (which brought the message) which was comparatively of no value. However, God's care of the vessel was a sign of his love, and that even if the vessel was used hard. This section will help us see how "earthly" the vessel really was, and how divine the message.

V. 10 — **life of Jesus** — Jesus was the supreme example of the vessel through which God brought the message, yet was used hard. If this was so, lesser vessels could hardly expect anything else, since the servant would not be greater than the Lord, John 15:20. One who served God had to lose his life daily, take up the cross and follow-daily, be willing to spend and be spent.

V. 12 — **death/life** — Herein lies a great glorious paradox: out of death life came to all, first in Christ, and then through the lives of those crucified with Christ who preached the message about Christ, who was the life. The real nature of the gospel message is seen in such characterizations. These preceding verses give an unencumbered view of a body in subjection to the spirit within. May it be true of all who read!

V. 13 — The quote is Psalm 116:10 in the Hebrew text, 115:1 in the LXX, which is the text Paul quotes exactly.

The point is, that faith must and will find expression and cannot be silent, perhaps in spite of such things as were just mentioned in vs. 8-11, and actually on the basis of God's abiding care even unto the point of death, v. 14. So, Paul was speaking, even if the message was not met with faith on the part of some who were hearing, Hebrews 4:2. Yet, we notice that Paul never treated the congregation as less than Christian, even if many weaknesses were present.

V. 14 — **knowing** — So often faith is predicated upon knowledge, of God, of Christ, etc. Note how often knowledge has been mentioned in this epistle. Knowledge, rightly used, does not puff up (I Cor. 8:1) but rather becomes the basis for commitment and service. Christianity is essentially, and eternally, a religion directed to rationality, based upon reception of information that proves trustworthy, thus generating trust.

We notice a difference here between this text and I Thessalonians

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4:13ff. However, many aspects of Jesus' coming are unclear, so it is best to accept what is written and let God take care of the details himself.

V. 15 — **it is for your sake** — The idea of v. 5 and 1:11 repeated, with the additional idea that as the circle of saved who give thanks grows, so does the circle of those who give glory to God.

QUESTIONS:

29. How were the Corinthians a better commendation than a letter on paper?
30. How did Paul contrast the new covenant and the old covenant?
31. What was the end result of the new covenant for Paul as an apostle?
32. What does v. 18 say happens to the Christian throughout life?
33. What was the "essence" of Paul's preaching?
34. In what ways did Paul describe himself in this section?
35. Does faith always express itself?

Lesson Five

(4:16 — 5:10)

SECTION VIII 4:16 — 5:10

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away our inner nature is being renewed every day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

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6 So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

This section sort of sums up the idea of sufficiency which was brought up in chapter 2 by showing that God has all things in hand, even to the preparation of a home eternal for those who are being saved, 2:16, and who are being led in a victory procession by Christ, 2:15. If God can prepare such a home, then it is sure that he is able to make anyone "sufficient" for service in the new covenant, which has eternal glory connected with it.

V. 16 — **we do not lose heart** — Though God sustains, yet the "vessel" is fragile, the trials ever-present, and sometimes faith is weak. So, it is comforting to know that God raises the dead, and promises them the blessing of his presence, v. 14.

outer . . . inner — See here Ephesians 3:16; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; Romans 7:22; I Corinthians 15:44. That which is material and temporal (cf. Ch. 5) will pass away as does all which is material. The spirit, the real person, is alone of such nature as to be eternal. It can be "reborn," and renewed each day, even if we fail to understand just how. The spirit is of the same nature as God, who is spirit, John 4:23-24, and is thus in the image of God.

To some extent, as we have noticed, part of what Paul says is true of any and all Christians, in principle, if not otherwise. Hence, it is generally held that such texts as this one state what is true for every Christian, regardless of who it might be. When this admission is made, however, it becomes difficult to separate what is true of all and what is true only of the apostle. If we hold that Paul is talking only of himself (or only of the apostles), a considerable amount of teaching that is not found elsewhere, at least not nearly so clear, is removed from use. Few, if any, would hold to such a position. So, it is a rather arbitrary proceeding on the part of anyone to decide just how much, if any, is true only of Paul, etc. We do well to recognize such.

V. 17 — This verse bespeaks of the abiding hope of every Christian who by faith looks for an eternal city, whose builder and maker is God, Hebrews 11:10, and that this pilgrim's citizenship is in heaven, Philippians 3:20. Note Romans 5:1-5; Luke 16:1-18, 19-32.

Notice the contrasts: affliction/glory; temporal/eternal; light/heavy.

Note here how heavy the affliction may get, ch. 1:8; yet the glory makes it insignificant, as Romans 8:17-25 states.

V. 18 — The reason is given for what was stated in v. 17; Christians (we) look (i.e., make our lifestyle) at things eternal rather than things temporal. Check Colossians 2:20 — 3:17 for a good parallel. The idea here will be enlarged in 5:1-10, especially v. 10, where judgment will be based upon what we "behold" in this life. Jesus taught that we ought to mind eternal things, Matthew 6:19-34; not building upon the shifting sands and things that perish with the using, Matthew 7:13-29; I John 2:15-17. We are encouraged many times to be like those of Hebrews 11, who built arks for future floods, and sought cities that were "other worldly" and all this because they were not ashamed to honor God as God, living as if seeing him who is invisible. It is then good to ask about what is real, true, and eternal!!

we know — This is part of the reason that we habitually keep beholding that which is eternal (4:17): because of our hope in God.

earthly tent — Our mortal/physical body. See I Corinthians 15, where the mortal puts on the immortal.

destroyed — The Greek term was actually used in reference to striking a tent.

we have — Present tense, present possession. See the point about faith, Hebrews 11:1. Note II Peter 1:14. This promise of God is yet to be totally realized by us who are living, since some aspects of salvation are yet to be revealed, I Peter 1:5, though other aspects of salvation are presently enjoyed.

building — Contrast to tent, impermanent/permanent. Only God could make such a house. The figures Paul used are interesting because he was a tentmaker.

eternal — Generally this term denotes a quality of life, and only implied is the idea of time. See John 10:10b. However, in our text the idea of time is prominent, the temporal vs. the eternal state.

5:2 — This verse brings up a section that is difficult (though the whole section is notoriously so) with the idea of wanting to put on the heavenly dwelling (as one would put on a garment) to keep one from being found naked, v. 3. The problem is several-sided, as for instance, a) was Paul afraid to die and would rather not die, b) what does the "heavenly garment" do, c) what is the meaning of "naked," and so on. We will run into a somewhat similar problem in chapter 12, with the body as well as the earth/heaven (Paradise) idea.

The evident fact is that we do not have a systematic discussion anywhere of heaven and how it relates to earth, etc. The times and places where it is discussed, as here, only give occasion for application of the truths to the Christian and how life ought to be lived down

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here, while in this fragile vessel like unto a tent. Hence, we are left with most questions unanswered. Doubtless God planned it so. Our job is to teach in such a way that people will live right here, and believe that God will take care of the rest.

V. 3 — **putting it on** — Whether Paul means in place of his earthly tent or on over his earthly tent is a moot question for many. It seems to me that he desires to replace the earthly with the heavenly dwelling/covering, as the rest of the text seems to say, and as is plainly said in Philippians 1:21-23.

naked — Just what this means is not too clear. It may mean something like is mentioned in Romans 13:14 (i.e., to put on Christ, his righteousness, etc., and to be found in Christ, Philippians 3:9; Ephesians 4:22-24).

V. 4 — Because of the exceeding flimsiness of the earthen vessel and the exceeding greatness of God's heaven, Paul longs for the eternal, as should every Christian, or as I Corinthians 15 puts it, that the mortal may put on immortality.

V. 5 — This simply states clearly what has been said earlier about the activity of God here and hereafter for those who serve the new covenant.

V. 6 — The opposite idea of 4:1, 16. Of course, "away" from the Lord is not in opposition to Matthew 28:20, but rather distinguishing heaven from earth.

V. 7 — **faith/sight** — As Romans 8:24-25 shows. Sight means that hope is gone, being swallowed up in realization, for in heaven both faith and hope will have vanished.

V. 9 — The same sentiments can be found in Philippians 3:1-4; Galatians 2:20; etc. Note the idea of "pleasing" in Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 14:6; Acts 12:3; Romans 15:3; I Corinthians 10:5; 15:38; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 11:5; 10:38; 11:25; 13:16; I John 3:22.

V. 10 — One can hardly think of being with Christ and not also think that the way one's life is lived will determine just where one spends eternity. Hence, the apostle states the obvious: to be absent from the body and present with the Lord includes a judgment through which one must pass. Hence, how life is practiced here is most important, since the verdict will be based upon what is done throughout life.

So all the talk of things eternal and life eternal are shown to be quite relevant down here among things mundane and people human.

QUESTIONS:

36. Upon what basis did Paul say he did not lose heart?
37. If things that are unseen are the "real," and things seen the "transient," what is true of the world about us?
38. Which term (real/transient) would describe the "house" God has prepared for us?
39. Does "mortal" equal "transient"?
40. Is the judgment based upon what we believe or what we do?
41. What "use" or "application" do the Scriptures make of the subject of heaven?

Lesson Six

(5:11 — 6:2)

SECTION IX 5:11 — 6:13

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from

God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says,
 "At the acceptable time I have listened to you,
 and helped you on the day of salvation."

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Without any question, our text is one of the finest in all Scripture. It presents the difference Christ makes. More than just speaking about a new man, the result of the conversion process that comes from God, it highlights the effect conversion has as stated especially in verse 16. Yet, additionally, the ever-encompassing power of Christ's love in one's life gives the daily strength to be about the business of persuading men, and that with the understanding that God knows our heart.

V. 11 — **fear** — that total attitude of the Christian about the God whom he worships, knowing that he must stand in God's presence to be judged (5:10), yet confident that it was God who provided Jesus (John 3:16) as the means of reconciliation (5:19). God is then viewed as both just and justifier (Romans 3:26).

we persuade — This was the work of Paul's life; the task to which he was called, and for which he suffered much at the hands of men unpersuaded. Note how often in the Acts history this concept of persuasion appears, and if the people being addressed were not persuaded, they were described as "disobedient." See Acts 13:43; 17:4; 18:4; 19:8, 26; 26:28; 28:23, 24. Texts using the idea/word would include Matthew 27:20, 43; 28:14; Acts 12:20; 14:19; Galatians 1:10; 5:7; Hebrews 13:17.

It is relevant to say that some take this text to refer to the preceding sections and that the "persuasion" Paul has in mind is in relationship to his apostleship and ministry, etc. Of course, that relates to his message which was given from God, and which was the major certification for his apostleship — so it is about the same way. In either case, the judgment of God was a controlling factor, since God would know the real motivation of any and all.

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conscience — The Greek word used here also means consciousness, the total awareness that is ours as a person. Here, it might be better to take it as consciousness, thus present the idea that the Corinthians, who are aware of the situation, would accept Paul for what he actually was: God's apostle, called and commissioned to a specific task.

V. 12 — If the people who were to read this letter were really Christians, then their measure/standard of judgment should be "other-worldly" as verse 16 states. If so, then they should also perceive that Paul was not bragging, but simply giving them every opportunity to thwart his opponents. He was giving to them an occasion to "boast," and thus provide an adequate defense for those who boasted in outward appearance rather than the effect of God in Paul's life, 12:12; Hebrews 2:4. Those opposing Paul were tearing his character down, to bring about disbelief of his message. He was trying to help those who should have been defending him.

V. 13 — This verse provides one definite argument: the (true) apostle had a self-sacrificing ministry: for God, for others. This must be the case, since Jesus was their example; he gave himself (v. 14), and demanded the same of them (Matt. 16). One's perspective is important in every situation of life—some thought Jesus "mad" (Mark 3:21) while Festus thought Paul "mad" (Acts 26:24). Paul would remind them that he was God's servant, and however they viewed him, they were viewing God's servant.

V. 14 — Whether sane or not, the controlling love of Christ for Paul was such that he could not do other than he was doing (Martin Luther caught that sentiment and so stated in the presence of his accusers). We would note that it is just as possible to take the verse as stating that it was Paul's love for Christ that was the constraining motivation.

In either case, the point is: my service is not for selfish ends, but rather in behalf of Christ for His sake (4:5). By implication, the attitude of those opposing him may be in the background since they apparently boasted in themselves and were also self-seeking.

V. 15 — Since all Christians die in Christ, and no longer live except in Christ, the change that follows is expressed in vs. 16-17 for all, and specifically illustrated by Paul's life, 5:18—6:13. The ensuing life will be "other-worldly" and expressed in selfless action, just as Jesus did, who tasted death for every man, Hebrews 2:9; was put to death for every man, Romans 4:25. On this basis, appeals are made to everyone that as redemption has been made by the precious blood of Christ, we ought to live holy, I Peter 1:15; Ephesians 4:17-23.

