

# 2 CORINTHIANS BOOK OF TREASURES



**2 CORINTHIANS 9:1 - 2 CORINTHIANS 13:13**

**PART 3**

**TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL  
HELPS**

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## Chapter 20.

### How to Keep the Egg Off of Your Face

#### 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;

<sup>2</sup> for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

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

<sup>4</sup> otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.

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

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

**Have you ever been in a situation where you got egg on your face?** In other words, you stated that something was true, or something would happen, and it turned out not to be true or take place.

Perhaps, you made a commitment that a task would be done and it wasn't. People were counting on you and you let them down. When you get egg on your face, you feel embarrassed and somewhat foolish. I felt that way when I invited a pastor friend and his wife to go with me and Elia to a Los Angeles Dodgers Baseball game at Dodger Stadium about 20 years ago. We drove 40 minutes to get to this beautiful stadium.

When we got there, however, things were quiet. There were no crowds and the gates were locked because the Dodgers were playing out of town. I somehow, read the wrong dates and showed up to watch a baseball game with no players. Boy, I felt stupid! I not only had egg on my face, I had bacon and hash browns too. Thank God, they were good friends and we had a good laugh. I still felt embarrassed.

In this section of [2 Corinthians](#), we find Paul was trying to avoid the embarrassment of having egg on his face. The Corinthians have promised to give a love offering to the Jerusalem Christians and he takes steps to make sure they follow through on their pledge.

He has boasted of their enthusiasm to the Macedonian believers, who gave sacrificially to this need. Now it is near the time to receive this gift. Before he arrives in Corinth, Paul very graciously and tenderly makes sure that the collection of this offering is *organized, accomplished, and done* without *pressure* and *constraint* on these believers.

He also reveals very important principles about the right way and the wrong way to give to the Lord and others.

## I. THE EAGERNESS OF THE CORINTHIANS AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 9:1-2](#)

### [2 Corinthians 9:1-2 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> For it is **superfluous** for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;

<sup>2</sup> for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

Concerning the ministry of giving to the Jerusalem church, Paul felt it was superfluous to write to the Corinthians. The word “**superfluous**” is from the word *perissos* {*per-is-sos*} which means “**more than necessary, uncommon, extraordinary.**”

Paul felt his letter was more than necessary to write the church about the offering for the Jerusalem believers because he knew the “**for I know your readiness.**” This phrase is from the word *prothumia* {*proth-oo-mee'-ah*} which means “**zeal, eagerness, readiness of mind.**” When this burden was revealed a year earlier, the Corinthians were very excited about helping out. This letter is following up on their desire.

Paul said he told the Macedonians that the Corinthians had been ready a year ago. Evidently he meant that they had been ready to start collecting a gift rather than that their gift was ready to go to Judea.

Because of problems in the church, their enthusiasm a year ago had diminished since then, but they now had been eager to participate in the offering project. It is this initial attitude that Paul commended here. Apparently the Corinthian Christians were taking the lead in their province that also included churches in the port city of Cenchrea, and probably other communities. This explains his reference to Achaia, which was that part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital city.

**These verses reveal the importance of encouragement**, especially among Christians. Paul does not hesitate to pat the backs of the Corinthian believers for their zeal to help the Judean believers. *Affirmation* or *encouragement* goes a long way with people. It means a lot to a wife when her husband praises her. A man likes to hear appreciation and praise from his wife for his love and care. Children crave the praise of their parents. Praise your children, especially when they demonstrate character in their lives. Make a big deal out of character instead of cuteness.

Inspire your family and Christian friends to live their lives for God. Bring out the best in them by your love and encouragement.

**Alan Loy McGinnis**, in his book *Bringing Out the Best in People*, wrote about the importance of encouragement. He said, “A proven motivator will make it to the top before a proven genius. When **Andrew Carnegie** hired **Charles Schwab** to administer his far-flung steel empire, Schwab became the first man in history to earn a million dollars a year while under the employment of someone else.

Schwab was once asked what equipped him to earn \$3000 a day. Was it his knowledge of steel manufacturing? Schwab’s snorted reply was, ‘Nonsense. I have lots of men working for me who know more about steel than I do.’ Charles Schwab was paid a handsome amount largely because of his ability to inspire other people. Charles said, ‘I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among the men, the greatest asset I possess. Any leader who can do that can go almost anywhere and name almost any price.’”

## **II. THE ENTHUSIASTIC EXAMPLE OF THE CORINTHIANS— [2 Corinthians 9:2B](#)**

### **[2 Corinthians 9:2 \(NASB\)](#)**

**<sup>2</sup>For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has **stirred** up most of them.**

The enthusiasm of the Corinthians became an object lesson for Paul to challenge other believers about the joy of giving and helping others. Paul boasted about the Corinthians’ attitude to other churches including Macedonia.

When the Macedonians heard that the Corinthians had been ready for a year, the Macedonians were challenged by their zealous example and gave sacrificially to this need, too. They were “**provoked or stirred,**” which means “**to stir up or excite.**”

**Let me ask some questions here, “Does your example get people ‘excited or stirred up’ about serving the Lord? What kind of example are you as a Christian?”**

You are an example of something. You are teaching lessons with your life, good or bad. By your *actions* and *attitudes*, what are you teaching other people about life, about love, and about the Lord?

Our example should never be underestimated. The Corinthian’s example excited other believers to serve the Lord, to *die to self*, and *sacrificially give* to others who had greater needs. They followed the challenge of Jesus. The challenge of Scripture is to let our example shine for Christ.

**Matthew 5:16 NASB "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

**Sir Harry Lauder, Scottish humorist** and comedian of another era, was a Christian. One evening at the Hotel Cecil, he told about an incident that might have been spoken from a pulpit.

He said: “I was sitting in the gloamin’ (dusk or twilight), an’ a man passed the window. He was the lamplighter. He pushed his pole into the lamp and lighted it. Then he went to another and another. Now I couldn’t see him. But I knew where he was by the lamps as they broke out doon the street, until he had left a beautiful avenue of lights. Ye’re lamplighters. They’ll know where ye’ve been by the lights [ye have lit].”

**Beloved, that is a beautiful description of the Christian life.** We are lamplighters. The light of Christ is revealed through our godly example and our witness about Him to people who do not know the Lord and are walking in darkness.

If you want to keep egg off of your face, live your life for Christ. Living for Jesus Christ will not cause you to be embarrassed or ashamed. Living for yourself or living in sin will.

**Proverbs 3:35 NASB The wise will inherit honor, But fools display dishonor.**

**Proverbs 11:2 NASB When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.**

**Proverbs 13:5 NASB A righteous man hates falsehood, But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.**

### III. THE EMISSARIES' MISSION—[2 Corinthians 9:3](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 9:3 \(NASB\)](#)

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

When Paul says here that he has sent the brethren, he really means he is sending them. The past tense views it from the perspective of the readers rather than the writer. The “**brethren**” are the three mentioned in the previous chapter: **Titus and two unnamed Christians**.

They were being sent so that Paul’s boasting concerning the Corinthians would not be in error with regard to the collection. The mission of the three brethren would be to ensure that the love offering was *organized, prepared, and secure* as Paul had already stated to the Macedonians. He didn’t want to be mistaken about their gift and wanted to make sure that it was ready when he arrived.

Paul was applying a basic principle of leadership that is used today. **Inspect what you expect**. He did not take for granted that this project would be completed. He wanted to make sure that before he made the journey, everything was completed and all was in order. They pledged to give and Paul expected them to keep their word.

It would have been very awkward for everyone if he arrived and the offering was not ready or had not even been taken up in the churches. The Corinthians would have been embarrassed by Paul’s arrival and would have egg on their face because the offering was not ready. Their integrity would have been in question or they would have looked disorganized.

If you want to avoid having egg on your face, **don’t procrastinate**. Get the job done and get it done right and on time. When it comes to the matter of putting your faith in Christ, **don’t procrastinate**. Do it today! **We really do not have the luxury to procrastinate about the salvation of our soul**.

**Proverbs 27:1 NASB** Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

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**2 Corinthians 6:2 NASB** for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--

If the love offering at Corinth was not ready, these believers also would have been under pressure to produce something. Paul did not want that at all. If the offering had not been prepared, Paul would have egg on his face because he had been boasting to other churches of their desire to give to this project.

The apostle avoids this predicament by sending these three men to make sure everything was organized and done decently and in order. If you want to avoid egg on your face, **inspect what you expect**. *Double-check circumstances or facts* to make sure they are *accurate* or *completed*. This is what Paul did to avoid an embarrassing situation. He further addresses this issue of embarrassment in [verse four](#).

#### IV. EMBARRASSMENT IS AVOIDED—[2 Corinthians 9:4](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 9:4 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>4</sup>Otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.**

When Paul wrote this letter, he was in Macedonia. When it was time to depart Macedonia, some of the Macedonian believers, would no doubt, come with him. The apostle did not want to arrive and find that the Corinthians were unprepared and had not completed the project or had given meagerly. This would have left egg on Paul's face and on the faces of the Corinthian believers because they claimed to be eager to give to this cause a year earlier.

Paul's *credibility, integrity, and judgment* would have been called into question if they were not prepared or had given little. He could be accused of *trickery* and *fraud* in inducing these Christians to give because Paul used their example to *stir* and *motivate* the other churches to give sacrificially.

This is what the Macedonian churches did. If the Corinthians were not prepared, it would have made Paul look foolish. Paul would also have felt foolish by claiming something to be true when in reality it was not.

This is why the men were sent in advance so that no one would be taken off guard and that there would be no surprise. If Paul showed up and there was no offering because of their neglect, the Corinthians would have egg on their faces too. Paul was trying to prevent this from happening.

There is another insight we will address here. If you want to avoid having egg on your face and being embarrassed, then keep your promises, fulfill your obligations on time, and do your best.

**[Romans 12:11 NASB](#) not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;**

Paul tells us here that we are not to be lazy or lagging in “**diligence**.” This word is derived from the Greek word *spoude* {*spooday*} which means “**diligence, earnestness in accomplishing a task, or striving after anything**.” We are to be fervent or “**on fire**” in our spirit. This is the idea behind the word “**fervent**” which comes from the word *zeo* {*dzeh'-o*} meaning “**to boil with heat, to be hot, enthusiastic, or to be zealous**.”



The opposite attitude would be to be *cold, dead, or apathetic*. This is what happened at Laodicea.

**Revelation 3:15-16 NASB (15) 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.**

**Beloved, diligent, careful enthusiasm and zeal will help you to keep the eggs off of your face.** It will enable you to accomplish what God is leading you to do and bring glory and honor to Him. Such was the case with **Samuel Morse**.

Today's "**Information Superhighway**" began with a young artist named Samuel Morse. The son of a preacher, Morse sailed to London at age 19 to study art. He was acutely homesick. "I wish that in one instant I could tell you of my safe arrival," he wrote, "but we are 3000 miles apart and must wait four weeks to hear from each other."

**Morse** became a respected artist and portrait painter, but his life took a sudden turn in **1832, as he traveled back to America aboard the Sully**. One night, the conversation at his dinner table turned to the sending of electric messages along a length of wire. Morse was seized by the idea and, arriving home, took a room atop his brother's newspaper building and spent every spare moment slaving over his "**Tele-Graph**."

After years of trial and error, Morse prepared a dramatic demonstration. He laid two miles of water-proofed wire under New York Harbor. Unfortunately, a ship's anchor caught the wire and destroyed it, and the crowds left, muttering.

But Morse planned an even more dramatic demonstration for the United States Congress. **On May 24, 1844**, before assembled dignitaries, he sent a message from the U.S. Capitol to the railroad depot in Baltimore. The first telegraph message consisted of four words from **Numbers 23:23**: "**What God has done!**"

**Numbers 23:23 NASB "For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination against Israel; At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done!**

All America and Europe were soon linked by telegraph poles and wires. "It is all of God," Morse later said. "He used me as His hand in all this. I am not indifferent to the rewards of earth and the praise of my fellow men, but I am more pleased with the fact that my Father in Heaven has allowed me to do something for Him and for His world.