V. 16 — This verse simply states the transformation that takes place when one is begotten of the implanted word (James 1:21; I Peter 1:23) and thus regenerated by the Holy Spirit: the human soul is viewed as

God would view it, not as his creation in general views it. Even viewing the world through Jewish eyes as did Paul would not bring the same result as from the Christian side. Of prime importance then, would be the change that is wrought in one's view of Jesus, whom most of the world sees as something other than God's son. The force of the Christian's life is on the "inner" man which God sees, not the outer man which man sees (note Rom. 2:25-29). Consider how often Jews argued about the nature of the Messiah, or their genealogy, simply reflecting their misunderstanding of what God really wanted of them (cf. Matt. 23:23.).

V. 17 — Coupled with v. 16, this verse depicts the change "that's wrought by the touch of the master's hand." Nothing else would suffice to describe such change except the picture of old/new. Now read John 3:3-8. Certainly the character of the new covenant is responsible for this effect. Perhaps one of the reasons it is so effective is that it was to be written on the hearts of men.

V. 18 — All these effects are not of men (John 1:12-13), but rather from God and come by means of the conversion experience. If with Christ we have died (Col. 2:20) and been raised to sit with him (Col. 3:1), then we are to live to God (Rom. 6:10) and yield our members as instruments of righteousness, (Rom. 16:13, 19).

With the creation of a right spirit and a clean heart (Psalm 51), we being reconciled to God have one consuming passion in life: the service of reconciliation, of bringing men to God. We had sinned and broken the relationship with God, but have returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25). Now God who sent his son to bring us to him, and with Christ also gave all things, Romans 8:31-32, sends us to bring men to his son and thus to him.

V. 19 — The Christian faith is primarily concerned with man's relationship to God, the fact of his sin. God is not so far off that he is indifferent to man's situation, and he is definitely not ignorant of nor uncaring for man's lost condition. Therefore, he in Christ made provision for the righting of wrong relationships. Not only then has God loved us in Christ, but he has taken the initiative to restore what man, not God, tore apart.

In addition to making adequate provision for man's sins, God involved those who were restored to him in the task of bringing others to that same lovely relationship.

So it is God who has planned it all even though he was not the one who broke off the relationship by exchanging it for something else. Now he pleads with men to exchange (the actual meaning of the Greek term which is translated "reconcile") what they have, a life

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of alienation from all that is good, for what he in Jesus offers. It is a worthy undertaking for any of us to be involved in God's scheme of redemption as herein pictured. However, we should keep in mind that the text is talking primarily about Paul (and his fellow-apostles) and the message initially given to them. Secondly, any Christian is involved insofar as he/she can take God's revelation through the apostles and tell others how to be redeemed. We differ from Paul in that we have no revelation from God except what is in the Bible, and the New Testament in particular. Further, we do not need, nor are we promised, any corroborating signs as we deliver the message. We are not apostles — we can be, in a general sense, ambassadors.

V. 20 — **ambassadors** — From the Greek word meaning "older man" (so in Phile. v. 9; Eph. 6:20) then one chosen to act on behalf of another (as an emperor, country, etc.). Hence, the apostles, including Paul, were God's chosen representatives, imparting terms of forgiveness to all, for all time. See then Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; and the book of Acts where these commissions were carried out. As Christians, we carry the message of the ambassador(s).

Paul sometimes would argue from this position of authority (as in I Cor. 9:1ff) and at other times disclaim any special privilege that normally went with an ambassadorship (I Cor. 9; II Cor. 12, etc.).

There was a great mystery revealed through these men initially (see Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3) and through Christians over the years that is summed up in the message: be reconciled to God. The whole Bible centers on the theme, developing it in one way or another, and concludes with the invitation to respond unto the call and be reconciled to God (Rev. 22). Note here Romans 3:10; 5:6-10; then 1:17 coupled with 3:21-26; 5:12-21 (all have sinned, are weak, enemies, sinners; all can be made righteous/sinless in Christ where God's grace abounds).

Here is summed up (again) the essence of Paul, who had no message of his own, no credentials of his own, claimed no honors for himself (see I Cor. 4), was but a servant (I Cor. 4:1-2) an earthen vessel through whom God made an appeal. We should probably pay attention to the fact that the appeal to be reconciled to God is the essence of the gospel message and intended for all men everywhere and yet is also directed at the Corinthian congregation.

we beseech — It is quite likely that the primary import of this text is that the plea to be reconciled was directed to some/all of the Corinthians, who needed to get right with God. This is so despite the fact that they were saints. Repentance is a lifetime process, and needed often. They had repented before, 7:8ff., and needed to do so again. However, the passage is also more generally applicable, as our comments indicate.

V. 21 —A great part of the ambassador's message is that God so loved the world that he came to live in it, be identified with it in many ways, and finally take the place of each and every person as a sinner; this last in the sense of taking the sins of (or the effect of the sins, so some) of all, thus suffering as a sinner in the sinner's place. Moreover, since God was just in punishment, he also provided in Christ the means of justification and reconciliation. By so doing, God became the justifier of man, Romans 3:26. One of the effects of this is that man was excluded from self-justification and shut up to the avenue of receiving by faith what could not be obtained by works. Hence, all the glory goes to God, I Corinthians 1:30-31.

Notice that it is affirmed that Jesus did not sin, even though in every way tested as we are. Check John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; I John 3:5. Since this is so, we may share in his goodness, becoming righteous in him.

Consider the contrasts: 1) Christ as sinless; we sinners, 2) righteousness/sin, 3) in Christ/for us, 4) Christ was made/that we might become. Hence, the Scriptures make much of being "in Christ," since that is to be in the "state of acquittal" known as righteousness. As remarked before, only a faith-system can produce such; never a law-system.

6:1 — Restating one facet of an ambassador, that of a fellow-worker, (see I Cor. 3) rather than someone independent of others, he brings the appeal to "keep up" what had been started, the reconciled relationship with God. Further elaboration of how this is to be done is in 6:14—7:1. So the urging not to allow God's grace which made reconciliation a viable possibility to be in vain. God is our "fellow-worker" to do this, Philipians 2:12-13.

V. 2 — The idea of what God offers and the "now" imperative-ness of it causes Paul to divert his thoughts back to the service he was in, which was but the natural outcome of the dispensation of grace foretold by the prophet Isaiah, 49:8. Consider Hebrews 3:7ff. So, each Christian should recall that upon him have come the ends of the ages (I Cor. 10:11). Recheck Jesus' comments in Luke 4:16ff., and see Matthew 12:15ff. The acceptable time equals the whole New Testament age, prophesied of old, and actually in force at the time of writing.

Lesson Seven

(6:3 — 7:1)

3 We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. 13 In return — I speak as to children — widen your hearts also.

V. 3 — This verse introduces another consideration of Paul's personal service, especially of the fact that he, on his part, was making every attempt not to be a stumbling block for anyone, and perhaps being a means of thwarting the grace of God. See Matthew 18:1ff., Luke 17:1ff.

We now begin considering "the ministry" of Paul, viewed from his personal prospective in regard to 1) objective (external) circumstances, 2) subjective (internal) attitudes, 3) preparations for said service, and 4) public judgments of it, and all these in behalf of others for Jesus' sake, 4:5. Some analyze these as 1) physical, 2) mental and 3) spiritual.

obstacle — The Greek term is one which meant an object which caused one to stumble. Read I Timothy 4:11-16; II Timothy 2:24-26.

fault — See here the idea of "faultless" as in Ephesians 5:27; Philippians 2:14-15; Hebrews 9:14; I Peter 1:19; Revelation 14:5.

V. 4 — **servants of God** — We do well to remember that God is sometimes misunderstood for various reasons, and so it will be with his servants.

Viewed by Paul, the various things he mentions were but what should be taken as commendations of the ministry, rightly seen. In a larger sense, the whole epistle was written for this self-same purpose: a commendation of Paul's service.

commend — "Set ourselves forth" as God's men. This idea parallels the idea of co-worker in v. 1 as the ways in which the "beseeching" of 5:20 is done.

endurance — Some consider that this word sums up the next several things mentioned. It is often translated "patience" in Bible versions. See then Romans 2:7; 5:4; 15:4; Colossians 1:11; II Thessalonians 1:14; James 1:3-4, 12; 5:11; II Peter 1:6; Revelation (the Martyr's book) 1:9; 3:10; 13:10. See also ch. 1:6.

afflictions — Recheck 4:17; 1:6, 8; 2:4.

hardships — The common, inescapable trials of living.

calamaties — Some of these were seen in 4:8-10, and in ch. 11.

V. 5 — **beatings** — more than one!

imprisonments — Some of these turned out profitable (Phil. 1; Phile. 1), but he always wanted out, Hebrews 13:18-19. In Paul's case, it was faith over physical liberty.

tumults — Any variety of disorder, mob violence, etc. as Acts testifies.

labors — The toils of everyday life; plus those of being God's co-worker.

watching — Probably sleepless nights, either from the sundry cares of the ministry or in the "tight spots" mentioned above.

hungry — Seemingly forced upon him rather than just fasting,

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per se.

V. 6 — **purity** — One of the inner qualities/attitudes necessary to effective service. Root for "saint."

knowledge — What is meant is anybody's guess, but it might be in reference to his message, or the basic structure upon which he built.

forbearance — The word often is well translated as "long-suffering," and deals primarily with people relationships.

kindness — The opposite of severity, and a companion virtue to forbearance. See Romans 2:4; Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:4.

The next four qualities are not in single terms, but double terms:

Holy Spirit — Somewhat better taken as "a holy spirit" meaning that Paul's "inner man" was not characterized by deceit, etc. See 2:17; 4:2.

genuine love — As Romans 12:9, a love unfeigned and not hypocritical.

V. 7 — **truthful speech** — Again, a claim to basic honesty and a message void of falsehood.

power of God — See Romans 15:15-21; especially v. 18.

weapons — Akin to Ephesians 6:10ff., and perhaps the means to exhibit God's power in the exact way needed.

These next three verses likely present the differing ways the co-worker of God was viewed:

V. 8 — **honor/dishonor** — These are apparent states in life (cf. Rom. 9:21; II Tim. 2:20), when the same set of circumstances are viewed through the eyes of people, some opposed, some sympathetic.

ill repute/good repute — Many verses in this epistle deal with integrity, conscience, motives, etc.

imposters/true — Some people refused to (even) hear (cf. Acts 22); others traveled miles to serve Paul (Acts 28).

V. 9 — **unknown/well-known** — As in Acts 9; I Corinthians 4; Galatians 1; Philippians 4, or with no credentials, etc.

dying/live — Paul's effort was to be absorbed by and into Christ, existing to serve others, Galatians 2:20; Mark 10:45.

punished/killed — The paradoxes of the Christian life are scarcely appreciated by the non-Christian.

V. 10 — **sorrowful/rejoicing** — Note that Paul had personal reasons to have these attitudes of mind, and also attempted to share the similar experiences of others. Cf. Romans 12:15.

poor/rich — Certainly the people of God, whose earthly wealth is often given over to the use of others, and who count riches more in things unseen than things seen, are rarely perceived as having riches. Note Hebrews 10:32ff.; Luke 9:57ff.; Revelation 3:14ff.; II Corinthians

4:16ff.; etc.

nothing/everything — The Christian, whether Paul or whoever, ideally believes that Christ possessed is enough, and the whole world without Christ is nothing, even as Jesus taught, Matthew 5:3-12; 16:24-26; Luke 12:1-59; I Corinthians 1:5; 3:18ff.; II Peter 1:3-11.

V. 11 — This verse is probably best understood to mean that Paul had been open and forthright with the Corinthians, quite willing to accept them, faults and all, because he loved them as a father loves children (see I Thess. 2:11-12) and had suffered much for them personally. They need then to love him in like manner.

V. 12 — The problem in the relationship between the church at Corinth and the apostle was not with him, but rather with them. Hence (v. 13) they are encouraged to return/repay what Paul had given them: love and acceptance; to open up their affections for him. They had been too confining (the word is the same as in v. 4 "calamities," narrow, constricted places) with their willingness to receive him.

QUESTIONS:

42. Why did Paul commend himself?
43. What difference did the death of Jesus make in Paul's life? Will it do the same for us?
44. How complete is the "conversion process" upon one's life?
45. What contrasts are in v. 21?
46. How can God's grace be made "in vain"?
47. Does 6:3-10 describe a life committed to Jesus?

SECTION X 6:14 — 7:1

14 Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will live in them and move among them,
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them,
says the Lord,

and touch nothing unclean: then I will welcome you,

18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and

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daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

V. 14 — This verse picks up the idea presented in 6:1 concerning the grace of God which brought about their salvation, and couples up with the particular point of making that grace of no profit (i.e., vain/empty). It is the same idea as in Romans 5:20-21, where grace is said to abound where sin abounds, but yet we are not to sin so that grace may abound more, 6:1ff. Why? Because a life of sinfulness rather than of Christian living will effectively nullify grace, make it vain, useless. God cannot and will not save us if we choose not to be saved.

So then, the picture is this: Christ and Satan are opposites; each and all Christians are in Christ's body, the church (temple of God, v. 16) and thus stand opposite to any and all unbelievers who serve Satan, the god of this world, 4:4. Since Jesus and Satan understandably have nothing in common, neither should the Christian and the non-Christian. It is to be noted that the contrast is between those in the body and not in the body, not between various "parts" of the body. Termination by the congregation/church of fellowship with one of its members is just that: body vs. individual member rather than member to member, and as a subject is not treated in this text. See I Corinthians 5.

What we have here is the individual member and his/her participation in things apart from what should characterize a Christian.

See the contrasts, none of which are considered possible: righteous/iniquity, light/darkness, Christ/Belial, believer/unbeliever, temple/idol.

To state the possibilities is to see clearly what must not be, if Christians are to enjoy what God has promised to all who are reconciled to him, 5:19-20. Hence, the only thing to do is cleanse self of any defilement, perfecting holiness, etc., 7:1.

mismatched — Unequally yoked, such as would be true if Jesus and Satan were "yoke-fellows." See Deuteronomy 22:10; Leviticus 19:19. Ephesians 5:3-20 is a fine parallel passage to this text. Note the I Corinthian letter with its various admonitions about being "in the world but not of it," such as 5:9ff.; 6:1ff.; 7:1ff.; 8:1ff.; 10:14-22, 23 — 11:1; etc.

partnership — No "having together" of these things, no common possessions. We are the righteousness of God in Christ who became sin/iniquity in our behalf.

fellowship — Our word “koinonia” which is about synonymous with the preceding word. Many texts deal with light/darkness, such as Ephesians 5; Acts 26:18; Romans 13:12; II Corinthians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:5-8; I Peter 2:9. I John 1:5-10 would be good to read here.

V. 15 — **accord** — The word is transliterated as “symphony” in English. It has the idea of harmony, making together the same sounds, etc. Without a dissenting voice, Christ and Belial (Epithet for Satan) have not accord!

in common — not one believer has a “part” (= Greek word) with an unbeliever, since they are citizens of differing kingdoms, etc. The Psalmist said it well in Psalm 1, didn't he?

agreement — No “voting” to agree (cf. Luke 23:51), since the church is God's temple, I Corinthians 3:16, and idolatry is anti-God (first commandment), destructive of the “temple of God”; results in God destroying such person, I Corinthians 3:17. If anyone should have known about temples, it was the Corinthians. Some of them had been there, I Corinthians 6:9-11. Compare I Corinthians 10:14-22.

“I will live in them” — So God had promised and prophesied in the Old Testament. Check Exodus 25:8; 29:44-46; Leviticus 26:11ff.; II Samuel 7:8-14; Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 20:34; 37:27; and the whole book of Leviticus, the theme of which is “Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Hebrews 12:14 says, “Strive . . . for holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.”

V. 17 — This verse, too, combines many texts in the Old Testament, and causes one to think of God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1, “Go . . .” (Get out!).

V. 18 — God considered Israel in many ways, one of which was as a son, Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9. If the people of God became defiled, they also ceased to be “sons and daughters.” It is interesting that Paul, often accused of being negative about women, should include the specific idea of “daughters” in this array of quotes from the Old Testament. There is nothing so fine as being possessed by God! Wonder why we act as if it were so bad?

7:1 — Christians are the dwelling place of God in the spirit, Ephesians 2:22, this temple. We have (present possession) these promises. Since this is so, the “containers” must be like the “contained”: holy. Moreover, having such great and precious promises (Heb. 11:39—12:2; II Pet. 1:4) as these (spelled out in 6:16-18), it is imperative that certain things be done: cleansing of self, perfecting of holiness.

cleanse — From a term meaning to sanctify, to prune away, etc. See Matthew 23:25; Mark 1:44; 7:19; John 2:6; Acts 10:15; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 1:3; 9:22; II Peter 1:9. So, remove causes of defilement from your lives.

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defilement — A word which means “to stain,” then that which stains. Here then, whatever would stain and cause God to reject would need to be removed. Note then again I Corinthians 5, and our immediate text. Consider the word in I Corinthians 8:7; Revelation 3:4; 14:4.

flesh and spirit — From the viewpoint of this text, the human is indissoluble, even if at other places the human is treated otherwise.

make (holiness) perfect — The Greek term is rather common in the New Testament with the basic idea of completing, becoming mature, finishing out, etc. Here it conveys the idea of “working out” (Phil. 2:12-13) or bringing to perfectness (Eph. 4:13), adding to (II Pet. 1:3ff.). Recheck Ephesians 5:3ff.; plus Colossians 2:20 — 3:17.

QUESTIONS:

48. If a Christian did not live as 6:14 — 7:1 indicates a Christian should, would God's grace be made “vain”?
49. What groups are discussed in our text: Christian/non-Christian or Christian/Christian?
50. If the Christian lives as God directs, what will God do for that Christian?
51. Will the Christian ever do any of the things a non-Christian does?
52. What promises did Paul have in mind? What were the promises to produce?
53. How would one cleanse body and spirit?

Lesson Eight

(7:2-16)

SECTION XI 7:2-16

2 Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. 3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. 4 I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed.

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. 8 For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were

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grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. 13 Therefore we are comforted.

And besides your own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. 14 For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true. 15 And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him, 16 I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

V. 2 — Repeating the thought of 6:11-13, the point being that Paul had been quite open and candid with the people, attempting to “do honestly.” Because he had done no evil (= wronged, corrupted, taken advantage), but rather was making every effort to do good, they should respond likewise. Some consider that accusations had been made that required the specific denials—perhaps so, but it may just have been Paul’s way of clearly denying any wrong done, as he seemed to say in an earlier text, 1 Corinthians 4:4. He had appealed to his example of consecration as a reason for their consecration, and also as a reason for continual fellowship.

V. 3 — With such a wealth of love as Paul had for them, no thought should have been given that he was condemning them. He had given to them without reserving anything for himself, showing how much faith he had in them.

V. 4 — He had nothing but good will for them, confidence and joy in them, and all that in the midst of various types of afflictions. (You might want to reread 4:7-12 in light of this text.) If these things be so, only their good was in mind.

V. 5 — Picking up where ch. 2:13 left off, the visit and results of the visit to them of Titus is spelled out (though some of the evident results of that visit can be “felt” in 2:13—7:1). Somewhat of interest is the fact that Paul uses *σάρξ* (= flesh) here in about the same way as

πνεῦμα (= spirit) in 2:13, showing that sometimes these overlap in meaning, while at other times not (cf. I Cor. 3:1ff.). Notice both the external problems ("fighting without") and the internal state of mind ("fear within"), the last mostly because of concern for them.

V. 6 — A passage very parallel to our text is I Thessalonians 3:1-10. We should also recall ch. 1:3-11 in our thinking about this section.

downcast — the same Greek word as in Matthew 11:29 ("lowly"); Romans 12:16 ("lowly"); II Corinthians 10:1 ("humble"), 11:7 ("abasing"); Philippians 3:21 ("lowly"). Paul could counsel others to be "of good cheer" but he himself needed such encouragement as he gave to others. In Acts 27, he could give encouragement, but read Acts 28:15.

Titus — He had evidently been sent with a letter and/or to check on the results of a previous letter (such as I Corinthians), and this seemingly in place of Paul, 2:1. His good news was that which we read in vs. 7-12.

V. 7 — **longing** — Apparently their desire to see Paul, which would have been the response he wanted, and had asked for in such texts as 6:11-13; 7:2.

mourning — Lamentation, evidently about their problems, etc. The only other place where this word occurs is in Matthew 2:18, in conjunction with "wailing," which is the normal context for this word.

zeal — Since this was in behalf of Paul rather than his opponents, he rejoiced greatly.

V. 8 — The letter Paul sent (either I Corinthians or some other letter) had several different effects: it made Paul feel remorse about having to write it though he wrote it anyway (showing how emotions and will may be at variance); and it caused sorrow (not remorse) to the people, which produced the transformation of mind among them that was needed (and for which no remorse or sorrow need be felt). One cannot always know how an admonition will be taken, regardless of in what good manner and nature it be given.

V. 9 — **repenting** — It is somewhat of a pity that the Greek term got "stuck" with the English word "repentance" which often has been colored with the Roman Catholic idea of penitence (i.e., "doing penance" as in works, etc.). It is not being sorry and attempting to "undo" what has been done, or even being sorry (i.e., grieving, mourning, etc.). It is, in fact, simply and only a change of mind, which may/may not be produced by sorrow. Moreover, it has to do with changing one's future (ref. Luke 3:8-14) rather than the past (the past is history and can't be retraced), and therefore looks forward much more than back. The future may well be, and should be, in contrast to the past; but it is the future with which repentance is

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concerned — all the future. The “repentant mind” is to be a constant for the Christian. It will be noted that (godly) sorrow is not repentance, however good said sorrow might otherwise be. The command in the New Testament is not “be sorrowful” but rather “change your mind.” As is evident in our text, such a mind transformation will produce various effects, as in v. 11. Consider the same idea in Romans 12:1-2.

Repentance is the means by which we receive the grace of God for our sins, and by which we maintain that relationship. We must see that it is necessary to do more than just get earthly relationships right — we must get right with God.

godly grief — Perhaps best understood as a grief that effects the change of mind that God desires, and then brings “life” with no regret. Any other grief does not do so, and is ultimately regretted, since death results.

V. 11 — This verse states the varied results of their repentance; all of them together being what Paul desired in their lives. Notice that it is Christians who are having the “mind change” and the resultant changes in life.

V. 12 — This verse is probably best understood to say that the primary purpose of the letter was not to deal with the person doing wrong or the person being wronged, though each was important; but rather in the interest of the total congregation, which seemingly did not perceive the state of affairs in which they were. They evidently did not understand how many parties were involved in the matter, nor how they should have acted. In such a situation, God, the offender, the church and society in general, were all involved.

V. 13 — Repeating the idea in v. 6 and v. 7. Paul evidently was concerned about Titus as well as how the Corinthians would react to Titus, and these things in addition to the reactions to his letter.

V. 14 — It may well be that Titus took our letter back to Corinth. It is certain that he was sent there to help take up the special offering for the Judean saints. Hence, what is said here will be helpful to those ends. We surely ought to see how Paul built up the Corinthians in the mind of Titus, and what state of mind Titus had when he arrived in Corinth. People often do what is expected when they would not have done so on their own accord.

V. 15 — The affections (= “heart”) of Titus for the Corinthians were increased as a result of the good responses he had seen among them.

fear and trembling — As we are treated to the various ways people felt in Corinth, and the feelings of Paul’s company, it is quite clear that the situation was critical, with much at stake. Compare Ephesians 6:5 and Philippians 2:12.

V. 16 — Note how much the ideas of courage/fear have been

mentioned: 3:12; 4:1, 16; 5:6, 8. With such good reactions, the proposed special offering can proceed as planned.

QUESTIONS:

54. How much interest did Paul have in the Corinthians?
55. Could one's life have affliction and joy at the same time?
56. How did God comfort Paul?
57. Did Paul regret having to write a letter to Corinth?
58. What is the difference between "godly fear" and "repentance"?
59. Is repentance a poor term to use (i.e., do you actually know what repentance is from Scripture)?
60. Why must a Christian be characterized by a constant "change of mind"?

Lesson Nine

(8:1 — 9:15)

SECTION XII 8:1-15

8 We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, **2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. **3** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, **4** begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints — **5** and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. **6** Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. **7** Now as you excel in everything — in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us — see that you excel in this gracious work also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. **9** For you know the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 10 And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, 11 so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. 12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. 13 I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, 14 but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. 15 As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

The section we are now to study concerns a special collection being received from Gentile areas for the Jewish-inhabited Judea. It was, therefore, an important gesture for all concerned, since it demonstrated such concepts as the commonness that existed in Christ, the concern of members of the body for other members, the proper attitude that one should have about handling matters of finance, and many others. Because it was an out-of-the-ordinary offering, exegesis should be done carefully since what was true for one type of giving might not necessarily be true for another type. Stated differently, principles for one's regular giving might or might not be applicable to some particular gift, and so the other way around too. An illustration might be that of the well-known widow lady who gave all she had: a person could do that sometimes, but not in regular practice. For that matter, God did not command such giving but rather laid down principles that could be practiced throughout life.

The discussion of these two chapters is divided into three sections: 8:1-15; 8:16—9:5; 9:6-15. These sections discuss the example of the Macedonians and of Jesus, and the encouragement therefrom; the brethren who were involved in the matter and how they fit into the collections; and the place God had in the whole "business" of giving and receiving.

As we think about the "grace of giving" mentioned by Paul, it is important that we not miss the fact that "grace" is interwoven throughout the whole section, vs., 8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 19; 9:8, 14, 15. The word meant the opposite of ugly, bad, weak, hate, thus encompassing that which was beautiful, good, great, lovely; then the expression of such ideals into the lives of others, seen especially in our New Testament, preeminently displayed by Jesus' death. Sometimes it comes across as that which grace bestows, such as a gift (cf. I Cor.