**Not unto us, but unto God be all the glory. Not what hath man, but what hath God done!"**

**Beloved, this should be the goal of every believer.** Bringing glory to the Lord with your life will help you to avoid getting egg on your face. Living for yourself will eventually lead to embarrassing behavior.



We have examined four areas in this chapter thus far.

1. *The Eagerness of the Corinthians* [9:1-2](#)
2. *The Enthusiastic Example* [9:2b](#)
3. *The Emissaries Mission* [9:3](#)
4. *Embarrassment is Avoided* [9:4](#)
5. *Next, the Exhortation to the Brethren* [9:5](#)

## V. THE EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHREN [2 Corinthians 9:5](#)

### [2 Corinthians 9:5 \(NASB\)](#)

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

For the reasons noted above, Paul thought it necessary to urge the brethren (Titus and the two unnamed brothers) that they would go on ahead to Corinth and arrange beforehand the Corinthians' previously promised, bountiful, gift for the Jerusalem saints. Evidently, they had promised a large amount, and Paul wanted to make certain they had it ready when he arrived.

The word “**bountiful gift**” is from the Greek word *eulogia* {*yoo-log-ee'-ah*} which means “ **blessing or praise to God.**” It forms our English word **eulogy**. The Corinthians' gift would be a blessing to the Judeans. It would be an occasion for the Jerusalem Christians to bless or thank God for their gift.

The word also implies a sizable blessing. Paul assumed that his readers would collect a substantial sum of money, and that generosity, rather than covetousness, would motivate them.

Paul sent Titus and his companions to ready this gift because he wanted no impression that these funds should be wrung out of the saints as by *extortion, intimidation, or high-pressure tactics*, but that this love offering should be a manifestation of their *willing, voluntary, generosity and sacrifice*. This love offering was to be a blessing, a thank offering to the Lord, not a burden or source of despair. The gifts were to come from yielded, *grateful hearts* to the Lord, *not hearts* that were *bitter* and *resentful* about this offering.

This is what true biblical giving is all about. Believers are not to be *intimidated* or *pressured* to give by strong-arm tactics. Such methods make me sick. It is wrong! Present the need, put it on the table, and let God's people privately do what He leads them to do.

**Challenge them to live by faith and trust God at His Word, and then let the Lord work in each heart.** God does a better job at motivating His children to give than you. When they do give, it is from a heart of love not loathing.

## 2 Corinthians 9:5 (NASB)

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

Paul addresses one of the key reasons why God's people do not give to the Lord. It is the problem with covetousness. This word "covetousness" is from the Greek word *pleonexia* {pleh-on-ex-ee'-ah} which means "the greedy desire to have more, avarice, covetousness, or greed which leads a person to defraud other people." Paul warned that this problem could be the one sin that could keep the Corinthians from meeting their commitment. He was right.

The struggle with *covetousness* or *greed* is probably the greatest hindrance to giving to the Lord. The believers in Corinth knew the purpose for this love offering. They knew this project was part of the work of Christ. It was being conducted in a biblical manner.

Since they promised to be involved in this project, any failure to keep their promise to the Lord would be the result of a spirit of covetousness. The roots of covetousness are found within our depraved heart. **It is easy for us to be greedy and selfish.**

**Mark 7:21-23 NASB** "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, (22) deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. (23) "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

**2 Peter 2:14 NASB** having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

Covetousness is so despicable that it is labeled as idolatry in the Scriptures. **The idol is us or some possession.**

**Ephesians 5:5 NASB** For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

**Colossians 3:5 NASB** Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

When a person gets gripped by *greed* and *covetousness*, he will trample people in his *path or spurn* the Lord because his heart is consumed with the *idols of money* or *materialism*.

**Micah 2:2 NASB** They covet fields and then seize them, And houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.

**Psalms 10:3 NASB** For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns the LORD.

A greedy attitude is so destructive that the Lord instructs us to not fellowship with people who behave this way.

**1 Corinthians 5:11 NASB (11)** But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

The person consumed with greed or covetousness will indulge in behavior that ends up destroying his life.

**Proverbs 28:22 NASB** A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth And does not know that want will come upon him.

**Proverbs 15:27 NASB** He who profits illicitly **troubles** his own house, But he who hates bribes will live.

The word “troubles” is from the Hebrew word *'akar {aw-kar}'* which means “to stir up, disturb, bring calamity, to trouble.” Greed will disturb your home. It will unsettle your family because they are stirred up by your neglect and passion for possessions at their expense.

The story of a butterfly named *Maculinea Arion* is most instructive. The creature lays its eggs on a plant, and after feeding on the plant for several weeks, the young caterpillar makes its way to the ground.

In order to complete its development, it must meet a certain kind of ant. When such an ant meets the caterpillar, the ant strokes it with its antennae, and the caterpillar exudes a sweet fluid from a special gland on its tenth segment.

Apparently the ant likes this substance, because it then carries the caterpillar home to its nest. There the ants drink the sweet fluid exuded by the caterpillar, and the caterpillar feasts on larval ants. The caterpillar spends the winter in a special cavity of the ant's nest, and in the spring, it continues eating young ants. Eventually it emerges as an adult butterfly and flies away to establish more of its kind, and the cycle starts all over again.

Some people are not much different from the ants. For you see, they are greedy for a luxury item which leads to the injury of themselves. If you want to avoid *shame, embarrassment, or egg on your face*, then get a grip on *greed* or *covetousness* that can cause you to desire or make choices that can destroy your own life.

**Proverbs 28:16 NASB** A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong *his* days.

## **VI. THE EQUALITY OF THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING— 2 Corinthians 9:6**

### **2 Corinthians 9:6 (NASB)**

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

Paul encourages the Corinthians with an important principle about the matter of giving. They have promised to give to the Lord, but the temptation for greed can quench the fire of generosity. He encourages them with the equality of the law of sowing and reaping, using the farmer as an example.

One of the great spiritual principles of life is that God blesses people in proportion to their blessing others. You *sow or give sparingly*, you *reap sparingly*. You sow bountifully, you reap bountifully. Giving to meet the needs of others is like sowing seed. It will yield fruit of the same kind in time.

The important lesson which Paul is urging upon the Corinthians at this point is that to give is to sow. What is given is not lost, but, like the seed sown by the farmer, it will yield its blessing at a later time.

When a generous believer gives by faith and trusts in God, with a desire to produce the greatest possible blessing, that person will receive that kind of a harvest of blessing. **Your return is determined by the investment you make.**

This principle is taught repeatedly throughout the Bible.

**Proverbs 3:9-10 NASB** Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; (10) So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.

**Proverbs 11:24-25 NASB** There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. (25) The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.

**Proverbs 19:17 NASB** One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

**Proverbs 22:8-9 NASB** He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish. (9) He who is generous will be blessed, For he gives some of his food to the poor.

**Proverbs 28:27 NASB** He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

**Malachi 3:10 NASB** "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

**Luke 6:38 NASB** "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

**Galatians 6:7 NASB** Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

A man in New England had been unemployed so long that he was down to his last dollar. He laid fifty cents of it on the offering plate on Sunday. That was a lot of money in his day.

The next morning he heard of a possible job in a neighboring town, but the railroad fare was a dollar. He began to wonder if perhaps he should have kept the fifty cents he put in the offering plate, but with the fifty cents that he had, he bought a ticket and rode halfway to his desired destination. He stepped from the train and started to walk to the town, but God had something better for him. He would reap what he had sown.

Before he had walked a block, he learned of a factory near at hand that needed help. He got a job at five dollars a week, more than he would have received had he traveled on to the other town.

The man was **W.L. Douglas**, who became the famed shoe manufacturer of Brockton, Massachusetts. His shoe company made the finest shoes in the country and was considered the Pepsi Cola of the shoe industry. Mr. Douglas went on to become the **governor of Massachusetts in 1905-06**, a position once held by famous men such as John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

**Beloved, giving to the Lord will not leave you with egg on your face, especially at the Judgment Seat of Christ.** It is an investment that will yield blessings for you in the future here on earth and in Heaven. Not all the blessings will be monetary. They may be the blessing of *good health, peace, joy, love, and usefulness to the Lord.*

Some may ask, "Is a proper motive for giving to get something in return?" The answer is "Yes." Both Jesus and Paul urged us to lay up treasure in Heaven, to make investments, counting on the fact that they will yield eternal rewards. Jesus told a parable in [Matthew 25](#), stressing the importance of investing for the purpose of an increase.

Good and faithful servants did this, but the one servant that did not do this was rebuked. We are stewards of God's money and are to use it wisely. Money is a tool that is to be used to yield fruitfulness and blessing. We are to lay up treasures in Heaven.

**Matthew 6:19-21 NASB** "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (20) "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (21) for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

How do you properly lay up treasures in Heaven? How are we supposed to give? **Basic elements of giving are given in the next verse.**

## **VII. THE ELEMENTS OF GIVING—[2 Corinthians 9:7](#)**

**2 Corinthians 9:7 (NASB)**

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

Paul gives us several important elements about how we are to give today. We will note four important principles.

1. Give as you Purpose in Your Heart.
2. Give without Pessimism and Peevishness.
3. Give without being Pressured
4. Give with a heart of Praise and Pleasantness.

*We are to first of all, give as we purpose in our heart* The term translated “**purposed**” occurs only here in the New Testament and indicates a **premeditated, predetermined plan of action that is done from the heart voluntarily, but not impulsively.**

It will be necessary for the giver to consider what is required for his own immediate needs. He will have to think of just obligations which he will incur in the course of normal life, but then above that, he should think of the needs of his fellow Christians, and of the claims of Christ upon him.

The giver is to think about the need, think about what the Lord would have him give, and give to the Lord the amount that He lays upon his heart. Pray about a plan for giving and then implement the plan and giving goals that God has given to you.

*Secondly, we are to give without pessimism and peevishness.* We are not to give “**grudgingly.**” What does this really mean? We are not to give with “**grief, sorrow, or sadness,**” which would indicate an attitude of *regret, depression, and reluctance* that accompanies something done strictly out of a *sense of duty, obligation, and void of any joy at all.* It is possible to give and yet, not be happy about it. If the giver is going to be mulling over his gift and regretting that he had given it, **his gift is unacceptable to God.**

God does not want any *grudge giving*. The Lord does not want one penny from you if you would rather keep it for yourself. Would you want to receive a gift from a person who *griped* and *complained* about giving it to you or put you on a “**guilt trip**” because they could not afford it?

If they gave because they felt forced or obligated, would you really want their gift? I wouldn't want it because I would always be reminded of their reluctance or lousy attitude instead of their love. God is no different.

In the Jewish temple, **there were two chests** for the giving of alms. **The one chest** was for that which was necessary or required by the Law. **The other chest** was for the free-willing offerings of the people.

To escape perdition some of the people would grudgingly give what was required of them by the Law. On the other hand, others would give cheerfully, out of love for God, and compassion for the poor. **Of the first chest**, nothing is said. God's people simply did what the Law required. **Of the second**, much is said in the Scriptures.

God loves those who give with a willing heart. The benefit of giving is lost to the giver when he does it with a grumbling heart. When a person gives grudgingly, he becomes blind to the needs of others and fails to recognize or remember what the Lord Jesus Christ did for him. Not only that, the actual act of giving has the opposite effect in the person's life.

**Voluntary, sacrificial giving develops a tender heart, gratitude, and joy.** Grudge giving develops bitterness and a hard heart. This is why the Lord tells us to keep our gift if we are going to gripe about it.