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12; Rom. 12). In our text, it is the quality of God in the lives of people specially seen in material giving. It is also used in 8:16 and 9:15 in such a way that most translators use the word "thanks" rather than the ordinary word "grace."

A second concept, mentioned above, is that of fellowship, seen particularly in the areas of what all possess because God/Christ shared, and that which is obligatory because of what all have in Christ. A "oneness" is thus to be perceived as the backdrop for these two chapters in that the various congregations involved were to act on this basis, even if remote in space, unknown by face. The Gentiles needed to feel their indebtedness (Rom. 15:27) to their Jewish brethren on account of the common factor of the gospel message.

8:1 — Parallel texts which bear directly on this point are Romans 15:25-32 and I Corinthians 16:1-4, coupled with the relevant texts in Acts 20-21. The Macedonian Churches known to us are Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Philippi gave to Paul often (ch. 4) and the Thessalonians were persecuted (ch. 3, ch. 1); otherwise we know little about them except that the groups were comparatively poor. The region itself was not so bad off economically at this time.

test — The Greek term is from δοκιμάζω. See comments on 2:9.

liberality — The word is in Romans 12:8 ("liberality"). See the study there. Check Matthew 6:22-23; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22-23; James 1:5; II Corinthians 9:11, 13; 11:13.

V. 3 — **free will** — This is a general Bible principle from earliest times, not only in the particular area of money but also in the larger realm of service to God. Any obedience brought about by faith is characterized by such. Anything else is forced and not God's method of dealing with people. Of course, such things as punishment from God are not of the same nature though such happens if obedience by faith does not take place. Restated: if we serve God willingly here on earth, well; if we refuse to serve him here, we will be "relieved" of our freedom to act, and be sentenced to spend eternity in hell (and doubtless against our will!).

V. 4 — **relief of the (Judean) saints** — Just why these people needed help is not stated. It may have been a famine, persecution, failure to manage rightly what was common to all (Acts 4), or other things. It is to be noticed in conjunction with ch. 9:6-11 that material prosperity is not always evident among Christians, even if they sow abundantly (unless one wants to draw the conclusion that the Judean saints had not so given). God may well choose to keep some/most poor in order to keep them depending upon his grace, etc. The verse reads that they begged Paul for "the grace (*χάρις*) and fellowship (*κοινωνία*) of service (*διακονία*) of the saints."

V. 5 — This verse is probably best understood in the light of v. 3. The Macedonian saints had done much more than Paul had hoped/expected. Naturally, one's personal commitment to Jesus will result in living like him, as evidenced here. God so wills it for each of us. The form of this commitment in everyday affairs may be surprising, at times.

V. 6 — Titus, perhaps on the occasion of his visit to them, had put the idea of the offering into motion, or helped the Corinthians put it into motion. Because of this fact, and the additional fact that others from Macedonia were going to be at Corinth (9:1-5), Titus was going to be sent back and help complete the collection.

this gracious work — The Greek text just has "this grace/gift" and lacks the word for "work."

V. 7 — Such things as are mentioned are stated to be gifts of grace in I Corinthians 12. The intriguing problem is this: was the ability to give a special gift? or was this special collection, not general giving, a "gift" from God through people? or is giving simply a means of evidencing "grace" to others? One thing seems clear: the gift of giving was a grace, and they needed it, and could get it, by doing it. Some "gifts" were of different nature than others (i.e., some were only by God's power, others were more like natural abilities brought to fruition by commitment to God).

V. 8 — One of the tests of love that is not spurious is seen in willingness to share one's goods with others. The offering in question was not to be forced (commanded) out of them, but if the Corinthians had love as they ought, and it was properly expressed, an offering would be forthcoming (assuming the means to give was present, v. 12).

V. 9 — Jesus' love is mentioned as an example to imitate as well as a reminder that it was only through his giving that their riches had come to be. This brings up an important idea about "riches" which is the fact that being "rich" through Christ certainly does not mean material possessions always. This is made clear in Romans 15:25ff., and should be kept in mind when ch. 9:6ff. is studied.

We can but be cognizant of the tremendous "exchange" that took place in the case of Jesus, and how we, by exchanging (the root idea of the Greek term translated reconciliation) our sin-filled life for the life of Jesus (remember 5:21) can be rich, beyond our wildest dreams.

V. 10 — **A year ago** — From this we conclude that the need Judea had had been known for quite some time, though the help was slow in coming since the offering was (at the time of this letter) not yet taken everywhere, and even when taken was yet in need of being delivered to Judea. Now if you were among the brethren in Judea, would you be thinking God had little if any concern for you, or that other brethren

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either didn't know your need or didn't care about it?

my advice — It was not a command to give, either originally or now. It was a good thing, and encouragement was in order. Their word of honor was at stake, 9:3. Yet God did care and was working in the affairs of men to alleviate the problem — and God still works in such fashion. We must never doubt God's care for us (1 Pet. 5:7) even when it seems that nobody knows or cares, including God.

V. 12 — According to this, the Corinthians had promised to help, and were thus encouraged to keep their promise, with the offering taken to be based on what they had, and that week by week (1 Cor. 16:2) so that no collections would need to be made when Paul arrived. How much they promised/planned is not stated, just that an offering was planned.

According to what a man has — This has always been the standard for giving, whether in a special gift such as was being given here or in the general giving. Hence, as with Paul's plans (ch. 1), circumstances might alter cases; but unless such was true, then their word needed to be kept.

V. 13 — Adding to the point in v. 12, God's general "plan" was not "hard" but otherwise, and not designed to put the giver in a place of tribulation financially/materially. Only with this understanding would most people give freely rather than grudgingly. One may give some or all as desired, but God asks only for part of one's possessions though he wants all of the person. The offering was not to be such that the positions of wealth/poverty would be reversed.

V. 14 — As Romans 15:25 shows, sharing was going to be done between the two ethnic groups. What was shared was not the same thing, however. As remarked before, we are not told what caused the need in Judea; just that it existed.

V. 15 — Exodus 16:18 is quoted. The point of the text is that God made the quantity, whatever it was, sufficient for the persons involved. This showed God's care in every case (ref. Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:33-34). 9:16ff. will develop this. Again the concept of equality is present, in that a need was present, and the saints were sharing, even if sacrificially. We will again point out that the offering being discussed was not of command, but rather out of concern. Do make your exegesis and application in light of this fact!

QUESTIONS:

61. How was God's grace seen in the Macedonian churches?
62. How did the Macedonians give?

63. Is giving a grace?
 64. Was the offering for Judea commanded?
 65. How did Jesus give?
 66. Was the giving to make the giver be in hardship?

SECTION XIII 8:16-24

16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. 18 With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel; 19 and not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on, for the glory of the Lord and to show our good will. 20 We intend that no one should blame us about this liberal gift which we are administering, 21 for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men. 22 And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of their great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 So give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

V. 16 — **Thanks** — Usually translated "grace."

Titus — has evidenced what Paul feels for them. Just what part God had in making Titus think as he did is anybody's guess.

V. 17 — Paul had evidently asked Titus to go back to Corinth, but the request was not necessary, since Titus had already decided to return, subject to God's will.

V. 18 — Who the "brother" was is unwritten, and unknown to us, though known for his integrity by those in the Macedonian congregations.

V. 19 — **he has been appointed** — The Greek term also appeared in Acts 14:23, where it signified the action of the several congregations in selecting elders.

this gracious work — no word in Greek for "work" but just "this grace."

we are carrying on — Translates the verb form of the Greek word commonly transliterated as deacon. The work of Paul was larger than

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just "preaching" per se, as this text shows. Galatians 2:10 reflects this idea also.

The two purposes which were expressed by the "grace" were 1) God's glorification and 2) love/interest shown in others. Such ought to be among the primary motivations for any giving, special or regular.

V. 20 — **we intend** — The Greek term bespeaks a deliberate plan/arrangement in regard to the offering, which signifies Paul's carefulness in money matters (church people: take note!). Chapter 12 may indicate that some had accused him of taking money for himself. He had mentioned misuse of position in 2:17 in regard to this same matter.

blame — A word (see 7:1 for comment) meaning that no one would be able to find any fault in him.

V. 21 — A vital point in any matter of finance, and most especially in some "special" offering such as the one in point. Much harm has come to otherwise good works because of failure to be responsible to those who give. Money matters are sensitive matters, and every caution should be taken to protect a) giver, b) gift, c) treasurer, d) church.

V. 22 — **Our brother** — Again, no one is named, and the issue is open. Whoever it was, like the previous two men, was considered trustworthy by others than Paul, and so lent support in the integrity of the offering. Several men are mentioned in Acts 20:4, but it may have been none of these.

V. 23 — **Titus** — Paul testified for Titus and his character as a partner (*κοινωνός*) and fellow-worker (so Philemon, Philemon v. 1).

messengers — Translated the Greek word for "apostle," as it then commonly was used (i.e., an agent, etc.). Note here Romans 16:7. It may then, as a term, refer to anyone sent by another, and thus include Paul, John, Andrew, etc. as apostles of God for a special purpose, fulfilled in their lifetime. We have and need no such apostles today as were "the twelve."

V. 24 — A great many brethren were dependent upon the action of the Corinthian people, and they needed to be encouraged to be true to what they had openly promised. The Greek has "unto (the) face of the congregations" (i.e., before them, to them, etc.).

QUESTIONS:

67. Why was Paul so careful about the offering? Is this a good example for anyone handling the money of others?
68. What two "parties" did Paul have in mind as the offering was

being taken?

69. How many men helped Paul take care of the offering?

SECTION XIV 9:1-5

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; 4 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated — to say nothing of you — for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

9:1 — **superfluous** — Why his writing was superfluous is spelled out in v. 2. Observe that it is called an “offering” but the Greek has the term *διακονία* (“service”) which would include such as an offering.

V. 2 — The Corinthians, upon hearing about the hardships of the saints in Judea, had determined a year previous to help them. Because they had taken such a position, Paul had told the Macedonians about their proposed offering which had stirred up the Macedonians. The “rub” was that while the Corinthians had promised (and Paul had instructed them how to help their promise in I Cor. 16:2) they had not done as well as the Macedonians who had taken up an offering acceptable to them, and were ready to send it to Judea. This is one instance of several that helps us see that inspiration in Paul’s life did not extend farther than reception and deliverance of God’s revelation to him. It was not a part of his general living or thinking, did not include his general knowledge, attitudes, plans (except in special circumstances, as Acts 16) or general methods, as nearly as can be told. It was so with others. This is not to say that God couldn’t have done such things for Paul — just that there is not indication that he did do so, or even needed to do so. We should not deduce, either, that Paul was in error to encourage the Corinthians to give, or the Macedonians to give, or use each to encourage the other.

V. 3 — Whether the Corinthians had promised some specific amount or just planned to send something (as seems evident from 8:11-12), they needed to fulfill their commitment (assumed is the

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point that God had prospered them so that they could give).

V. 4 — This verse highlights the fact that Bible giving (whether a special gift or “regular” giving) is always based upon what God has done in the past rather than what might be done in the future. The Bible teaches throughout that God expects giving to be done on the basis of what is possessed rather than what is not possessed (i.e., either what is not one’s own or what is yet future). The future is adequately taken care of if one has given oneself to the Lord, 8:5. No other type of giving is taught or expected by God (though such as the special offering under discussion is possible, and yet it is predicted upon what has happened in the past, in the final analysis).

V. 5 — Again, the point of 1 Corinthians 16:2 is brought before us: they, because they had promised to give, were to supply an offering through weekly giving on the basis of how they had prospered. The emphasis is on the “prospering” in that if no one had prospered, then no one was to give. The verse in 1 Corinthians 16:2 teaches more about how often the local Corinthians’ congregation met than it does about “weekly” giving, per se. We repeat: the offering being discussed was not for “local” work at all — not even for “mission” work in the common usage. All interpreters should use this text in this light. Let’s at least be good students of the Word, and not be guilty of “using” a text to sound “biblical” and yet use it for something other than the author intended for it.

QUESTIONS:

70. Was it right for Paul to encourage the giving of someone by the giving of others?
71. Why would Paul be humiliated if the Corinthians did not keep their promise? May it be that Paul should not have said what he did about them?
72. How was the gift to be given?

SECTION XV 9:6-15

6 The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in

abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written,
 "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
 his righteousness endures for ever."

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; 12 for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. 13 Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

This text will discuss the fact that the offering being taken will 1) provide for those who have need in Judea, 2) establish in the minds of both groups that Christianity is not limited by race or distance, and 3) will rebound in blessings from God (The N.T. teaches that rewards are given by God to those who seek, as in Romans 2:7, etc.) to those giving. However, all of these were really subordinate reasons for giving. The primary reason for the giving was the generosity of God himself as expressed in Jesus. Were there no other reasons to give, this one should have been sufficient.