The story is told of a very wealthy man who, upon the occasion of his daughter's marriage, sent a check for \$5,000.00 to the bridegroom as a wedding present. He sent it by the hand of the bride's sister and when she returned, the man eagerly asked: “What did your new brother-in-law say when you gave the check?”

The girl replied. “He didn't say anything, but when he looked at it he began to cry.” “And how long did he cry?” was the question. She replied, “Oh, I imagine for about a minute.” “Only a minute?” roared the disappointed giver, “Why, I cried for an hour after I had signed the check!” Beloved, God wants us to give to others without regret and crying.



## 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NASB)

<sup>7</sup> Each one *must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under [necessity] compulsion*, for God loves a *cheerful giver*.

*The third element is the giver is to give without being pressured or out of necessity.* The word “**necessity**” means “**compulsion**.” This refers to external high pressure tactics and coercion. Believers are not to give based on the *demands of others, the pressure of emotional appeals, public embarrassment, or according to any arbitrary standards or set amounts.*

The gift is not acceptable to the Lord when the person is *forced*, when he *fears* what others think, when he is *frustrated* by others pestering him for money and he wants them off of his back, or when the individual is *focused* on gaining personal recognition and honor. The real source of prestige giving is not love but pride. The gift is given not to help, but to glorify the giver. In fact the chances are that it would not be given at all if it were not seen and praised.

Our giving is to come from a heart that is willing to sacrifice because of our love for God or others. For example, during the Crusades, a knight was taken captive by the Moslem Saladin. The knight begged for his life, claiming that he had a wife in England who loved him dearly.

Saladin commented that she would soon forget him and marry another. On second thought, the cruel chieftain offered to set the man free if the lady in question would send her right hand as token of her love for this captive. When word was sent to this lady in England, she immediately cut off her right hand and sent it to Saladin.

The man was immediately returned to England. There is a statue of this faithful woman in one of the old cathedrals of England. She is very beautiful, but the statue shows her without her right hand. Her gift was a willing sacrifice.

*The fourth element of giving is the fact that we are to give with an attitude of praise and pleasantness.* We are to be cheerful givers, not bitter ones. This word “**cheerful**” is from the Greek word *hilaros* {*hil-ar-os*} which forms our English word “**hilarious**.”

*Hilaros* means “**to be cheerful, joyous, or prompt to do anything**.” God loves a heart that is enthusiastically thrilled with the pleasure of giving. Giving is a serious matter, but it is also to be a delightful experience.

If you want to see an example of a hilarious giver, see the film *A Christmas Carol* and enjoy the behavior of Scrooge after his night with the three Christmas spirits. Scrooge found out the wonderful joy of giving on Christmas day and for the rest of his life.

**Don McCullough** shared his experience about a missionary he visited in **Ghana**. This missionary told him an interesting thing about the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. The Presbyterians are the largest Christian group in that country.

The church was established over a hundred years ago by Scottish Presbyterians, and their worship service is very much like a Scottish Presbyterian service. Recently they have allowed the African traditional experience into the worship service at the offering.

At the offering, they let the people dance. That's a part of African culture in religious, spiritual worship. They let the people dance as they bring their offerings forward. The music is going, and they individually turn it into a production as they bring their offerings to the offering plate. They take their time, too.

The offering could go on for a long time because they are dancing all the way down the aisle. It's the only time in the service when they smile. Don thought, "How interesting! The only time in the service when they smile is when they're giving their money to the Lord." This is the attitude we are to have when we give to Christ or others in need.

**What makes a man a cheerful giver?** The answer is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace sustains us throughout our lives. His grace gives us our daily bread, supplies us with lungs full of air, and grants us the ability to make a living. God wants an *abundant* life for us. His grace makes it possible. God loves the cheerful giver, for the cheerful giver is just like His Son, Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ willingly and cheerfully gave all He was and had to meet the needs of the world.

***There are three kinds of givers—the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb.*** To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it, and then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more you will get. The honeycomb, however, just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you? God wants us to be like the honeycomb, beloved.

## VIII. THE EFFECT OF YOUR GIVING—[2 Corinthians 9:8-15](#)

### [2 Corinthians 9:8-15 \(NASB\)](#)

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

<sup>9</sup> as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

God demonstrates His love for cheerful givers by giving them more grace and more opportunity to give. Here we have a promise that, if a person really wants to be generous, God will see that he is given the opportunity.

Grace is used here as a synonym for resources. God is able to supply us with resources so that we will not only have sufficiency ourselves, but so we will be able to share what we have with others, and thus, have an abundance for every good work. He generously provides all that we need and helps us to be content with what we have. This is the meaning of the word “**sufficiency**.”

It comes from the Greek word *autarkeia* {ow-tar'-ki-ah}. This was a favorite Stoic word. It does not describe the sufficiency of the man who possesses all kinds of things in abundance. It means “**independence**.” It describes the state of the man who has directed his life, not to amassing possessions, but to eliminating needs. It describes the man who has taught himself to be content with very little.

It is obvious that such a man will be able to give far more to others because he wants so little for himself. It is so often true that we want so much for ourselves that there is nothing left to give to others. The man who has “**sufficiency**” is a contented man. **Contentment produces a sense of satisfaction and sufficiency.**

**Philippians 4:11 NASB** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

**1 Timothy 6:6 NASB** But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

As the Lord provides for all of our needs, we will have plenty left over to share with others in need. The righteous person who desires to give to the needs of others will not lack opportunity to do so because God will make this possible for him or her. Paul's logic is identical to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice [Matthew 6:33](#).

**Matthew 6:33 NASB** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Beloved, when we put God first in our lives, it will keep the egg off of our face. There is no shame in putting the Lord first and serving Him. When the temporal concerns of life are placed first, the Lord is usually left out of our lives. This is when we make choices that leave egg on our face.

When the kingdom of God is placed first, God sees to it that the temporal needs are included and supplied. God sees to it that the generous giver will not suffer want. Instead, the Lord generously provides for those who give so that they can continue to do so. The righteous acts of the Christian who readily gives and supplies the needs of others have eternal value when it is for the purpose to glorify God.

**Psalms 37:25 NASB** I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread.

Beloved, may we all live our lives in such a way where we honor the Lord Jesus Christ and avoid making foolish decisions that leave us with egg on our face. May He find us ready when He returns again and not ashamed at his coming.

**1 John 2:28 NASB** Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

In the closing verses of [chapter nine](#), he reminds these Christians that the Lord is our source of blessings and prosperity. As we give to the Lord or to others, the Lord continues to supply our needs so that we can continue to be generous.

**2 Corinthians 9:10-11 NASB (10)** Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; **(11)** you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

The effect of our giving becomes a ministry of encouragement to other believers according to [verse 12](#) when Paul speaks of “**for the ministry of this service.**” The consequences of such giving bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ as believers praise and thank God for His provision of their needs through His people.

Bringing honor and glory to Jesus Christ should always be the goal of anything we do. The recipients of sacrificial giving will also pray for those who have given in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. These are Paul's encouraging comments as **chapter nine** closes.

**2 Corinthians 9:12-15 NASB (12) For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. (13) Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, (14) while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. (15) Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

Beloved, when we bring honor to the Lord, especially by our generosity, such behavior will keep the egg off of your face. There is no shame in causing others to praise Him!

## Chapter 21. The Battle for the Mind

### [2 Corinthians 10:1-6 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

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

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

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

<sup>6</sup> and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

The [tenth chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians](#) marks a big shift in the tone of this letter. The first seven chapters of this book were focused on Paul's restored fellowship with the Corinthian believers. Because there had been reconciliation, Paul felt it was proper to address the issue of their previous promise to send a love offering to the poverty-stricken Jerusalem church. He shares important principles about giving in chapters eight and nine of this book. The tone of the first nine chapters was basically tender, gentle, and gracious.

In the [final four chapters \(10-13\)](#) Paul's tone makes a sharp change and he becomes very firm, confrontational, and authoritative.

**Why is there a change? What happened to trigger this drastic change and firmness?** The answer is Paul is battling for the minds of these believers. What has brought about this battle?

When you look at the book of Acts, you will find that Paul started this church and **pastored it over 1½ years (Acts 18)**. When the apostle left Corinth to spread the Gospel in other cities, he was notified that serious complications had developed at Corinth after his departure.

One of the serious problems was the invasion of false teachers into the church that attacked the ministry, the character, and the apostolic authority of Paul. They were battling for the minds of these people by attempting to destroy Paul's *credibility* and *reputation* so that they could set themselves up as teachers of authority. If they could discredit Paul, they could discredit his message, and in turn, spread their lies to these folks.

Let me interject here that if you are a parent, in a way, you can understand what Paul was facing. People today are battling for the minds of your children. For some parents, the battle is more intense than what other parents face. These people are endeavoring to capture your children's hearts and turn them against your authority or God's authority. Your competitors could be the friends of your *kids, neighbors, fellow-workers, teachers, a boy or girl friend, movie stars, music stars, etc.*

They may feed your kids lines like:

1. Your parents are old fashioned and don't know what they are talking about.
2. It's your life. It is none of their business what you do.
3. Live anyway you want to live. Don't let anyone tell you what to do.
4. There are many ways to God. Jesus is one of many ways to Heaven.
5. There is no God. There is no Heaven or Hell. Death ends it all. Live it up!
6. There is nothing wrong with sex, drugs, or alcohol. These things are not going to hurt you. Everyone does this kind of stuff.
7. Church is a waste of time. Prayer doesn't work. The Bible is boring and won't help you. You don't want people to think you are weird, do you?
8. The Bible is full of fairy tales and isn't true. Those stories aren't true at all. Man evolved, God didn't create us. No man can live inside a whale for three days. Three guys, walking around in a fiery furnace is a joke. Jesus was a good man, but not the son of God. He had to have a real father in order to be born. Mary was not a virgin. Jesus died and His body was stolen. He did not rise from the dead.

When people feed garbage like this to you or your kids, they are in essence, battling for your mind and the minds of your kids. They are trying to influence your mind or negate your authority and influence as a parent and the influence of the Bible in your life or the life of your children.

The battle doesn't stop here, however. People are battling for the mind of your spouse. Men or women may strive to capture the heart of your spouse with statements like:

1. He's no good. He doesn't care about you. You deserve better. I can make you happy.
2. I know how to treat you right. I love you more than he or she does. I would never do that.
3. Dump the bum. She's a wicked witch. She doesn't care about you.
4. You don't need to put up with that kind of treatment.
5. Come with me. No one will know. We'll keep it discreet.

The battles for the minds of husbands and wives are being waged every day. The divorce rate and adulterous affairs confirm the fact that it is being waged and that competitors for a spouse are very influential and effective. If you are not careful, if you do not nurture that relationship with your husband or wife, then someone else might. Someone may try to rob you of your influence with your spouse by battling for his or her mind.



This is what was happening to Paul in his relationship with the Corinthian church. False teachers were trying to destroy, with their lies, Paul's influence over the Corinthians. These false prophets were battling for the hearts and minds of these people. The apostle responded to the threat with a sternly worded letter, known as the severe letter.

**2 Corinthians 2:3-4 NASB (3) This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all. (4) For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.**

This letter was lost and has never been found. The result of this stern letter was the repentance of the majority of believers in the Corinthian church. Paul knew, however, that this battle with the false teachers was not finished.

The general repentance of the congregation had likely only driven their poisonous stream underground. There, some bided their time, hoping to rekindle the rebellion against Paul.

To root out the rebellion, Paul endeavored to expose the remaining pockets of resistance at Corinth by writing the contents of these last four chapters and by personally visiting Corinth several months later.

He realized that as long as his opponents remained in Corinth, peace and harmony would vanish and division would flourish. The apostle is in a battle for the minds of these people and he is determined to win it. The church needed to make sure that the false teachers did not regain a foothold again.

They were battling for the minds of the people and Paul was battling back. They needed to know that the apostle intended to personally confront any who had not repented. He was going to deal with those who were attacking him and teaching false doctrine.

## I. THE APPROACH IN THE FACE OF ACCUSATIONS— 2 Corinthians 10:1

### 2 Corinthians 10:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

In his battle for the minds of the Corinthians, Paul begins this section with an appeal before he launches any kind of firm assault and confrontation with his attackers. A good soldier takes no pleasure in using deadly force, and does so only with great reluctance. Paul was no different. He was not one who was quick to get into *arguments* or *confrontation*, and neither should we be this way.

**Let me pull over and park for a second here. Do you find yourself constantly arguing with people?** Some folks love to do this. They love the *rush or the thrill of debating, fighting, or arguing*. They are also battling for the minds of people. Many times they want *influence* or *control* over people and feel threatened by any opposing viewpoint. Unfortunately, these arguments *create stress, damage to your health, damage to your relationships with others, and strain the atmosphere of your home, church, work, or school*.

Solomon did not pull any punches when it came to the issue of arguing and striving with people. People who struggle with constant *strife* and *arguing*, whether it is a *husband, wife, mother, father, teenager, boss, employee, student, teacher, or a preacher*, reveal that they are struggling with sin problems such as *bitterness, hatred, or pride*.

I understand we are going to get in arguments once in a while with others, especially with family members. The person who is in constant battle mode, however, is revealing there are some problems taking place within his heart. Here is what Solomon said about this issue of constant arguing and the root problems.

### 1. Anger or Bitterness problems

**Proverbs 15:18 NASB** A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.

**Proverbs 29:22 NASB** An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

### 2. Hatred or Scorn

**Proverbs 22:10 NASB** Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, Even strife and dishonor will cease.

### 3. Pride

**Proverbs 28:25 NASB** **An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.**

When it comes to arguing, Solomon tells us to leave it alone if possible.

**Proverbs 17:14 NASB** **The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.**

**Proverbs 20:3 NASB** **Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.**

**2 Corinthians 10:1 (NASB)**

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

Paul begins his battle for the minds of the Corinthians by responding to his critics with gentleness. He said, “**I, Paul, myself urge you.**” This word “**urge**” is from the Greek word *parakaleo* {*par-ak-al-eh'-o*} which means “**to call to your side; to admonish, to beg, to strive to appease, to comfort or strengthen.**” It is a word of a gentle nature. Paul addresses those who are *rebellious* or *insubordinate* in the church with a gentle voice, yet, it will be balanced with firmness as we will see later.

He addresses his critics by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of the Lord Jesus Christ and urged them to end their rebellious spirit and be reconciled to the truth of the Gospel. The apostle demonstrated the same *patience* and *compassion* that the Lord had shown him. Christ was *meek* and *gentle* in handling the *insults, attacks, rumors, lies, wrong, and evil done to Him*. Paul was saying that Jesus Christ was his example in dealing with people. This is the reason he was *meek* and *gentle* when *preaching* and *confronting* people face to face.

This word “**meekness**” is from the word *praotes* {*prah-ot'-ace*} which is a “**humble, mild, gentle attitude that results in the patient endurance of offenses.**” The person with meekness is not struggling with any *anger, hatred, bitterness, or thirst for revenge*. **Meekness is not weakness or being a sissy.** Quite the contrary, it is *power* or *strength* that is under control. You could say that it is gentle firmness.

The apostle knew the accusations of his critics. They were claiming he was hypocritical by being base in their presence, but being bold and talking tough when he was absent from them. The word “**meek**” is from the Greek word *tapeinos* {*ta-pi-nos*}. It is translated, “**meek, humble, timid, or cowardly.**”

The enemies of the Apostle Paul put a negative **spin on his compassion, scornfully condemning it as cowardly weakness**. They accused Paul of being *meek, timid, or cowardly* when face to face with them, but bold toward them when absent!

When confronted face to face, his adversaries insinuated that **Paul was a weakling or in today's terminology, he was a sissy**. They were saying that Paul was real bold in his instructions, or he rebuked the church when he was writing to them and not standing eyeball to eyeball, but he was a coward when it came to speaking face to face with them. His detractors were woefully wrong in imagining that he was a cringing little man who could only be bold when he was far away penning his paper bullets.

The Apostle Paul was not *timid* and *humble* because he was a coward, **but because Jesus Christ demonstrated how people are to be handled, even people who are evil and in error**. Our Lord confronted people in *meekness* and *gentleness* when He was battling for their *mind* or *heart*. This is why Paul was **meek and gentle**. If you are having conflicts with people, there may be a time that you have to get firm with them. Before you do this, battle for their heart or mind by trying to be gentle with them. Solomon spoke about this in Proverbs.

**Proverbs 15:1 NASB** A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

**Proverbs 25:15 NASB** By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft tongue breaks the bone.

**Former Boston Red Sox Hall-of-Fame third baseman Wade Boggs applied these principles in Proverbs.** He used to hate going to the **New York Yankee's** baseball stadium. Why? It was not because of the Yankees, for they never gave him that much trouble at all, but because of a fan in the stands. That's right... one baseball fan. The guy had a box seat close to the field, and when the Red Sox were in town, he would torment Boggs by shouting *obscenities* and *insults*. It's hard to imagine one fan getting under a player's skin, but apparently this guy had the recipe.

One day before the game, as Boggs was warming up, the fan began his typical routine, yelling, "Boggs, you stink. You're lousy! Go back to Boston!" Boggs decided he'd had enough. He walked directly over to the man, who was sitting in the stands with his friends, and said, "Hey fella, are you the guy who's always yelling at me?" The man defiantly said, "Yeah, it's me. What are you going to do about it?"

Wade took a new baseball out of his pocket, autographed it, tossed it to the man, and went back to the field to continue his pre-game routine. The man never yelled at Boggs again. In fact, he became one of Wade's biggest fans at Yankee Stadium. A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

We have looked at Paul's approach in the face of accusations. We will now see his avoidance of confrontation.

**Notice verse two.**

## II. THE AVOIDANCE OF CONFRONTATION—[2 Corinthians 10:2](#)

### [2 Corinthians 10:2 \(NASB\)](#)

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

In battling for the minds of others, Paul does not come out with guns blazing. We have seen that his initial efforts began with gentleness. In his desire to avoid confrontation, Paul begged the dissidents to repent of their false accusations and respond to the truth in obedience. If they did, when he was present with them, *he would not need to be* bold with the confidence he had in his apostolic authority.

The word “**bold**” is from the Greek word *tharrheo* {*thar-hreh'-o*} which means “**to be courageous or bold; to be daring or act without fear regardless of any threats or consequences.**” Paul was pleading with the rebels to not put him in a situation that would force him to be *stern, firm, or courageously confront them*.

He was very capable of doing this. These rebels were undermining his authority by accusing him of walking after the flesh. They were *questioning* his motives, *attacking* his credibility, and *accusing* him of self-indulgence in the lustful pursuit of money and sinful desires. **This in turn, was an attack on his message of truth.**

When it came to *defending the truth* or *dealing with corruption in the church*, Paul was a tiger. This man of God would not back away from a fight with those who threatened the church. The souls of men and women and the credibility of the Gospel were at stake. If they would repent of their *rebellion, false teaching* and *accusations*, their judgment would be greatly minimized.

**No parent or pastor wants to have to get *stern* or *firm*** with those who are creating trouble in the home or in the church, but sometimes it is necessary. It is no fun at all. In fact, it is very stressful. You may be faced with a situation like this right now in your life.

Paul shows us by his example, that in *battling* for the *hearts or minds* of people, his first approach is gentle. He gives warning before he gets stern. He gives people the opportunity to change their behavior and make matters right.

Paul was not afraid to confront the wicked. He tries to avoid heated confrontation with his accusers by reasoning with these trouble-makers first. Solomon states this is a wise choice to make. **When it comes to heated confrontations, slow down and try to reason with the person first.**

**Proverbs 14:29 NASB** He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

**Proverbs 29:8 NASB** Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away anger.

**Proverbs 30:33 NASB** For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the nose brings forth blood; So the churning of anger produces strife.

**Proverbs 25:8 NASB** Do not go out hastily to argue your case; Otherwise, what will you do in the end, When your neighbor humiliates you?

**Proverbs 18:6 NASB** A fool's lips bring strife, And his mouth calls for blows.

In the **January, 2006** issue of *Men of Integrity*, **Ben Patterson** shared a story of gentle confrontation in his own life when he did something that was downright stupid. Here is what he stated in this issue: For six summers, **Jim Slevcove** was my supervisor at Forest Home, a Christian conference center in California.

I held a responsible position over junior high and high school kids, but couldn't pass up a chance to play a prank. Like the time I passed off a laxative gum as chewing gum to some coworkers. Word of the rigorous purgative's effect of this laxative got back to Jim.

He asked me to come to his office the next day for "a little chat." I was still a little defiant when Jim called me in. There was a long, awkward silence as he leaned back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. Were those tears in his eyes? Then he whispered "Benny" with tender affection. "Benny" he repeated twice when he got control of his emotions.

My arguments disappeared like the vapor they were. I'd gone way over the line of propriety, not to mention compassion. I owed and paid Jim and my victims an apology. We talked about my *impulsiveness* and *vindictiveness*, the meaning of Christian community, and the responsibilities that go with leadership. Even in saying the hard thing to me, Jim was always gracious. His goal *was not to tear down, but to build up*. This ought to be our goal too as we battle for the minds of people.

In the battle for the minds of people, we have examined so far Paul's *approach* in the face of **accusations**, his *avoidance* of **confrontation**, and now the *arsenal* of the believer.

**Notice verses three and four.**

### III. THE ARSENAL OF THE BELIEVER—[2 Corinthians 10:3-4](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 10:3-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

When you examine the writings of Paul, you will find the analogy of warfare and being soldiers for Christ to describe the life of the Christian.

[2 Timothy 2:3-4 NASB](#) Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (4) No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

[1 Timothy 6:12 NASB](#) Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

[1 Timothy 1:18 NASB](#) This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

[2 Timothy 4:7 NASB](#) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

Paul is right. We are in a war and we face spiritual and sometimes physical battles every day. The battle with *your flesh* and the battle for *your mind* is on-going and never ends. The struggle of **our will vs. God's will** is constant.

This is why we are to put on our spiritual armor that is described in [Ephesians 6: truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer](#). We not only have to battle our own desires and temptations, we also fight against forces of darkness that are *seen* and also *unseen*. Such battles require spiritual weapons.

**When battling** for the minds of people, we are not only to have *courage* and *compassion* we must be **spiritually prepared** for *conflicts* and *struggles*. If Paul's adversaries underestimated his *leadership* or *courage*, they were in for a shock. Paul warned his accusers that he was armed with a spiritual arsenal and was prepared for battle.

Yes, Paul was human and frail like anyone else. He walked in the flesh, but his weapons were not carnal weapons like *knives, clubs, spears, or swords*. His weapons were *spiritual* and *mighty*, powerful enough to pull down the *strongholds, fortresses, or castles of the heart or mind*.



The Corinthians could relate to Paul's use of this word "**fortress.**" Corinth, like most major cities in Greece, had an acropolis which was a fortified section of the elevated part of a city. Located on a mountain near the city, the acropolis was a fortified place into which the inhabitants could retreat when attacked. Every fortified city had strongholds, bulwarks that were particularly impregnable.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,**

**<sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**

Paul uses this word "**fortresses**" as a reference to central arguments that fortify his opponents' message. In spite of these fortresses of false reasoning, Paul's gospel has "**divine power**" to demolish impregnable arguments.