V. 6 — New English renders: "sparse sowing, sparse reaping" which is a good way to mention the principle that is true everywhere in the universe, that as one sows, one reaps, Galatians 6:7. Jesus pointed this out in his comments in Matthew 7:1-5 and Luke 6:37-38 about judging others. One needed to cultivate richness in spirit and allow said attitude to leaven all that one did. As v. 7 will show the only giving that was really praiseworthy was when the giving was done as a gift, and not otherwise (i.e., no other reason but love). One dare not even have given with the hidden motive that God would surely give back more (so the principle became "I'll give \$10.00 and God will give back \$15.00," etc.), for again the motivation would be wrong. The gift must have been a gift, nothing else but. What God would give in return might simply be a more generous spirit (i.e., riches of a non-material nature), etc.

As the verses 1-5 and previous indicate, it was just such a characteristic that Paul desired in the several churches involved in this offering. So, whether a special gift as this was, or just in the mundane giving of local church life, the pleasure of pleasing God comes through

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being like God: unselfish and generous, good measure, pressed down, etc. We are thereby judged as we do, II Corinthians 5:10.

bountifully — Translated as “willing gift” in v. 5, this Greek word is generally translated as “blessing.” So, the reaping will be as the giver has determined!

V. 7 — This principle has always been so, and in every area of life. God does not want any to come to him except they desire to do so, nor serve him unless they love him. So Jesus says about discipleship and love, John 13:34-35. Love precludes the idea of “having to” and evinces “wanting to” in what is done (cf. the Macedonians in 8:1ff.). Irrespective of any standard for giving that may be stated in Scripture, this principle must take priority, though one is surely obligated to find out, sooner or later, what God has said about the matter of giving, as a part of one’s total stewardship.

he has made up — The root of the Greek term is often seen in our English versions in the word “heresy” or “sect” since it means “to choose” and then “to make up one’s mind.” So one gives freely (= willingly) not in a state of mind like sorrow or necessity. Cf. Exodus 25:1-2; II Corinthians 8:5.

V. 8 — **God is able** — Cf. Philippians 4:19. God is limited in some ways by his own justness, but sometimes even more by what we will allow him to do. It may be that God will not give because of the intended misuse (James 4:4) but it may be that the limiting factor(s) is how man has responded (even the gift of Christ has “strings attached”).

have enough of everything — New English has probably caught the right idea: “(you) will always be rich enough to be generous.” One needs to keep in mind that this is a general principle covering every area and every church, true in some ways and some times. Obviously the Judean saints were not rich but needy in material things. Then, too, generosity is a comparative thing, in proportion as one is able, and not in comparison to others.

blessing — The Greek word is “grace” (χάρις).

always have enough — That is, be sufficient, autonomous; though not really, since one is but an individual member of the whole body, and must always rely upon God. Yet the Greek word (αὐτάρκεια) has to do with the person who can so give self to God that having God, though naught else, is all that is needed. The ideas expressed by Paul in ch. 4:7-11 and 6:4-10 really show someone who was αὐτάρκεια.

every good work — Such things as the need in Judea, or those “needs” in Matthew 25:31ff.

V. 9 — The idea had been presented that for the person whose sufficiency is of God the ability to be generous would be theirs. This

verse makes explicit the reason. The verse is from Psalm 112:9. The whole psalm is a characterization of the "man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!" (v. 1). It may be that at times one is so poor materially that others have to supply the material needs (as was Paul's case, Phil. 4) but yet possess riches of such nature that one could be generous in other ways (in every way, v. 11). And all of such giving is "righteousness."

V. 10 — This verse brings in the ultimate source of all: God (and his abundance) who enables the Christian to be self-sufficient, and helpful to others. Cf. Isaiah 55:10; I Corinthians 3:6; Hosea 10:12. As seeds produce out of all proportion to their size, so God can greatly increase what one has.

righteousness — As in v. 9, this word refers to what they were giving. Jesus used the word in the same way in Matthew 6:1, as something done. The Greek term is more often used to mean a relationship that is available in Christ, who is our righteousness, I Corinthians 1:30. Some hold that the idea in mind is that of the Christian who does such things because he is righteous, which should be true, too.

V. 11 — **enriched** — Made wealthy in all kinds of ways.

great generosity — Note 8:2 where the same word is translated "wealth of liberality," and 9:13 "generosity."

through us — Those who were helping Paul with the offering.

V. 12 — This verse shows how "thanksgiving" (v. 11) will be produced: through ministry (*διακονία*) of service (*λειτουργία*).

rendering — The common Greek term for "deacon."

service — The term describes service in general, or more often service of a religious nature, Luke 1:23; Acts 13:2; Romans 15:27; Philippians 2:17; Hebrews 1:14.

wants of the saints — Some were not rich enough to be generous (in a material way, at least).

V. 13 — **test** — See 2:9.

glorify God — As Matthew 5:16; Colossians 3:17. This motive must be primary in any activity of the Christian's life.

obedience — One of the tests of discipleship, 8:8; Romans 1:5.

acknowledging — The term is commonly translated as confession/profession. Confession is more than just what is audible, encompassing the whole of life.

generosity — See ch. 8:2; Romans 12:8.

contribution — Greek: *κοινωνία*

the gospel of Christ — Their relationship as Christians was an indication of the Gospel in their lives. A part of the response to the gospel would include care for the other Christians who have need—the exact idea of "my brethren" in Matthew 25:40; (which phrase does

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not include non-Christians).

V. 14 — **long/pray** — Evidently Paul knew or guessed that the Judean brethren would, upon receipt of the gifts, respond in such a way.

surpassing grace — God's grace to man is never just theoretical, but always practical. So it must be in everything: no dichotomy between what we are in Christ and how that fact is to be expressed in the mundane of life. One can increase in grace, 8:7; II Peter 3:18.

V. 15 — **Thanks** — The third time (v. 11, 12, 15) in a brief span (the word *χάρις*).

inexpressible A wonder beyond description, so words fail to help. Similar words/ideas are in Romans 11:33; II Corinthians 12:4; Ephesians 3:8; I Peter 1:8. Probably this is reference to Christ, if only indirectly.

gift — Greek: *δωρεά*, having the general concept of a free gift, without charge. It is in Matthew 10:8; John 15:25; Romans 3:24; II Thessalonians 3:8; Revelation 21:6; 22:17. Jesus' body was given in this way, Mark 15:45. God gave this way, II Peter 1:3ff. We should realize in the matter of giving that the one receiving has to appreciate the gift for it to accomplish its total purpose. The one giving may have blessings accrue to him; being blessed of God. However, as this text shows, a gift properly received results in glorification and thanksgiving of God, as well as thanksgiving to man (cf. Paul in Phil. 4). God gave Christ, but until we receive his gift, it is for naught as far as we are concerned. The cross and the sacrifice of Jesus upon it go unheeded and unappreciated except in the lives of those accepting God's free gift made there. So: food for thought.

QUESTIONS:

73. Does God's "law of harvest" apply spiritually as well as physically?
74. What Old Testament example did Paul use to describe the person God blesses?
75. Who is the ultimate source of what is given?
76. Could riches be in things non-material?
77. What effects would come from the offering?
78. Was the gift offering for either local church work or some missionary effort?

Lesson Ten

(10:1-18)

SECTION XVI 10:1-18

10 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away! — 2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. 3 For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's let him remind himself that as he is Christ's, so are we. 8 For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you,

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I shall not be put to shame. 9 I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. 10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." 11 Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. 12 Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond limit, but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you. 14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. 15 We do not boast beyond limit, in other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field. 17 "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." 18 For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

As we begin the study of chapters 10-13, it will be well to state that the discussion is rather specifically in defense of Paul's apostleship and the authority thereof. However, that was the underlying current of thought in chapters 1-6, with chapter 7 breaking off into the discussion arising about Titus, which led into the subject of the special offering, in which Titus was involved (hence, chapters 8-9 are parenthetical to the epistle as a whole, which is basically concerned with Paul and his position as an apostle). This section intensifies the discussion, and develops it more directly and specifically.

These four chapters are not easier to understand than chapters 1-7. It is often difficult to decide if Paul is quoting someone, using irony, being defensive or what. If we keep in mind what seems to be the main issue, and attempt to interpret in that light, we will do better. There are many worthwhile lessons for us in these remaining texts.

Chapter 10 begins with a "readout" on any whose lives reflect a lack of submission to Christ, and who thus have standards of thinking centered not in Christ but in themselves (a most unstable point of reference!). This type of thought process does not have every thought captive to Christ, v. 5, and thus sets up humanly-contrived standards, v. 12. This leads to undue evaluations, and results in rejection by Christ rather than his commendation, v. 18. The procedure that is better is to make Christ the point of reckoning, submitting wholly to

his Lordship, considering one's own place in the Lord's will and how perfectly that place has been kept, receiving in return the Lord's "well done." The application that Paul wishes made is for the Corinthians to know who they are (Jesus' disciples), who he is (Jesus authoritative representative to them) and what they should do in consideration of those facts. Thus, the chapter rather neatly describes what should be the "transformed mind" and the results of it in practical ways.

V. 1 — **meekness** — See Matthew 5:5, 11:29, 21:5 (Zechariah 9:9). The term is akin to self-control in its broader sense. Jesus was always self-controlled, though various facets of his personality can be seen, as the preceding reference and the Gospels indicate.

gentleness — Paul urged Felix to be this way, Acts 24:4. It conveys the idea of being reasonable and that nicely so. See then Philippians 4:5. Neither term precludes the thought that other "sides" of one's character may be seen and/or exhibited.

I who . . . away — This is probably best taken to be what some people had said of him, namely, that in person he was anything but what he was by letter; hence, very inconsistent in character. Of course, it is easier to write "strong things" than to say them face to face. However, that, if done, does not mean one is incapable of saying strong things to someone.

V. 2 — Perhaps the problem is that his endeavor to be gentle had been taken, rightly or wrongly, as weakness. So he beseeched those who would read the letter not to make him exhibit what would be described as boldness (i.e., something else other than "meekness"). See I Corinthians 4:18-21. The fact may be that Paul did not know the "some" by face or even by name; he just knew of the opposition.

worldly fashion — This concept is treated in the following verses. He had already denied the charge (as in 2:16-17) by word and by example (7:2-5).

V. 3 — One can be "in the flesh" but not "fleshly-minded" (carnal), since "flesh" can be used various ways. Cf. Romans 8:9 and Galatians 2:20 where the Greek construction (*ἐνσαρκί*) is the same.

V. 4 — **warfare** — That a battle was in progress was not denied, but the nature of the conflict was in respect to authority, and on a spiritual plane, since the authority in question was that of Christ and his apostle. Hence, the issue was moral in nature, revolving around obedience and submission, etc.

divine power — This probably represents the antithesis of the idea in v. 3-4 of "worldly power." See here I Corinthians 2:3-5.

to destroy — The Greek term is *καθαίρειν*, which was regularly used in just such contexts, but in a material sense.

strongholds — Defined in v. 5. The Greek term meant forts, etc.,

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and was used in Proverbs 21:22.

V. 5 — **arguments** — Men's reasoning, thought, what is held as true.

proud obstacle — What is exalted, held up; hence considered of prime importance. It is probably "men's reasonings" which is akin to the idea in Romans 1:18-23. (So the play hasn't changed over the years though the players are different: human wisdom versus divine revelation.)

knowledge of God — Perhaps the idea here is similar to that in Romans 1:18, where truth (what can be known about God, v. 19) was suppressed and/or rejected.

every thought captive — no part of man can be autonomous and yet be pleasing to God. Only complete submission of the total mind will do. Needless to say, here is the most important, yea, the only real battleground: the mind of man. All else is unimportant and trivial in comparison. So Paul's "battle plan" was to capture every thought of every mind, making them subject to the Lord Jesus.

to obey — Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5, 16:26. The issue at hand is not primarily obedience to Paul but rather obedience to Christ. The result of submission to Christ is freedom in every area of life even though we are captives, since truth brings freedom.

V. 6 — The issue is made clear: if Paul goes to Corinth, things will get straightened out. This is made crystal clear in chapter 12:19—13:10.

disobedience — A refusal to "hear" what was commanded. Ref. Matthew 18:17 and Hebrews 2:2 for this word. The play on words in Greek (*παρακοή* vs. *ὑποκοή*) is hard to reproduce in English.

V. 7 — Perhaps this verse is best understood to mean that they needed to see something besides outward appearances, "fleshly" in nature, v. 3-4, and along the lines of what those opposing Paul were doing, vs. 10-12. Instead, they needed divine standards.

we are (Christ's) — The aim is to make Paul's apostleship clearly seen. Because this is true, he has authority, v. 8. It is hardly possible that the issue is just whether Paul be Christian or not. It is rather that he is Christ's representative.

V. 8 — This verse, like most of chapters 11, 12, indicates that Paul had been forced to argue for his position as an apostle, much to his personal dislike. He did make it plain that his authority was to build up rather than tear down (which was the intent and/or end result of what his opponents were doing). He repeats this same sentiment in 13:10. (Gal. 5:2-12 is somewhat like this too.)

V. 9 — This verse is a problem, but seems best taken in connection with the idea that his whole life (letters included) was directed at

upbuilding, and this letter, then, is also for that purpose, and not to undo, tear up. This leads into v. 10.