When you are battling for the minds of people, you are confronting a castle that only the Lord can penetrate. If you have ever tried to reason with someone entrenched in rebellion or some sinful habit or lifestyle, you understand what I am saying. It is like the person is blind or has no brain at all. They lose all sense of reason.

You can try to *manipulate, intimidate, aggravate, alienate, collaborate, or accommodate people* to get them to change their minds, but find your efforts are *fruitless, feeble, fruitless, and frustrating.*

*Human reason, worldly wisdom, plans, strategies, organization, skill, eloquence, marketing, religious showmanship, personality, science, technology, education, social programs, appearance, or attractiveness, are all ineffective weapons against the forces of the kingdom of darkness.*

There is nothing wrong with these things, but winning the battle for the minds of people requires powerful weapons such as *prayer, love, faith, dependence on God, patience, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.*

It is the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit that *can penetrate the hearts and minds of people gripped by superstitions and* wickedness that lead to *hate, treachery, and butchery.*

A 2007 article syndicated in the *Agence France-Presse* told of a town in Southwest Nigeria that calls itself "**The Land of Twins.**" Why the odd nickname? The majority of families in that region have at least one set of twins, a phenomenon that baffles fertility experts. The only possible explanation scientists have come up with is the vast amount of yams the people consume in their diet. Yams contain a natural hormone that stimulates the ovaries to produce twins.

However, there is another possible explanation for the name “**The Land of the Twins.**” In pre-colonial times, the people of that region of Nigeria would often kill twins and their mothers. The minds of the people believed twins were an evil omen and that the mother must have been with two men to bear them.

The article follows this startling piece of historical background with this single sentence: “A Scottish missionary is credited with ending this practice.” The rest of the article goes into greater detail about other issues from history and how scientists continue to scratch their heads over the matter. The Scottish missionary is never mentioned again in the article despite the fact that history shows she may have a little more to do with the matter than a pile of yams.

If you do a little digging, you’ll find that the name of the Scottish missionary was **Mary Slessor (1848-1915)**. According to the Christian biography website [www.wholesomewords.com](http://www.wholesomewords.com), **Mary Slessor** was a missionary to the Calabar region in Nigeria. She traveled throughout the many villages along the Calabar River, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the people she encountered.

In these communities, twin babies were indeed cruelly murdered and mothers were driven into the jungles because of supposed immorality. Through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this missionary battled for the minds of the people. She opposed such treacherous practices and saved the lives of countless babies. Her weapons were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Mary Slessor could have easily turned around and gone back home after seeing the horrors of some of these native rituals. She could have reasoned that she would never be able to penetrate such *wicked* and *warped* thinking.

She was just one woman against many people and their darkened beliefs. Seeing beneath the surface, however, she was far more interested in the work of saving babies’ lives, relieving sorrow, and hunting for opportunities to spread the knowledge of the Prince of Peace throughout the blood-drenched villages and hamlets of a region of Nigeria now called “**The Land of Twins.**”

She was willing to battle for the minds and hearts of these people, using the weapons that God has given to all Christians. Never underestimate the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

**Isaiah 55:11 KJV** So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

## IV. THE ALTERCATIONS OF THE BELIEVER—[2 Corinthians 10:5](#)

### [2 Corinthians 10:5 \(NASB\)](#)

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

If you love the Lord, if you have a desire to please and honor Him with your life, then you do understand that *you are in a battle*. *You battle* to keep yourself spiritually in line with God's Word, and *you battle* for the minds of others as you endeavor to reach them for Christ and teach them truth.

Believers who are backslidden or don't care about being dedicated to the Lord have removed themselves from spiritual warfare because they have surrendered to their fleshly desires and have succumbed to *apathy* and *indifference* concerning the plight of the lost. They are right where Satan wants them, on the *sidelines doing nothing, collecting dust, and wasting their lives away*.

Paul gives **two key specifics of the battle for the mind** and what is involved in the altercations of the dedicated believer. He speaks of casting down and capturing thoughts.

### A. Casting Down Imaginations

What is the meaning of this phrase “**destroying speculations?**” The words “**destroying speculations**” are derived from the word *kathaireo* {*kath-ah-ree'-o*} which means “**to pull or throw down; to refute.**” In your battle for the minds of people, you will find that many times you must refute their errors before they will accept the truth. *Imaginations* or *speculations* must be *refuted* or *destroyed*.

In ancient warfare, when strongholds were captured and towers pulled down, the defenders were taken into captivity. Commanders had a good view of the battle field from these high positions. It was from these towers that commanders communicated their defense plans in battle to those fighting on the walls when an enemy was attacking. If the towers could be destroyed, then the defense of the enemy was greatly weakened. **This is why the towers were targeted first.**

In the same manner, if the defenses of men could be destroyed, then their minds could be reached. Like high towers, *imagination* or *speculation* come from the head, the top of the body.

What are “**speculations?**” What is Paul talking about here? This word is from the word *logismos* {*log-is-mos*} which means “**reckonings, conclusions, reasoning, thoughts.**” It is a general word referring to **any** and **all human** or **demonic thoughts, opinions, philosophies, theories, psychologies, perspectives, viewpoints, and religions.**

Beloved, *spiritual warfare is not a battle with demons* as some wrongly conclude. *It is a battle for the minds of people* who are captive to lies that are exalted in opposition to Scripture. Christians who verbally confront demons waste energy and demonstrate ignorance of the real war.

We are not called to *convert demons, but sinners, by tearing down conclusions, thoughts, or reasonings* that are **anti-Christ** and **self-exalting**. Such thoughts are like castles or barriers that men have erected in their minds to resist, and keep out the truth and knowledge of God and His Word. The arsenal of the Almighty is the only thing that is powerful enough to penetrate the walls of man's *unbelief* and *rebellion* and change his attitude and way of thinking about the Lord and sin.

## B. Capturing Thoughts

Paul's goal in battling for the minds of people was to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they were obedient to Christ, they would trust in Him for their salvation. The objective of our warfare is to change how people think, to battle for their mind, taking every thought they have and making it no longer captive to a damning ideology, but captive to the obedience of Christ.

**This is what spiritual warfare is all about.** Reaching men with the truth of the Gospel, seeing them *saved* and *growing* spiritually in Christ.

**Joseph Aldrich** said, "When my wife and I went to Dallas Seminary, we decided we wouldn't live in the 'cemetery' housing. Instead, we lived in the high-class, red-light district. If you want to get an introduction to life itself, that's the place to be. We made a commitment to take one non-Christian person, couple or individual, out to dinner once a week. Did we ever get a liberal education, but what fun we enjoyed! We had people coming to know the Lord right and left in that place, because we simply loved them. We opened our home to them." **Jude described the actions of this couple.**

**Jude 1:23 NASB** **save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.**

The weapon that captivates men's thoughts is *truth, the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God*. It is the weapon of assault in our arsenal and has the power to change the thinking of men, and cause them to turn to Christ for their salvation. This is why it is essential to study it and know it well if we are going to be effective soldiers for Christ and battle for the minds of people.

**Ephesians 6:17 NASB** **And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

**Hebrews 4:12 NASB** **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

**Psalms 119:11 NASB** Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

As you battle for the minds of others, you will find that it is not easy because of the castles that people have erected in their hearts.

**What are the common castles of men's minds today that must be torn down in order to reach them for Christ?**

**What are the barriers of resistance that men, women, teenagers, etc., have erected in order to shut out the Lord and the knowledge of Him and His truth?**

## **The Castles of Men's Resistance toward God**

### **1. The Castle of Intellectualism**

People reject God's truth because they put more faith in that which they can see than what they cannot see. Some embrace science over the Bible, not realizing that the roots of science are found in Scripture.

In fact, those folks gripped by anti-God intellectualism think the Bible is just another book and there is nothing special about it at all. They do not recognize it as *God's Word, its authority, its warnings and commands*. **Intellectualism** causes people to hold to their own philosophies over Scripture. **Intellectualism** creates a high-minded, omnipotent attitude that makes people think they know more than they really do. What they think is wisdom is in essence foolishness.

**Romans 1:22 NASB** Professing to be wise, they became fools,

**Romans 12:16 NASB** Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

**1 Corinthians 1:18-21 NASB** (18) For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." (20) Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

## 2. The Castle of Illogical Ideologies that are False

The fortresses of false ideology are abundant today. The **atheist** believes there is *no God, no Heaven, no Hell, and no judgment*. Thus, he believes he is not accountable to anyone, that death ends it all, and there is no after-life. He believes we evolved and were not created by God and that God has no authority over us.

David, however, described such thinking as foolish.

**Psalms 14:1 NASB** The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.

**Writers H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw** were brilliant men, yet, they rejected the message of Scripture. They placed their trust in their own systems of belief, which were based on human reason. They could not find lasting inner peace, and they slowly lost confidence in what they believed. Wells' final literary work, for example, has been aptly called "**a scream of despair.**"

**Shortly before Shaw died in 1950, he wrote,** "The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels which should have established the millennium have led directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once. In their name, I helped to destroy the faith of millions, and now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith."

As you can see, false ideology needs to be torn down because it stands in the way of the person accepting the truth. There is a Heaven, a Hell, and judgment after death. When you don't have the Lord, you really are alone.

**Hebrews 9:27 NASB** And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

**Revelation 21:8 NASB** "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

## 3. The Castle of Inaccurate Teaching

People have been deceived by false teaching and religions. They sincerely believe that their church, their gods, or their good works will get them to Heaven or that there are many ways to Heaven. The Bible says differently.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**Titus 3:5 NASB** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

**John 14:6 NASB** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

If we could get to Heaven any other way than through the Lord, then there would have been no need for Christ to die on the cross. But it was necessary because only God could meet the requirements of a perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. God cannot die, so He had to put on the robe of humanity, born of a virgin, so that He could pay the price for man's sins on the cross of Calvary. This is what Jesus did for us.

#### **4. The Castle of Irritation or Anger with God**

Barriers of bitterness keep people from turning to the Lord and accepting His truth. They may have suffered a tragedy in their life and blame God for it. They ask, "Why did God do this to me? Why did this happen?" Their claim is, "God doesn't care about me and has done nothing for me." Such conclusions are faulty. The Lord has done a great deal for us all.

**John 3:16 NASB** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**Romans 8:28 NASB** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

#### **5. The Castle of an Independent Attitude**

Many folks reject the Lord because they feel they don't need Him. Their pride causes them to claim, "I'm doing just fine without Him. I don't need anyone's help. I'll live my life my way." Let me say, "Just wait, you will need help and you will need the Lord sooner or later." Why?

An independent attitude leads people to make decisions that get them out on a limb and into trouble because they feel unaccountable to anyone and invincible to the damaging consequences of their sinful lifestyle. Their choices leave them bound in sin.

**1 Corinthians 10:12 NASB (12)** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

An independent attitude also makes people **unteachable** and **unreachable**. "Leave me alone," is their motto. The Bible makes it clear, however, that when you shut the Lord out of your life, it will end in destruction. We are nothing without Him.



**Proverbs 14:12 NASB** There is a way which seems right to a man,  
But its end is the way of death.

**John 15:5 NASB** "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides  
in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can  
do nothing.

## 6. The Castles of Indifference or Apathy

People will also *reject God's truth* because they just **don't care** about their *soul* or *eternity*. They are living for what is going on now. They may have heard the Gospel many times, but rejected it. The "*I've heard this before*" syndrome grips their mind. When they watch the lives of people who claim to be Christians, they may have noted *inconsistency* or *hypocrisy* and concluded that all Christians are fakes. Their heart becomes *hard* or *indifferent*.

God's response to man's **indifference** and **apathy** is to beware of a hard heart and delaying your decision for Christ. Men are sinners and are imperfect, but Christ is not. He is our only hope for salvation.

**Hebrews 3:15 NASB** while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS  
VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY  
PROVOKED ME."