V. 10 — **letters** — Those opposing Paul were evidently trying to show that what he wrote was bad, not good, and thus similar to his personal presence, which was also of negligible worth. His letters were “heavy” but he was a “flyweight.” It is worthwhile to notice that in Acts 14, he was thought by some to be a god in human form.

weak — See comments on 11:29.

V. 11 — Now hear this!

V. 12 — All along Paul has tried not to commend self, and rather would commend others, or even use one group as a commendation for another group, or use a group to be his commendation. The thing that he always did, however, was recognize that he was an apostle, and reckon/consider how he related to that obligation. Hence, he did not use any other standard of comparison except that divinely given. Clearly, some were guilty of doing otherwise, and he wrote that such practice was not wise. This was not necessarily to exclude comparison of people, or comments on what they were, but such was always to be done from the Lord’s standard. Many Scriptures have contrasts and comparisons of people by people or by God, in both Old and New Testaments. Jesus compared people with people, and so did Paul, but all was done with “God’s yardstick” as the sole criterion of measure. Note then the following verses 14-18 as an example of how one is to do comparison, and with what “yardstick.” (See also Romans 15:16ff. for a parallel text.) The transformed mind of the Christian will not utilize worldly standards if, indeed, it is transformed. The problem is that all too often churches and Christians do use appearances rather than divine criteria.

V. 13 — Note the New International Version on vs. 13-15, especially the marginal reading.

This is an example of how “measurement” should be done: directly related to one’s individual obligation to Christ. It is evidence that one has brought every thought into captivity to Christ, v. 5, and thus can be commended by him, v. 18.

V. 14 — The “measure” given to Paul was the Gentile community at large, and included Corinth. Hence, he was not amiss in judging that they were part of his stewardship responsibility. This was pressure from Paul, in that he was challenging the use of words rather than realities.

V. 15 — It was not wrong to “measure oneself” per se, but it was wrong not to measure oneself by what God expected of self, which was the condemnation in v. 12.

V. 16 — If they would “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24) in

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regard to him and themselves, thus accepting him as they ought, the effect would be that they could be part of the means to help him to do what God wanted him to do: evangelize other Gentile areas.

V. 17 — He had written this in I Corinthians 1:30, 31, and used this principle as the "absolute" to which all was reckoned. It is somewhat like Proverbs 27:2; Jeremiah 9:23, 24. Check Romans 2:25-29; I Corinthians 4:5.

V. 18 — Self-praise is always suspect, and often hollow. It is quite worthless if God doesn't give his approval. If God does approve, one's own praise is quite needless. If God then "checks out" a person (the Greek term means "to test" and then "to approve"—see I Corinthians 9:27; II Corinthians 13:5, and comments on 3:9), then what others say is only relative. Note here Romans 14:1-12.

QUESTIONS:

79. Did Paul want to be "hard" on the Corinthians when he arrived there?
80. What goal did Paul have for the thoughts of a person?
81. If standards other than those of the Lord are used, what is true?
82. For what purpose did Paul have authority?
83. What standard of measure did Paul use?
84. Is there any real worth in self-commendation apart from God's commendation?

Lesson Eleven

(11:1-15)

SECTION XVII 11:1-15

11 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. 5 I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles. 6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

7 Did I commit a sin in abasing myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? 8 I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in

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order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs were supplied by the brethren who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

12 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

As we begin this section, it may be worth your while to attempt a portrait of those who were opposing Paul, as intimated throughout the epistle. In so doing, interpretation may be helped, as the composite picture becomes more clear. You may also want to be thinking about what Paul has said of himself, and will say in chs. 11-13. Care must be taken, however, lest the pictures be overdrawn or misdrawn, as could happen. Nevertheless, some attempt at "personalizing" those against Paul should be done. We may well be dealing with more than one group of people.

Consider these ideas as you begin your study:

1. Who was accusing Paul of vacillating, 1:17ff.?
2. Was the person(s) involved in 2:5-11 part of the problem?
3. Who was in Paul's mind in 2:17 and 4:2? (cf. 12:16-18.)
4. Was Paul implying some were commending themselves in 3:1ff., and then mentioned these same people again in 5:11-15; 6:1ff.; 10:12?
5. Was there any need for the discussion in 3:4-18 about the law? Read here 11:22; 13:5.
6. Mentioning the "god of the world" in 4:4 may have been done with the same general people in mind through whom the "god" worked as those in 10:3-4; 11:3-6, 12-15; etc.
7. The "beseeching" in 5:20—6:2 may have had to do with the problem that brought alarm to Paul as mentioned in 11:1ff. Consider here the background of the text in 6:14—7:2, which may have to do with false doctrine being taught, that would result in corruption, etc.

8. In what areas and for what reasons was the change of mind needed, 7:8-10? Was the "one wrong" (v. 12) not a part of the problem being addressed in chs. 10-13?
9. Whose disobedience is in mind in 10:6, and mentioned again in 12:19ff.?
10. The issue of apostolic authority becomes prominent in 10:1ff. Should one consider that various persons with differing problems may be involved (such as false teachers of various doctrines as well as the individuals in the congregation)?
11. When we consider 11:4-5, with a different Jesus, spirit, gospel, we must consider that the issues may be like those mentioned in Galatians 1:6 and throughout that letter. (Some think that the ideas in ch. 11:4-5 were only hypothetical and had not actually happened. They were just given to show a state of mind that was present in the congregation.)
12. When the characters of some men are clearly stated in 11:12-15, should we also judge that the same people are in view in 11:22-23 (note the fact that Paul doesn't deny that "they" are "servants of Christ," v. 23)? If not, then at least two different groups of people are in view. Consider carefully the ideas in 11:20 and how they may relate to the picture you are drawing.
13. How much of the difficulty Paul faced is to be found in the congregation itself? Check 12:20-21, 13:5ff.

Any interpretation must take into account the ideas the author had in mind, and to what those ideas are opposed. As you consider the apostle and his letter, what doctrine(s) was being presented that was opposite the truth (13:8), and in what respects opposite? When these ideas are somewhat settled, then one can begin interpretation with more confidence.

V. 1 — **little foolishness (nonsense)** — The idea is dropped and picked up again in v. 16, running through 12:10, and then plainly described in 12:11 as the words of one foolish. The reason such is so is found in the principle enunciated in 10:17-18. Such boasting as Paul did pandered to the flesh, and used men's standards. Hence he had and does negate its value. From our point-of-view what he listed is hardly foolishness but sacrifice. It was done so that they might have something for the purpose of comparison.

do bear — The Greek text permits either a statement or a command. Most translate it as a statement.

V. 2 — Paul will express both jealousy and fear about the situation.
pure bride — not corrupted by false doctrine, as was evidently being taught. See 7:2. They were a new creation, 5:17, and Paul wanted them to remain new.

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V. 3 — Eve allowed her “purity” to be corrupted in the acceptance of false doctrine, and Satan is crafty enough to pull the same thing again. Check 2:11 again.

sincere — The same word as in 8:2 (liberality) and 9:13 (generosity). It has the idea of lack of duplicity. Here comes to mind this point: just exactly what is the sum total of what one must believe about Jesus, as well as the question of how much that is false can be believed at the same time. Is the simple idea in I Corinthians 12:3 (Jesus is Lord) sufficient? Should that be stated with the ideas in I John 1:1-4; 4:1-3 understood and accepted, if not stated? What did you mean/think when you stated your belief about Christ? Has any of it changed? been added to? corrected?

V. 4 — This verse is an enigma in the sense that some take it to be simply an illustration of what they might do. Others consider that this is what was, in fact, happening; so Paul believes they should be willing to listen also to him. A different problem is what is meant by his terms: *another Jesus, different spirit, different gospel*. As we raised the question above, we will add the following: did any change in what had been taught by Paul about Christ/Spirit constitute another gospel? (An example of such would be found in Acts 15:1ff.) Is Paul’s definition of “gospel” circumscribed by I Corinthians 15:1-4? with “gospel” being different than what response is expected to it (i.e., one might preach the gospel correctly and yet falsely state the means by which that gospel is to be appropriated)?

V. 5 — **apostles** — Here described ironically as “superior” but stated to be Satan’s apostles in vs. 12-15. Some would lump these together with those described in vs. 22-23 as being one and the same.

V. 6 — Paul might concede being unskilled in oratory (note I Cor. 2:1ff.) but lack of knowledge (truth, 13:8) about Christ was not conceded. Contrariwise, he had declared the message by which they were/are saved, if they keep it in mind. So, though he was not skilled and had not accepted a salary, Paul was in every way equal to the “super apostles” (who were, in fact, not apostles of Christ at all).

V. 7 — **a sin** — Again, best taken as irony. It was his right (as is that of any workman) to be paid (argued at length in I Cor. 9. See Gal. 6:6). It was also his right (as is true of all others) to refuse any salary. Evidently he had done so in Corinth, for reasons not stated, though accepting pay in other places. Quite clearly such action had led to considerable misunderstanding, and provided “ammunition” for his opponents.

without cost — The Greek term *δωρεά*, as in 9:15.

V. 8 — **other churches** — As from Philippi, v. 9.

V. 9 — To some extent, Paul’s refusal of pay was one of his

"weaknesses" and was used, therefore as a ground of boasting. He was sometimes "short" (*ὀστέρημα*, as in John 21:3 and Phil. 4:11, but either worked, Acts 18:3, or had support from others, 18:5).

V. 11 — **God knows** — The Greek text only has these two words. Something more is to be understood, such as (God knows) I do love you, etc. Some seemingly argued that Paul's action was an indication that he didn't love them as he loved other congregations. Others argued that his action simply meant that he did not think himself and his doctrine worthy of pay, because of his inferiority, etc. It is hard to see how they would figure he did not care for them, considering all the time he spent there, other visits, letters, others like Titus who went there, etc.

V. 12 — Paul's refusal to be supported, as was his right, made opportunity for it to be said of him he thought too little 1) of himself or 2) of the Corinthians. Now neither position was true, but that was the problem. He then had to meet the argument of his opponents who were claiming to be apostles and, as such, had the right to support. Paul attempted to undermine them by refusing to take money, and showing up his opponents as being simply interested in a free ticket from Corinth.

V. 13 — More than just being money-minded, Paul stated that they were actually servants of Satan, v. 15, and not what they claimed. As pointed out above, this group may be identical to or different from those in vs. 22, 23. The language here seems hard to reconcile with the idea in v. 23 that they were servants of Christ as was Paul. Paul, however, used the term "false brethren" in 2:4 about those who were arguing for the law, as in Acts 15. These in Corinth were masquerading as apostles, wolves in sheep's clothing as in Matthew 7:15ff.

V. 15 — **their end** — This phrase rather clearly implies that what was being done was deliberately engaged in rather than a case of ignorance (Apollos) or misunderstanding (Peter).

to their deeds — So it always is: judgment according to truth, for the truth will sooner or later come out, since nothing can really be done against it, 13:8.

QUESTIONS:

85. How were the Corinthian brethren described?
86. How did Paul describe himself?
87. Were those "apostles" in Corinth of God?
88. How would Satan transform himself into an angel of light?
89. What particular right had Paul not exercised in Corinth?
90. Why was he going to continue in this way?

Lesson Twelve

(11:16 — 12:18)

SECTION XVIII 11:16 — 12:10

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 (What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence; 18 since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.) 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews

the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.

12 I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. 5 On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. 7 And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. 8 Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; 9 but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

V. 16 — This verse picks up the idea of v. 1, that of the boasting that Paul was forced to do, which he termed foolishness. He only

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did this to show up his opponents and argued that rather than commending himself in such a fashion, the Corinthians should have done so, 3:1ff., 12:11.

The sentiment here is about like that of v. 1 and v. 4.

V. 17 — Any kind of self-aggrandizement would be boasting in something other than Jesus, and not according to the Lord's will. However, too many of those in Corinth were babes rather than men, I Corinthians 3:1ff, Hebrews 5:11-14.

V. 18 — **of worldly things** — *κατὰ σάρκα*, which was a major problem in Corinth.

V. 19 — Rather ironical, but Paul argued that they have put up with the false apostles, and they should put up with him (even as a fool, though they be wise!?!). See the same sentiment expressed in I Corinthians 4:7-8. True wisdom would be to glory only in Christ, and to consider oneself as actually foolish in comparison with God's wisdom, I Corinthians 3:18. See I Corinthians 4:10-14.

V. 20 — Evidently some of those false apostles had been so overbearing that only such a description as this would fit. It is interesting to wonder if Titus brought such information as this back. Note such texts as Romans 16:17-18; I Timothy 3:3. Such a relationship as here described would hardly be Christian brother to brother, but rather more like Master/slave. It would surely not describe an apostle of Christ, who was characterized by "meekness and gentleness" in 10:1.

V. 21 — Paul was not "strong" in such ways as these above, nor did he wish to be. Rather his power/authority over them, such as it was, was for the express purpose of building up, 12:19; 13:10.