## 7. The Castle of Indolence or Presumption

The *indolence* or *presumption* of men causes them to put off the matter of being saved. They believe they have plenty of time for spiritual decisions. God, however, warns us about the *brevity* and *unexpected* surprises of life.

**Proverbs 27:1 NASB** Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not  
know what a day may bring forth.

**James 4:14 NASB** Yet you do not know what your life will be like  
tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and  
then vanishes away.

The Bible stresses the importance of obeying God today and not delaying your decision for Christ.

**2 Corinthians 6:2 NASB** for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE  
TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION  
I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,"  
behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--

Much sooner than you can anticipate, you will be the silent guest at your own funeral. No doubt there will be relatives and friends present to mourn for you whom you haven't seen in years.



After the preacher delivers a message in your memory, you will be taken to the graveyard, given a final farewell and buried. The retirement that you spent your life working for will be gone forever.

Remember the new car that you worried about scratching? Its new owner just wrecked it! The newlyweds bought your house and have redecorated the room that you had at last decorated to your liking.

Your personal belongings have been sorted and some discarded. The dog is making a bed out of your favorite old coat. Other clothes of yours that no one could wear or did not want have been boxed and given to Goodwill or the Salvation Army. Your personal treasures that were valuable only to you, the carefully preserved flower, the lock of hair, the torn picture, the stained postcard, all have been burned as trash.

You attended a number of funerals in your lifetime, but for some reason you just never expected to be lying in the casket yourself. Sure, someday, but not that particular day. **“Maybe tomorrow,”** you always thought, **“but not today.”** You remember telling the Lord each time you thought your time was close, **“Not this time, Lord. Not today. Maybe tomorrow.”**

Sooner or later, everyone runs out of time but no one runs out of eternity. Doesn't it make more sense to spend your time preparing for that which will not end, rather than squandering your time trying to hold on to that which will not last? Anyone with any brains can figure this one out.

## **8. The Castle of Infatuation for Iniquity**

Another reason why people will not turn to Christ is because they love their sin too much. They are slaves to their lust.

**John 3:19 NASB** "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

**Romans 2:8 NASB** but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

**Jeremiah 14:10 NASB** Thus says the LORD to this people, "Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account."

G.H. Charnley, in *The Skylar's Bargain*, tells the story of a young skylark who discovered one day a man who would give him worms for a feather. He made a deal—one feather for two worms. The next day the lark was flying high in the sky with his father. The older bird said, "You know, son, we skylarks should be the happiest of all birds. See our brave wings! They lift us high in the air, nearer and nearer to God."

But the young bird did not hear, for all he saw was an old man with worms. Down he flew, plucked two feathers from his wings and had a feast of worms. Day after day this went on. Autumn came and it was time to fly south, but the young skylark couldn't do it. He had **exchanged the power** of his young *wings* for *worms*.

Beloved, that is our constant temptation in life, to *exchange wings for worms*, to *exchange our walk with God for wickedness*, our *closeness* with Him for *carnality* and *corruption*.

If you are in bondage or addicted to a sinful habit or lifestyle, realize that Jesus Christ can break the shackles of your sin if you will put your faith in Him.

**Galatians 5:1 NASB** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

**2 Corinthians 3:17 NASB (17)** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

**Romans 6:14 NASB** For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

**Romans 6:18 NASB** and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

## 9. The Castle of Insincerity or Self-Righteousness

Some folks claim, "There is nothing wrong with me. I am as good as everyone else. I'll get to Heaven my own way." These folks truly believe they are good enough for Heaven. These were the sentiments of the Pharisee who felt he was better than others.

**Luke 18:11 NASB** "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'

God's assessment of our righteousness is it is not good enough. This is why we need Jesus Christ to cleanse us.

**Matthew 7:22-23 NASB** "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

**Isaiah 64:6 NASB** For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

**Romans 3:11-12 NASB** THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; (12) ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

We cannot clean up ourselves, but the Lord can. He alone can cleanse us from all our filth.

**1 John 1:7 NASB** but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**1 John 1:9 NASB** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent with a home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning she decided to run away, breaking her mother's heart.

Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, Maria hurriedly packed to go and find her. On her way to the bus stop, she entered a drugstore to get one last thing.... pictures. She sat in a photo booth and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of pictures, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro.

Maria knew her daughter had no way of earning money. She was also too stubborn to give up. **When pride meets hunger, people will do the unthinkable to survive.** Knowing this, Maria began her search for her daughter in *bars, hotels, night clubs, and any place with a reputation for prostitutes*. Each place she checked, she secured her picture on hotel bulletin boards, bathroom mirrors, and in phone booths. Each picture had a note written on the back.

It was not long and Maria's money ran out. She had to stop her search for her daughter and return home. She wept as the bus headed back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the stairs of a hotel. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes were darkened by pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream of city life was a nightmare. A thousand times over she longed to trade her countless beds with lustful men for her secure pallet in her village home which seemed so far away now.

As Christina reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. There on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Her eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the lobby to remove the picture. Written on the back was a compelling invitation, "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home." She did. Beloved, the Lord wants you to come home to Him just as you are.

## 10. The Castle of the Importance of the Trivial

Another reason why men will not listen to the Lord is the fact they are too busy and are focused on earthly matters. They just don't have time for God.

**Mark 4:18-19 NASB** "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, (19) but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

**Luke 14:15-20 NASB** When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (16) But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; (17) and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' (18) "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' (19) "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' (20) "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

**Luke 12:17-21 NASB** "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' (18) "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" (20) "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' (21) "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Beloved, the most important matter in your life is the salvation of your soul. Put your faith in Christ today. It is your only hope for Heaven.

**John 3:18 NASB** "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

## 11. The Castle Of Insubordination or Defiance toward God

People also will not listen or obey the Lord because they are defiant and rebellious. Their attitude is the same as the Pharaoh of Egypt.

**Exodus 5:2 NASB** But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

**Job 21:15 NASB** 'Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?'

**Psalms 10:4 NASB** The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

**Psalms 12:3-4 NASB** May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaks great things; (4) Who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

Even in the Tribulation period, men will not submit to the Lord in spite of His judgment. They would rather die than yield to the Lord.

**Revelation 6:15-17 NASB (15)** Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; **(16)** and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; **(17)** for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (NASB)**

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

The Latin root, of the word “**authority**” and “**authentic**” means “**that which allows growth and life.**” Godly authority enables us to grow spiritually. When we are honest and authentic with God, we grow in the Lord. Our *resentment* or *rebellion* toward God’s authority is foolish.

Mary was not the first mother to worry about her children, and she definitely wasn’t the last. Back in the sixties a young man named Tim Lee was growing up in a Christian family. As a matter of fact, his father was a preacher. When Tim became a teenager, he began to *rebel* against the *restrictions* his mother and father put on him.

Finally, Tim Lee became so fed up with his home life he ran off and joined the Marines. They trained him and shipped him off to an Asian country called Vietnam.

Imagine how his mother felt. She loved her son and had nurtured his faith when he was young. If she put restrictions on him, it was because she wanted to direct his life in God's ways. But he had *rebelled, rejected* the faith and ran away from the Lord. Now he was at war. Where were God's promises?

Some of her worst fears soon came to pass. Three months before he would have returned home, Tim was leading his men through a mine-field. He made one false step and the mine exploded. When he regained consciousness, a buddy was cradling him in his arms and praying for him.

Both of Tim's legs were blown off. Tim uttered the most sincere prayer of his life, "God, if you'll just let me live, I promise I'll serve you." Tim Lee survived, and he kept his promise. In answer to his mother's prayers he became a preacher, and has led hundreds of revivals across the United States and other countries.

Beloved, like Tim, if you are *rebellious* or *defiant* against God, you too, are walking through a mine field that will eventually scar your life. Stop running from the Lord and turn to Him today. Let the Lord win the battle for your mind.

**Romans 12:1-2 NASB** Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

## V. THE ACCOUNTING OF THE DISOBEDIENT—[2 Corinthians 10:6](#)

### [2 Corinthians 10:6 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Paul was prepared to take firm measures when he arrived at Corinth. The apostle was ready to punish those who were disobedient, after all the folks who wanted to obey the Lord and get their lives right with God had made their decisions.

The competent soldier understands the crucial importance of timing. Rather than fire blindly and risk killing friendly troops, he waits until the enemy is clearly in sight. Paul had the *patience, courage, and the competence* to punish all disobedience at Corinth. He would not allow the purveyors of error to destroy the church, but he also had the patience to wait until the church's obedience was complete. He was giving sinners time to repent.

Paul would not unleash his apostolic power on anyone until each person had made his choice. That way, it would be clear who *accepted the truth* and *who rejected it*. The apostle does not want to discipline the rebels alone, because he knows that church discipline is most effective when the entire church willingly participates.

Those who obeyed the Lord would receive compassion, but those who were defiant would find him to be a *courageous* and highly *competent* opponent. Paul's example in battling for the minds of others teaches us we should have *gentleness, compassion, concern, firmness, wisdom, and reliance upon the Lord and His Word.*

## Chapter 22. The Cauldron of Condemnation

### 2 Corinthians 10:7-18 (NASB)

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

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

<sup>9</sup> for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>17</sup> But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.

<sup>18</sup> For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

It is no fun at all to be *roasted* or *condemned* by other people. You may be doing the best that you can in your job, school, or in your family, but for some reason, it is not good enough. Face it you are always going to have people that you can never please because they are addicted to finding faults in you or others, even when there is nothing wrong with what you are doing.

Their dessert is having people for lunch that have been boiled like stew in their *cauldron* or *cooking* kettle of *condemnation*. Like a hungry man, hunched over his cooking cauldron, rubbing his hands together, wiping the drool from his lips, eyeing and smelling the stew as it boils, some folks eyeball every *fault* or *sign* of weakness you may have with the same *intensity* and *enthusiasm*.



Paul had to deal with being *cooked* in the *cauldron of condemnation* in Corinth. In **chapters 1-9**, Paul poured out his heart to the repentant majority, pleading for their continued trust and loyalty. In **chapters 10-13**, he turned his attention to the false teachers lurking in Corinth, directly refuting their attacks on him. The last four chapters of this letter form a powerful defense of Paul's apostleship, and **verses 7-18** are a vital core of his defense.

As we examine these verses, we will look at a godly man as he responds to those who condemn him. These verses will provide insights for us if we find ourselves in the same kind of situation.

## **I. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAUL'S SALVATION— 2 Corinthians 10:7**

### **2 Corinthians 10:7 (NASB)**

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

In his defense, Paul is challenging these believers to look at the obvious facts or appearance. Those folks who were claiming to belong to the Lord needed to recognize the obvious facts that Paul was a dedicated believer. Just as they were confident in their salvation, Paul was confident too.

Isn't it great that we can have confidence in our salvation and know we have eternal life? God's promises give us assurance of our salvation. If the Christian is asked if he knows he is going to Heaven, he does not have to say, "**I hope so. I think so. The odds are with me or maybe.**" Thank God the believer can say, "**I know so.**"

**1 John 5:13 NASB** **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.**

People make their conclusions many times based on the outward appearance of what they are examining. Paul was saying, "Ok, look at my life and you will see I am the real thing." The apostle's testimony proved he was a godly man and the Spirit of God indwelt his life.

His life was the evidence of his defense. A godly man can be recognized by *his* relationship to Jesus Christ, *his* impact on the church, *his* compassion for people, *his* disdain for fleshly methods, *his* integrity, and his humility. The apostle's life was in sharp contrast to the hypocrisy of the false teachers that were boiling him in their cauldrons of condemnation.

Beloved, if you are being boiled in someone's *cauldron of condemnation*, **realize your life, example, or testimony is your best defense in the attacks against you.**

**1 Peter 3:16 NASB** and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

If there are *inconsistencies* and *weaknesses* in your character, then let the *criticism* and *condemnations* of others be a catalyst for getting your life right with God and men so that when Christ returns, you will not be ashamed before Him.