V. 22 — Hebrews/Israelites/descendants = various ways of viewing a "true-blue" "all wool and a yard wide" Jew.

V. 23 — **servants of Christ** — The apostle does not deny that these now being considered are servants of Jesus. Of course it is possible that this was their claim, and not actually true, since they were really servants of Satan.

The remainder of this chapter pictures what a servant of Christ must be, and delineates the "privileges" said servant had. Doubtless the picture painted was different than that of his opponents.

As we consider these various things, it is rather noticeable how little we really know of Paul's life. The time of writing is about A.D. 57, which puts us about Acts ch. 19. So it is evident that Luke's history, while adequate for its purpose, is hardly complete.

Viewing the various things listed in vs. 23-27, both physical and mental sufferings are evident. The perils of travel and those from people are likewise evident. See again I Corinthians 4:7-13; II Corinthians 4:7-11; 6:4-10. We will bypass discussion of the various

"weaknesses" since they are rather clearly understood.

V. 28 — Perhaps in contrast to those "super apostles" in Corinth who cared only for themselves, Paul as a real apostle felt the daily burden of concern for churches near and far, including Corinth; here designated as the thing "within" and apart from all the other items mentioned which were things "without." It is interesting too that the word he used (*μερίμνα*) is also found in Philippians 4:6 where he advised not to be so. Jesus used it in Matthew 13:22 to describe "seed" that did not bear fruit. Martha was of like mind, Luke 10:41; while the apostles were not to be so, Luke 12:11. In the same vein, Matthew 6:25ff. and Luke 12:22ff. enjoin all disciples not to be anxious, but to cast all anxieties upon God, who cares for them, 1 Peter 5:7. Sometimes it is hard to practice what one knows is right.

daily pressure — The Greek term was used by Paul in Acts 24:12 in reference to "stirring" up a crowd. Here is depicted the true heart of a shepherd and an apostle. While he would not "lord it over their faith" (1:24) yet he did feel as a father, and as a brother in faith, one who had presented them to Christ, (11:2) and held them in his heart (6:11; 7:3).

V. 29 — **weak** — See the complete listing of all its occurrences at the end of the book. The term means/signifies a deficiency of some sort, and often is used in a context in comparison with such terms or concepts as healthy/strong/righteous/sinless, etc.

made to fall — The Greek term means to sin, as in Matthew 18:6-7; Luke 17:1; Romans 11:9; 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:13; Galatians 5:11; 1 John 2:10. Like the sentiment in 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul made every effort to place himself in the other person's shoes, so that he might more effectively help. Implied is that any true apostle would do the same. Now read Galatians 6:1-5; Jude, vs. 22, 23.

V. 30 — **weakness** — The things as above (which were not true of his opponents), or such as next mentioned, vs. 32-33, or his "stake in the flesh," 12:7-10; all these made him depend on Christ rather than himself (and thus human achievements). Note Philippians 4:13.

V. 31 — If the preceding recital of events was hard to believe, certainly the event in 12:1-6 would be so. Thus, the need to impress upon his readers that he was mindful that God was to judge him, and what he wrote must then be the truth.

V. 32 — Aretas IV was Chief of the Arabs known as Nabateans. Herod Antipater had married his daughter, then divorced her to marry Herodias. Aretas was offended and engaged Herod in war, defeating him. Evidently Damascus was ruled by Aretas for awhile during this period, somewhere around A.D. 37-39.

Acts 9 shows that the Jews were participants in this episode that

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was clearly a shameful memory to Paul.

V. 33 — **basket** — A large basket of rope, such as was used to pick up the remnants after the feeding of the 4,000, Matthew 15:37.

12:1 — **I must boast** — Simply because of the weaknesses of the church.

nothing to be gained — Evidently to be taken in connection with v. 12. What he was now writing about himself really was not the standard by which apostleship should be judged, since such a procedure was more worldly in nature, and pandered to the carnality of men.

visions and revelations — This incident closely following that of 11:32-33 (which must have robbed Paul of much dignity) is seemingly written to show the fact that he had received supernatural things as well as those just mentioned. Such supernatural events as this one would offset any such like claims of his opposers (i.e., "if you have had supernatural experiences, so have I.").

V. 2 — **fourteen years** — Some think this was the time of stoning at Lystra, but that view is unprovable, and rather unlikely. It could have just been a special event in his life.

was caught up — It is useless to speculate how this happened, since Paul doesn't know.

third heaven = Paradise, v. 3. We have only speculation about "third heaven" and Paradise. Jewish thought and/or Greek ideas about heaven could be mentioned, but who knows which, if any were used, or that Paul so believed? The point of the experience in our text is to reveal one of the ways God had exalted Paul, and to put in vivid contrast the humbling, continuous experiences such as in 11:32-33; 12:7-9.

V. 4 — **things that cannot be told** — Whether he was not to tell, or couldn't find words for it as a man, is not too clear; but unimportant for the illustration.

V. 5 — **of this man** — Seemingly of "Paul the apostle" who was such only by the grace of God and not by anything of man. As is evident, "Paul the man" was to be viewed only in "weakness." Some have questioned if Paul is speaking of himself or of someone else. The illustration is hardly relevant unless it is about Paul.

V. 6 — Again, judgment of Paul should have been done on things other than now being mentioned, although nothing revealed about him has been untrue.

V. 7 — **thorn** — The Greek term is for "stake" or "splinter," and so a thorn. No one knows what was meant, but Paul considered it as a leveling factor in his life, a means to bring into focus the part that God wanted to play in his life.

messenger of Satan — ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ. Paul was perhaps like unto Job in this instance. We might consider the supposition that God gave it, or permitted it, etc., but no solution is possible.

V. 8 — **three times** — From this text, and others, we get the idea that repetition of a prayer is not wrong per se. It is vain repetition (i.e., meaningless because of one's attitudes) that Jesus forbids in Matthew 6:2ff. As is obvious from Jesus' own example in Mark 14:35ff., and that of Paul in Romans 1:9-10, repetition is not bad. The parable in Luke 18:1ff. is on the same point.

V. 9 — **my grace is sufficient** — Not "will be" or "was" sufficient, but "is" sufficient. Cf. Hebrews 2:10, Philippians 4:13. Notice how all-encompassing is the word "grace."

is made perfect — God's power is perfected in endurance of affliction, Romans 5:2ff.; 8:31-39.

boast of my weaknesses — Because it is in such that God rather than man is to be seen. Pleasure in pain, as such, is not good but suspect. In Paul's case, it was unto a greater purpose, that of serving Christ and displaying the power of God. Therefore, the sufferings were to be viewed in that light.

power of Christ — "may be spread, as it were, a tent upon me." The imagery is like that of the Old Testament pillar of cloud/fire that rested upon the tabernacle. It is also like the idea of spreading a tent over someone.

V. 10 — **I am content** — Paul had to learn (Phil. 4:11) this state of mind as it does not come naturally. The people in Hebrews 10:32ff. were likeminded.

when I am weak — It will be good to recall I Corinthians 1:25ff. here. The cross was God's "weakness" as men viewed it, at least until converted; then it became the strength of God unto salvation.

QUESTIONS:

91. What drove Paul to boasting about self?
92. How did Paul describe (at least) one servant of Christ?
93. What was Paul's purpose in his choices for boasting?
94. What do you understand by the statements in v. 29?
95. For what reason did Paul mention the experience in 12:2-4?
96. In what did Paul learn to boast? Why?

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SECTION XIX 12:11-18

11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I am not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing, 12 The signs of a true apostle, were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. 13 For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? 16 But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by guile. 17 Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

V. 11 — **I have been a fool** — They forced him because too many had the standards of men as their standards. "Sin in the camp" was the most of Paul's problem, as we shall see in vs. 20-21.

inferior — The Greek term (as in 11:9) *ὕστερον*.

V. 12 — **signs** — Assumed here is our own perception of what would be "true" and "false." Paul seemed to make much of the fact that they had been sinners (I Cor. 6:9-11) but were now saved, and all because he was a true apostle. In the terms of II Corinthians 3, they were his recommendation.

signs, wonders, mighty works — As in Acts 2:22 of Jesus, Hebrews 2:4 of God working through apostles. Of course, nothing of man could actually make anyone an apostle of Jesus, I Corinthians 4:3; Galatians 1:1; etc. They had their own salvation through him rather than anyone else, and it was through what Paul preached that their salvation would remain, I Corinthians 15:1-4.

V. 13 — **Forgive me this wrong** — Maybe Paul is ironical here, maybe not. The Greek term, *ἀδικία*, is commonly used of sin, as in Luke 16:8, 9; 18:6; Romans 6:13; I John 5:17. He will attempt to justify his position in v. 14. As can be seen, the failure of the Corinthians to pay Paul as a laborer worthy of his wages, and his refusal to accept pay, worked against all of them. It is a good lesson for churches and preachers to consider.

I seek . . . you — The key to any discipleship is here — if one's mind is not totally submissive to Christ, discipleship is a difficult task. Naturally, the principle here stated is desired in any close relationship, such as marriage, in the sense that complete commitment is desired. Notice then the texts in Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22 — 4:1.

parents — Mentioned in I Corinthians 4. Paul felt that their particular relationship permitted him to refuse help from them if he so desired, even though from others who were also "his children" he could accept help.

V. 15 — Paul's commitment to them was such that all he was and possessed was theirs. Jesus set the example for such giving, as Paul often pointed out. Certain it was that his independence of them did not mean he did not love them. He attempted to love them unselfishly. Sometimes love can be too demanding, too possessive. God loves us, even with a "jealous" love, but not so possessively that we cannot be ourselves. The interesting thing about the cross is its winsomeness in spite of the sacrifice, and this is so because it was an unselfish act, only asking our love in return, yet not making us cease to be ourselves, but rather helping us to be what we really can, and desire, to be.

V. 16 — Some were hard to convince, and though granting that Paul had not personally "used" them, he was rather doing it through someone else. He now refutes that objection, asserting that he had not deceived them, and neither had "Titus or the brother" sent from Paul, as they well knew.

QUESTIONS:

97. In what way was Paul a fool?
98. Had God given Paul the credentials of a true apostle?
99. What right do parents have?
100. Had some accused Paul of deceitfulness?

Lesson Thirteen

(12:19 — 13:14)

SECTION XX 12:19 — 13:10

19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20 For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 2 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them — 3 since

you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. 4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God.

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed. 7 But we pray God that you may not do wrong — not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement. 10 I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

V. 19 — Paul's efforts throughout this book might have been viewed at first glance as primarily a defense. In reality, he stated, the primary thrust had been to make them better Christians. In truth, if they accepted what he had written, that result would accrue (even as it does for us) just as he stated. Indeed the book is a defense of Paul's apostleship, but the higher aim and intended result was more perfect disciples, then and now. The fact is, he was innocent, they were guilty, and both parties knew it.

upbuilding — edification, as in 13:10. This time is seen throughout Paul's epistles, all of which were for this express purpose. Sometimes edification may take a negative tack in the sense of direction "away from" certain things (as in Romans 13:11-14; II Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1; Colossians 2:20 — 3:17) but often in a positive sense, as in the above texts, or as in Hebrews 10:18ff. Consider Acts 9:31; 20:32; Romans 15:2; I Corinthians 3:9; 8:1-10; 10:23-33; II Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 4:12-16; I Thessalonians 5:11.

V. 20 — This verse and v. 21 zero in on the major difficulty in Corinth: the un-Christian attitudes and actions of its members. This makes the point all the more relevant in v. 19 about the purpose of his epistle: to give them both time and instructions needed to rectify what was lacking before he arrived, or they would see a "side" of Paul they wouldn't want to see.

It was for these reasons that Paul had planned a visit, 1:23, but had not come. Now he was ready again to come, and they were yet unprepared. The following list of things shows just how unprepared

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they were.

quarreling — *ἔρις*, the party spirit, "I'm of Paul," etc. Check Romans 1:29; I Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:20; Philippians 1:15; Titus 3:9.

jealousy — *ζήλος*, in a bad sense, such as Acts 5:17; Romans 3:13; James 3:14, 16. It was fine to be zealous in a good cause, but they had crossed the line.

anger — *θυμός*, can be of God (Rom. 2:8; and other places in O.T. and N.T.) but most difficult for man to handle. Thus, as in Ephesians 4:31, it is to be put away, and replaced with kindness and long-suffering.

selfishness — *ἐριθεία*, the "selfish ambition" of men, condemned in Romans 2:8 and Galatians 5:20. Paul found people preaching Christ in this way, Philippians 1:17, but directed the Philippians to do nothing from such motives, 2:3.

slander — *καταλαλιά*, the one who speaks against another, attempting to ruin reputation and character. The Christian is not to be known for such things, James 4:11; because God gave up on some who had such traits, Romans 1:30. In fact, the Christian is to live in such a way that when others speak against him, I Peter 2:12; 3:16; the accuser will not be believed.

gossip — *ψιθυρισμός*, what every congregation suffers from, and the scourge of all communities! The gossip and tale-bearer is condemned, Romans 1:29, and truthful speech coupled with care for another's good name (Titus 2:8; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; 22:1) enjoined.

conceit — *φουσίωσις*, the windbag that needs no attention! The preacher or anyone who "puts on airs" is to be pitied (*his/her ego is out-of-hand*) and not imitated. The one who loves is not so, I Corinthians 13:4; because "puffedupness" is a greased slide that leads to pride and destruction. Consider I Corinthians 4:6, 18; 5:2; Colossians 2:18; I Peter 5:6.

disorder — *ἀκαταστασία*, the opposite of things of God, I Corinthians 14:33, 40, the one who brought a "cosmos" out of "chaos." This term described the person who was like the waves of the sea, James 1:6; and was an outgrowth of jealousy and selfish ambition, James 3:16. Indeed, such a characteristic is descriptive of a tumult, Luke 21:9, and one of the things Paul had had to endure, II Corinthians 6:5. Hardly what ought to be known of a Christian!