**1 John 2:28 NASB** Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

Let me say here that it is important to not jump to conclusion about others based on *first impressions* or *situations* where you don't have all the facts. Your conclusions may be terribly mistaken.

**Richard Smith** from Kansas shared a story which illustrates this truth. He said: While I conducted my usual Tuesday evening prison ministry, my wife decided to attend a local home sales party. Our 15-year-old daughter, Faith, was at home and later told us about a telephone call she had taken from one of our church members. It went like this: "Hello, is your father home?" "No, he's in jail," Faith said. "Well, then, is your mother home?" "No, she's at a party."

Based on this information, the church member could have concluded, "The pastor is in jail and his wife doesn't care. She is goofing-off at a party while he rots in jail!"

Fortunately, the church member did not make that mistake. Many people, however, have made terrible conclusions based on information like this. Beloved, be careful. If you have a *cauldron of condemnation* that is being heated up for someone, it can end up *cooking you* because you don't have all the facts.

## II. THE AIM OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLE—

### [2 Corinthians 10:8](#)

#### **2 Corinthians 10:8 (NASB)**

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

The apostle was being condemned for making a big deal about his apostolic authority given to him by the Lord. Paul, however, was not ashamed of his authority given to him by God or the way he used it, because it was for the purpose of building up believers, and that is what he did with it.

He did not use his authority to tear them down. He was not anything like the false apostles that were *abusive, harsh, and destructive* in the way they treated other people.

False teachers bring *discord, division, disunity, and destruction* into a church. Paul, on the other hand, used his authority to reach people for Christ, *establish churches, train leaders, and disciple the converts*. The result was spiritual growth in the churches.

Anyone in authority should take note of this verse, whether you are in *business, church, government, or the home*. Some people today do not know how to handle their authority and become abusive with it. The power of their position goes to their head as they try to control the lives of those folks under their authority or exert their power.

If you are a pastor, your job is NOT to control your people. They don't have to check in with you about every little decision they make in their personal lives. If you think they do, then you have a warped view of your authority.

Yes, you are the pastor and are to lead the ministry of the church. This does not mean you own the folks in the church. They belong to the Lord. He owns them. Let the Lord work in their lives and lead them. **Your people are to be God-dependent people, not pastor-dependent people.**

Train them to go to the Lord with their needs and problems and seek solutions from Him. They are accountable to the Lord and will stand before Him one day when they are judged, not you. Peter addressed this issue of “**pastoral authority**” stating that we are not to be “**lording it over**” God's heritage.

**1 Peter 5:2-3 NASB** shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

The phrase “**lording it over**” is from the word *katakurieuo* {*kat-ak-oo-ree-yoo'-o*} which means “**to subdue, master, hold into subjection, to bring under one's power.**” This is a “**no-no**” for a pastor.

Brethren, it is our responsibility, especially as pastors, to *teach* and *preach* what the Bible says, not to *intimidate* or *manipulate* people by fads that have no scriptural backing at all, or put them on “**guilt trips**” because they won't do what we want. Intimidation is a terrible method of leadership.

People that are intimidated into service may take a position of service, but their heart is not in it, and eventually they create division by their *gripping* and *complaining*. You would be much better off not having someone like this in a position of responsibility. Shepherds gently lead their sheep instead of driving them like a bunch of cattle on a Texas prairie.

**General Eisenhower** used to demonstrate the art of leadership with a simple piece of string. He'd put it on a table and say: “Pull it and it'll follow wherever you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all.”

We are to build up those under our authority by our example. **Let me ask, “How do you use your authority? Do you build up people or tear them down?”** As a husband, do you build up your wife or tear her down by constantly criticizing her? Parents, do you encourage your kids or do you spend all your time griping at them because they did not achieve your goals for them?

Challenging your kids is great, but don't break their spirit by expectations that are so high they can never achieve them. Give them reachable goals and when they reach them, praise them. Challenge them to do their best. If they are *lazy, sloppy, or disobedient*, then definitely correct them. Use your authority as parents wisely. If you are a child, respect the authority of your parents. If you honor and respect their authority, things will go well for you. That is God's promise.

**Ephesians 6:2-3 NASB HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), (3) SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.**

On the other hand, when you rebel against your parent's authority, God says you are a fool, you are evil, you will reap cruelty in your own life, and your actions will lead to your death.

**Proverbs 15:5 NASB A fool rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards reproof is sensible.**

**Proverbs 17:11 NASB A rebellious man seeks only evil, So a cruel messenger will be sent against him.**

**Proverbs 30:17 NASB The eye that mocks a father And scorns a mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.**

### III. THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PAUL—[2 Corinthians 10:9-10](#)

**2 Corinthians 10:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup>For I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

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

The *cauldron of condemnation* for Paul was *hot* and *personal*. It is not easy when people launch personal attacks against you that are *unfounded, untrue, or unchangeable*. He was condemned for trying to terrify and intimidate the Corinthian believers into *obeying* and *submitting* to him, no doubt, because of the stern letter he wrote to the church.

These very accusations were the traits of false teachers themselves. Yet, they had the gall to condemn him. Paul assured these people that he was not trying to scare them, but bring them to repentance so they could enjoy the full blessings that God had for them.

Paul's critics did not stop with his letters, but shot their *arrows* of *arrogance* at his *abilities* and *appearance*. The apostle was considered weak and without backbone. He was being accused of hypocrisy by scolding the believers in his letters but being a sissy when he was face-to-face with them.

They were critical of his *appearance* and *speaking abilities* too. They felt that Paul lacked *charm* and *charisma* to be a good leader and command respect. His speaking was considered contemptible which means he *lacked polished, oratorical skills* which were highly prized in the Greek culture.

These folks were comparing him to other preachers they had heard and felt that others were more powerful speakers. They mistakenly believed that "**speaking ability**" is the prerequisite to being a good leader. Let me say, there is more to being a good leader than just his speaking ability.

Paul's bodily presence was considered *weak, without strength, or feeble*. It may well be that they were right about Paul's appearance. A description of Paul's personal appearance has come down to us from a very early book called *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which dates back to about **A.D. 200**.

His description is so unflattering that it may well be true. It describes Paul as "a man of little stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows meeting together, and with a nose somewhat hooked. He was full of grace, for sometimes he appeared like a man and sometimes he had the face of an angel."

Paul may have not been *handsome, glamorous, a mighty orator, or Mr. Personality*, but God used him in a powerful way. Why? The Spirit of God that **controlled** and **filled** this man was *glamorous, mighty, and powerful*. God can do powerful things with any person yielded to Him, no matter how big or small he may be.

**William Wilberforce** was responsible for the freedom of the slaves in the British Empire. He was **so small** and **so frail** that it seemed that even a strong wind might knock him down. But once Boswell heard him speak in public and afterwards said, "I saw what seemed to me a shrimp mount upon the table, but, as I listened, he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale."

The focus of Paul's life was to glorify God, not himself. If that is your goal, the Lord will use you too, as you yield yourself to Him. The apostle was *condemned* and *criticized*. We don't remember his critics, but we do remember him because he put the Lord first in his life. If you are in a *cauldron of condemnation*, then follow his example and put the Lord first. He will take care of those who are condemning you.

**Matthew 6:33 NASB** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

About to graduate from high school, a young man from a wealthy family was anticipating his gift. It was the custom in that affluent neighborhood for the parents to give the graduate a new car. Jason and his father had spent months looking at cars, and the week before graduation they found the perfect car. Jason was certain that this car would be his on graduation night.

Imagine his disappointment when, immediately following the graduation ceremony, Jason's father handed him a small, elegantly wrapped package. "It must be the keys to my new car," Jason thought. Upon opening the gift, though, all he found was a Bible with his name imprinted on the front. A Bible? He took it out, looking to find car keys in the box. Empty!

Jason was so angry that he threw the Bible down and stormed out of the house. His father tried to stop him, but Jason kept on running. He and his father never saw each other again. News of his father's death finally brought Jason home again.

As he went through the possessions he was about to inherit from his dad, he came across the graduation Bible. Brushing away the dust, he opened it and began idly flipping through the pages. A paper tucked inside caught his eye and he pulled out of the Bible a cashier's check, dated the day of his graduation, in the exact amount of the car he and his father had chosen.

His father had supplied his need, yet, he was not patient enough to receive it. His values were distorted as he was offended by the gift of the Bible. He had not learned to seek God's kingdom first.

**Does this describe you?** Are material things more important than spiritual matters in your life? Do you find yourself impatient with the Lord? If you are facing the cauldron of condemnation, give God time to change your situation or your critics. He may have already solved your problem and you don't even realize it.

#### **IV. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE APOSTLE—[2 Corinthians 10:11](#)**

##### **[2 Corinthians 10:11 \(NASB\)](#)**

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

Paul was being condemned as a fake. His response was an argument for authenticity. He said, "What we are when we are away from you, we are the same when we are face-to-face." **The charge of inconsistency is met firmly with the answer of "consistency."** Paul's integrity was impeccable, unlike the lifestyle's of his accusers.

If you are being boiled in the *cauldron of condemnation*, your *integrity* and *authenticity* will serve as a powerful defense for you. These two traits are jewels in the character of a man or woman. They are valuable like diamonds. Jesus was *authentic* and had *integrity*. He could preach against sin because He knew no sin.

He was sinlessly perfect, yet, He knew what it was to be tempted. He understands what we face because He faced it too, without surrendering any of His virtue.

**Hebrews 4:15 NASB** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

We know that authenticity is important to the Lord because He noted those who did not have it. Paul firmly denounced those **who were not *genuine* or *authentic*.**

**Matthew 15:7-9 NASB** "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: (8) 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. (9) 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

**2 Timothy 3:5 NASB** holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

**Titus 1:16 NASB** They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

**Are you real or fake, genuine or counterfeit? Is your behavior at church different from your behavior at work or home?**

Beloved, God wants us to be genuine and authentic believers wherever we go. A guy named **Harry Hein** put it this way, **“Be who you is, cause if you ain’t who you is, then you is who you ain’t.”**

Beloved, love for Christ will develop authenticity in your life and help defend you against the **cauldrons of condemnation.**

**Mark 12:30 NASB** AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

**Let me ask, “Do you have integrity with God and with men? Do you keep your promises to God and your promises to men?”**

This kind of behavior will go a long way in protecting you from the condemnations of other people. In his book *Lessons from a Father to His Sons*, **Senator John Ashcroft** writes: Until 1997, Michael Jordan, indisputably the leading player in the NBA for over a decade, was never the highest paid player. When asked why he did not do what so many other players do—hold out on their contracts until they get more money—Michael replied, “I have always honored my word. I went for security. I had six-year contracts, and I always honored them. People said I was underpaid, but when I signed on the dotted line, I gave my word.”



Three years later, after several highly visible players reneged on their contracts, a reporter asked Michael once again about being underpaid, and he explained that if his kids saw their dad breaking a promise, how could he continue training them to keep their word?

By not asking for a contract renegotiation, Michael Jordan spoke volumes to his children. He told them, “You stand by your word, even when that might go against you.” Michael Jordan’s silence became a roar. His integrity has continued to bless his life as companies want him to advertise their products. He has a good reputation with people.

## V. THE ANALOGIES AND ASSESSMENTS THAT ARE FOOLISH— [2 Corinthians 10:12](#)

### [2 Corinthians 10:12 \(NASB\)](#)

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

A woman was sitting in the waiting room for her first appointment with a new dentist. She noticed his DDS diploma, which bore his full name. Suddenly, she remembered that a tall, handsome, dark-haired boy with the same name had been in her high school class many years ago. She wondered, “Could this be the same guy I had a crush on way back then?”