V. 21 — **humble** — In the sense that God would put "Paul the apostle" in their midst, and do through him what needed done (as had been done by letter on an earlier occasion, I Cor. 5).

not repented — The never-ceasing necessity in the Christian life: the "putting away" of the mind of the flesh and the "putting on" of the mind of Christ (i.e., the maintenance of the pilgrimage from the

mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ, as Eph. 4:11-13 shows).

Some had not had a transformation about such things as the above in v. 20, and the following threesome — no wonder Paul had trouble!

impurity — *ἀκαθαρσία*, a lack of cleanness, holiness in life. Demons were like this, Mark 1:23 and the things in the great sheet, Acts 10:14. Tombs were filled with such, Matthew 23:27; immoral people were like tombs, Ephesians 5:15, whose lives reflected this matter, Galatians 5:19. So, God gives up (Rom. 1:24) on people who continue this manner of living and fail to become "changed" in mind.

immorality — *πορνεία*, the bane of civilization: If any people should have known better than to be so, the very antithesis of godly living, it should have been the Corinthians. They had firsthand knowledge of the matter, I Cor. 6:9-11, in their own lives and/or city. No word is more removed from godliness than this one, since it describes lack of spirit-controlled living, stems from selfishness and results in never-ending trouble, mentally and physically.

licentiousness — *ἀσελγεία*, the loose-living playboy/playgirl syndrome. It indicates a bad mind, Mark 7:22, not like Christ but rather like those in Sodom whose lives vexed a righteous man, II Peter 2:7-8. False teachers and prophets promote such living, II Peter 2:1ff. Christians beware!

13:1 — **third time** — In conjunction with verse 2, we understood Paul had made two separate visits to them, and had planned a third visit (cf. ch. 1) but had not gone there. Now he is again planning to go. Thus it will be the third actual visit.

any charge — As in the Old Testament law (Deut. 19) God had stipulated laws of good jurisprudence, so also in the New Testament age. It is both protection for the accused and for the court. This may happen if repentance is not forthcoming, 12:21-22; or if the church doesn't do its needed house cleaning before he gets there, or both.

There is no compelling reason to suppose that a legal proceeding was to take place — just that things were to be established and handled properly. The matter of having two witnesses to establish a matter is seen in Matthew 18:16; 26:60; Romans 8:16; I Timothy 5:19; I John 5:6ff.

V. 2 — The ones who needed to straighten up their lives could not plead ignorance, since Paul had either instructed them personally or now by epistle as to their need of repentance.

V. 3 — **desire proof** — The reason for the "not sparing" of v. 2: their challenge of his authority and/or their un-Christian living.

V. 4 — This verse, coupled with verse 3b, presents the real problem in the thinking of those who were problems: their idea/concept of Jesus, and Paul who served Jesus as a divinely-appointed representative.

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They had implicitly accused Paul of weakness. He concurred, but qualified just "how" he was weak. Then he pointed out that Christ was also "weak" in some respects. The fact remained, however, that God's power was manifested in Christ (i.e., his resurrection), despite the "weakening." Paul shared in the "weakness" but also in the power; and would exhibit the same when and if he needed to do so. Had they thought clearly at all, they would have been able to see that God's power had been abundantly displayed in Paul's life, and as such needed no further display.

V. 5 — **Examine** — The common Greek word for test/tempt, *πειράζω*. See it in Matthew 4:1; 16:1; John 6:6; I Corinthians 10:9, 13; Hebrews 2:18; 3:9; 11:17; James 1:13-15; I Peter 4:12; II Peter 2:9; Revelation 2:2; 3:10.

test — From the word meaning "to examine" or "to check," *δοκιμάζω*. See II Corinthians 8:2 and references there. It means to check by some standard and either approve or disapprove of the product being tested. Here, the standard had been laid down by Paul's authority as given by God, and they were to ascertain their status in that light. The prime "test" (same word again) would be their willingness to obey Christ's apostle: Paul. They were so willing to "test" Paul but should have been more eager to do a bit of self study.

These two words simply but lucidly spell out the idea that we are personally responsible for our relationship to Christ; that there is an objective standard by which we may compare ourselves; and that we are to do so.

V. 6 — **we have not failed** — Evidently this means: when you examine yourselves, you should find Christ in your life. If you do, then we (Paul) have not failed. If not, then we (and you) have failed.

V. 7 — Paul loved them enough that his desire is for them to "pass" even if it might appear to some that he had "failed." He was really willing "to spend and be spent" on their behalf (12:15) and to build up all in Corinth. Exercise of his authority in such a way as I Corinthians 5 or as implied in v. 2 was not what he wanted. So then, he will be glad if they will "shape up" and be found in Christ, quite apart from his own vindication.

V. 8 — No verse contains anything more important than this one. God is the ultimate truth, revealed in Jesus Christ (John 14:6), expressed by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth, John 16:13) through the revelation given by means of the apostles, etc. Hence, even Paul's authority as an apostle would be powerless against truth, whether in any particular case or generally. So it would be for any and all men: if life here does not bring this point to their attention, life hereafter will do so. The more one meditates on this verse with all its ramifications, the more it will be emblazoned on one's thinking, and in

life. It is a verse at once both exhilarating and sobering. In the case before us, they needed to "do the truth" (John 3:21) as well as give lip service to it, and the special point at issue was their acceptance of Paul's apostleship; God's representative, as that related to truth in the larger sense above.

This verse ought to cheer the heart of every Christian who sees truth so often rejected and replaced by evil. The same sentiments are true for all of us at times (witness the song, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day") and we wish for a reckoning. This verse says that God lives, and all is well. Now recall the book of Revelation and its message of God's triumph (him whose ways are just and true) over evil.

QUESTIONS:

101. What had been the primary purpose of Paul's writing? The secondary purpose?
102. What was Paul's fear?
103. Who had not had a mind-change?
104. Had some in Corinth neglected to see Christ's power?
105. Could Paul display both "weakness" and "power"?

SECTION XXI 13:11-14

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you.

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

V. 11 — **farewell** — The Greek term is commonly rendered "re-joice." It is, thus, sort of a general salutation.

mend your ways — Some translate "Pull yourselves together" or "be perfected." The term was in v. 9 ("improvement") and in such texts as Matthew 4:21; 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; I Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:12; I Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 10:5; 11:3; 13:21; I Peter 5:10. It has the general idea of finish or complete.

heed my appeal — This translates just one Greek term, which was seen in ch. 1:4ff., 7:13; and has a wide variety of meanings (which are reflected in different versions), often with the idea of "exhortation"

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or "beseeching" or "comfort."

agree with one another — An appeal to think alike, together. See this concept in Philippians 2:1ff.; 4:2; Romans 12:16, 18; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 3:8.

live in peace — Be reconciled, not only with me and each other, but also with God. The idea is that of having correct relationships, not tumult and strife.

If the above exhortations are obeyed, then the result will be that the God of peace would be with them, not against them.

V. 12 — **Greet one another** — The idea of "greet" or "salute" often appears in the salutations (16 times in Romans 16). The common custom (which I think is not binding upon us today) was kissing, regardless of sex. It seems to me that any cultural equivalent will do, though there are problems with such an interpretation, and some therefore practice otherwise.

V. 13 — Some versions combine 12 and 13.

V. 14 — Note here the distinctness of the three personalities enumerated, and the particular idea mentioned in regard to each "person." In other scriptures, of course, differing qualities are attributed to each, as the grace of God, power of Christ, Spirit of truth, etc. We may not understand the exact relationships of each personality mentioned, but we need not, on that account, refuse to accept the idea of three distinct beings, each with the quality of deity.

QUESTIONS:

106. Do Christians have an objective standard by which they may judge themselves?
107. What do you see in v. 8 in regard to your life? The lives of others?
108. What did Paul expect the Corinthians to do?
109. What three personalities are mentioned in v. 14, and how are each characterized?

WORD STUDY — *ἀσθενεία*, WEAKNESS, etc.

The word *ἀσθενεία* and its derivatives occur some 83 times in the New Testament. Because of its importance in such texts as Romans 14, the following is presented. Many of its occurrences are in reference to physical sickness, of whatever nature (perhaps even caused by demon possession). All those that are of this nature are listed under the representative verse, John 5:3. All others not so clear are listed

separately, and the reader can decide just what is meant in each case, or how broad the term is. It seems to be clear that it represents a deficiency of some sort, and often is placed in a comparative sense to some other concept, such as healthy, well, sinless, strong, etc. The word is in small capitals in each citation.

John 5:3 — In these lay a multitude of *INVALIDS*, blind, lame, paralyzed. Matthew 10:8; 25:36; 36; 43; 44; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; 5:15; 8:2; 9:2; 10:9; 13:11, 12; John 4:46; 5:3, 5, 7, 13; 6:2; 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 6; Acts 4:9; 5:15, 16; 9:37; 19:12; 28:9; Philippians 2:26, 27; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20.

The remaining texts are given to allow consideration of the word in its context. The reader may decide, then, how it is used, and what connotation it may have.

Matthew

8:17: "He took our *INFIRMITIES* and bore our diseases."
26:41: ". . . the spirit is willing, but the flesh is *WEAK*."

Mark

14:38: ". . . the spirit is willing, but the flesh is *WEAK*."

Acts

20:35: ". . . by so toiling one must help the *WEAK*, . . ."

Romans:

4:19: He did not *WEAKEN* in faith when he considered his own . . .
5:6 : While we were yet *HELPLESS*, . . . Christ died for . . .
6:19: . . . , because of your natural *LIMITATIONS*.
8:3 : For God has done what the law, *WEAKENED* by the flesh, . . .
8:26: Likewise the Spirit helps us in our *WEAKNESS*; . . .
14:1 : As for the man who is *WEAK* in faith, . . .
14:2 : . . . , while the *WEAK* man eats only vegetables.
14:21: . . . or is made *WEAK* (Textual variation).
15:1 : . . . bear with the *FAILINGS* of the weak, . . .

I Corinthians

1:25: . . . , and the *WEAKNESS* of God is stronger than men.
1:27: God chose what is *WEAK* in the world to shame the strong.
2:3 : And I was with you in *WEAKNESS* and in much fear . . .
4:10: We are *WEAK*, but you are strong.
8:7 : . . . , and their conscience, being *WEAK*, is defiled.
8:9 : . . . become a stumbling block to the *WEAK*.
8:10: . . . , if his conscience is *WEAK*, . . .

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- 8:11: And so by your knowledge, this WEAK man is destroyed . . .
8:12: . . . wounding their conscience when it is WEAK, . . .
9:22: To the WEAK I became WEAK, that I might win the WEAK.
11:30: That is why many of you are WEAK and ill, . . .
12:22: . . . which seem to be WEAKER are indispensable, . . .
15:43: It is sown in WEAKNESS, it is raised in power.

II Corinthians

- 10:10: . . . , but his bodily presence is WEAK, . . .
11:21: I must say, we are too WEAK for that!
11:29: Who is WEAK, and I am not WEAK?
11:30: . . . boast of the things that show my WEAKNESS.
12:5 : . . . I will not boast, except of my WEAKNESSES.
12:9 : . . . for my power is made perfect in WEAKNESS."
12:10: . . . content with WEAKNESSES, . . . I am WEAK, . . .
13:3 : He is not WEAK in dealing with you, . . .
13:4 : . . . crucified in WEAKNESS For we are WEAK . . .
13:9 : For we are glad when we are WEAK and you are strong.

Galatians

- 4:9 : . . . again to the WEAK and beggarly elemental . . .
4:13: . . . because of a bodily AILMENT that I preached . . .

I Thessalonians

- 5:14: . . . , help the WEAK, be patient with them all.

Hebrews

- 4:15: . . . sympathize with our WEAKNESSES, . . .
5:2 : . . . , since he himself is beset with WEAKNESS.
7:18: . . . because of its WEAKNESSES and uselessness.
7:28: . . . appoints men in their WEAKNESS as high priests . . .
11:34: . . . won strength out of WEAKNESS, . . .

James

- 5:14: Is any among you SICK?

I Peter

- 3:7 : . . . honor on the woman as the WEAKER sex, . . .