She quickly discarded any such thought when she met the old-looking, balding, gray-haired man with the deeply lined face. “He’s way too old to have been my classmate,” she thought to herself. Still, after he examined her teeth, she asked, “Did you happen to attend Morgan Park High School?” “Yes! I’m a Mustang,” he gleamed with pride. “When did you graduate?” she asked. “1959,” he replied. “Why do you ask?” “You were in my class!” she exclaimed. “Really?” he said, looking at her closely. “What subject did you teach?” Ouch!

Beloved, when you start comparing yourself with others, you may end up with pie on your face if you are not careful. Your opinions of yourself and of others may be shaken when you learn of their opinions of you. This is what happened to the woman in the dentist’s chair.

Paul gives vital instruction in this verse about *analogies* and *assessments*. The critics of Paul were boiling him in their *cauldrons of condemnation*. They were basing their denunciations on their own standards of what they thought was great and what was lousy.

These counterfeit apostles attempted to make themselves appear more important and authoritative than the apostle Paul by tearing him to pieces and cooking him in their *cauldrons of condemnation*. They established their own personal standards for greatness, met them, and then proudly proclaimed their superiority. Look how great we are!



Their assessment of greatness was based on personality *instead* of the power of God, on charisma instead of Christ-likeness, on appearance *instead* of availability to the Lord, on oratorical skills and abilities *instead* of obedience to the Word of God.

The problem with their *analogies* and *assessments* was their standard of measurement. It was *faulty, flimsy, and foolish* because it was based on their guidelines and achievements instead of God's. They were based on the actions and behavior of people who were just as corrupt as they were.

Paul criticized the false teachers who were trying to prove their goodness by comparing themselves with others rather than with God's standards. The apostle labeled this kind of thinking as *foolish, ignorant, and lacking wisdom*.

When we compare ourselves with others, we may feel pride because we think we're better. This kind of *self-centeredness* and *self-satisfaction* leads to *self-deception*. We suffer from the "*Pulled Wool over the Eyes*" syndrome.

When people compare themselves to others, many times they *rationalize* their wrongs, and *magnify* what they think are great accomplishments which are really not that great at all. These folks conclude, "I am just as good, or better, than anyone else, so I don't have to correct any faults in my life. I don't have to get anything right with God or right with other people." The Pharisee did this, not realizing his attitude would lead to *failure, humiliation, and a loss of God's blessings*. Notice [Luke 18](#).

**Luke 18:11-14 NASB** "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. (12) 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' (13) "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (14) "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

A man may think he is a great golfer until he compares himself to someone like Tiger Woods. Why? The standard of measurement was changed to a much higher standard. When we measure ourselves against God's standards, **it becomes obvious that we have no basis for *pride* or *bragging***. We fall short of His perfection.

Beloved, don't worry about other people's accomplishments. Why is that really important? Who cares what your neighbor owns? Who cares if you are dating the most popular boy or girl in the college?

In church work, is it really important to have the biggest church in town? Does having the biggest church in town make you a better preacher or more Christ-like than a pastor who has a smaller church? Does it make you closer to God?

I can tell you right now, “No, it doesn’t!” Getting caught up in the numbers game and comparing your self or your ministry with other preachers or churches is not wise. It is foolish!

In fact, I have noticed that the tendency of people, including preachers, is to almost worship men instead of the Lord and to place the words or teachings of these preachers above the Word of God if their teachings are unscriptural. Some of these well-known men are wonderful Christians, but some of them preach things that are not in line with the Bible. I have a major problem with this.

Instead of worrying about how big your ministry is, why not continually evaluate yourself and ask, “How does my life measure up to what God wants for me? How does my life compare to the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I obeying the will of God for my life and living the way the Lord wants me to live? Am I doing my best for Jesus Christ? What kind of relationship do I have with the Lord? Am I close to Him? Am I a godly example to my church and my family?”

**Now these things are important! Get your priorities right and keep them right! Do your best for the Lord and He will take care of your ministry.**

Before we get off this verse, have you ever wondered why people compare their accomplishments with others? In the business world, some compare themselves because *they want* to be the best they can be for their company. *They want* to succeed and do their very best. *They may* be working for financial rewards in order to care for their families. There is nothing wrong with that as long as the Lord is not left out of your efforts and life. Go ahead and do your best and give God the glory for what you accomplish. Working hard is a good testimony for Jesus Christ.

Some folks, however, get in “**comparison mode**” because they are insecure and feel if they do better than someone else they will be more important than others, they will have more *power* or *prestige*, or they will be happier. Unfortunately, those folks are in for a rude awakening.

Achievements are fine, but the enjoyment you may receive from them doesn’t last long for they are not the *source of stability, strength, and serenity*. These things are found in a close walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the most successful achievers in the world are miserable and empty inside. Yet, some of the poorest people in the world are content with what God has given them and they have the joy of the Lord. They have learned the same lessons as Paul.

**Philippians 4:11 NASB Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**

## VI. THE APOSTLE'S ATTITUDE ABOUT BOASTING— 2 Corinthians 10:13-18

### 2 Corinthians 10:13-18 (NASB)

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

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

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

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

<sup>17</sup> But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.

<sup>18</sup> For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

The false teachers boasted about *themselves, their abilities, and their accomplishments*. Paul, however, refused to say anything about himself or his ministry that was not true or accurate. He said he would not boast about matters outside the limits, sphere, or measure of his ministry.

By the word “**measure**” mentioned here, it seems as if the apostle meant the commission he received from God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. It was a measure or district that extended through all Asia Minor and Greece, down to Achaia, where Corinth was situated.

The apostle tells them they must remember that he came to them first. He was the first one to bring the gospel to them, and he had traveled a long way from home to do that. He tells them that his method was not to come and be a pastor of a church. He had been called to be a missionary. After he would begin a work, he would travel on to another place. He was always moving out to the frontier. He never built on another man's foundation.

Paul was not trying to “**out-do**” his critics or inflate his labors beyond what was reality. The apostle was content with what God had done in him and through him. **His focus** was upon the *quality* and *excellence* of his ministry, not its size. **His desire** was to ground his converts in the Word of God and help them to be mature in Christ. By doing this, he could continue to go to other places far beyond Corinth and preach the Gospel to others who had never heard it. No one could accuse him of taking credit for another man's work.

He closes by telling them if you want *to boast* about anything, *boast* about the Lord. God's men are not to be going around *promoting* or *exalting* themselves. They are not to be taking *credit* or *glory* for what God has done or glory from the Lord in any way. God's men are not to be *proud, cocky, and on power trips*. They are to be servants of Christ that seek to honor and exalt Him and not themselves.

When we look at Paul, we find that he purposed to not take credit for (boast in) what others had accomplished in their service for Christ. He could not even boast about what he had accomplished since it was God who was at work through him. We too, should have the same attitude. Our attitude about boasting is to focus our praise on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Psalms 20:7 NASB** Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.

**Psalms 34:2 NASB** My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble will hear it and rejoice.

**Psalms 44:8 NASB** In God we have boasted all day long, And we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah.

**Jeremiah 9:23-24 NASB** Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; (24) but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

Patting yourself on the back does not count for much. The most important thing is that the Lord commends you. **It is His "Well done" that really matters.** When you are truly seeking God's glory and approval in your life, it will help you to face the cauldrons of condemnation if they come your way. If you are doing what the Lord has truly led you to do, you can look yourself in the mirror and with confidence and peace say, **"Lord, deal with those who are hurting me."**

Relax and yield to the needle of your condemners. If the condemnation is valid, even in a small way, learn from it and make adjustments in your life. That's good! If it is ridiculous, ignore it, lest you lose heart and become discouraged.

If the condemnation is based on *misunderstanding* or *misinformation*, clear up the matter and set the record straight. This is what Paul did.

Back in **1899**, **Teddy Roosevelt** wrote some powerful words of encouragement for those who face the cauldrons of condemnation. **Roosevelt said:**

- 1. It is not the critic who counts.**
- 2. It is not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.**
- 3. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust, sweat, and blood.**
- 4. The credit belongs to the man who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, but who does actually strive to do the deeds.**
- 5. The credit goes to the man who knows the great enthusiasms and the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, and at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails daring greatly.**

Beloved, do your best for the Lord. That's all He asks from us.

## Chapter 23. The Task of Taking Spiritual Responsibility

### 2 Corinthians 11:1-15 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.

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

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

<sup>8</sup> I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you;

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

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

<sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do!*

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

<sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

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

**1 Timothy 4:7-8 NASB** But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

**Acts 24:16 NASB** "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

*You are not* going to grow in the Lord *unless* your relationship with Christ is important to you. *You are not* going to thrive in your spiritual growth *unless* you want to grow, and that is the problem with many Christians. They really are not interested in being inconvenienced for the Lord, sacrificing for Him, and being the best they can be for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian life to them is a play ground *instead* of a battle field where our flesh wrestles with the Spirit of God and we plead for the lost souls of men, women, and children. Church to them is a time of entertainment *instead* of a time of self-examination and exhortation. If a flippant attitude permeates the heart of the believer, then it is for certain, he will not want to take on the task of spiritual responsibility for anybody else.

Beloved, the task of taking spiritual responsibility is how people are reached for Christ. If you are saved, the Christian that was burdened for your soul, in some way communicated to you the Gospel. It may have been a preacher, Sunday school teacher, a missionary, a good friend, a godly parent or grandparent that shared the Gospel with you.

When they did that, they were taking spiritual responsibility for you. They took it upon themselves, with the Lord's help, to try to reach you for Christ. **They did not make excuses and say, "Let someone else do it. I'm too scared to talk about the Lord. I don't know what to say."** No, they went ahead and reached out to you, not knowing how you would respond. They were willing to risk possible rejection from you and others in order to bring you to the Savior. **Spiritually responsible Christians do this.**

People who take on the task of spiritual responsibility are willing *to give sacrificially, be faithful, stand for Christ, face rejection and intimidation, risk being misunderstood, and endure mocking, scorn, and the belittling of others in order to get others saved.* They are willing to take time to help Christians spiritually mature in Christ by sharing with them principles about how to grow in the Lord and walk with God or bring them to people who can teach them these things.

Parents, the most important thing you can do for your kids is try to win them to Christ and bring them with you to church every Sunday where they can learn about the Lord. *They* most likely *will not be faithful in church* if *you are not faithful*. It is tragic today that the Lord is a stranger to many children who have Christian parents who are not faithful and are out of church. These kids are ignorant about the Bible and salvation because their parents are unwilling to take spiritual responsibility for themselves and for the salvation of their kids and their Christian growth. If you don't care, Mom and Dad, it is rare that anyone else will care. God wants us to take on the task of spiritual responsibility for ourselves and for others in spite of the difficulties we might face.

Such was the case with the Apostle Paul. He had taken on the task of spiritual responsibility for the Corinthian believers and was *opposed* and *ostracized* for doing so by people who did not know the Lord at all. In fact, these people claimed to be apostles and preachers of the Word, but they were not at all.

In the eleventh chapter of this letter, we see Paul's response to the opposition, lies, and mockery he faced that were chopping at his credibility and the importance of his message. We find in this section what is involved in the task of taking spiritual responsibility for someone else.

## I. THE PLEA FOR PATIENCE—[2 Corinthians 11:1](#)

### [2 Corinthians 11:1 \(NASB\)](#)

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

The apostle asks these believers to put up with a little more of his foolishness and to endure or bear with him. **What is this all about?** Those who opposed Paul were trying to destroy his credibility. The apostle **had no choice** but to *defend himself, his credentials, his authority, and vindicate his sufferings and success*. **If these were undermined, his message would be undermined.** So Paul says that it was going to be necessary for him to defend himself or to speak foolishly.

The word “**foolishness**” is from the Greek word *aphrosune* {*af-ros-oo'-nay*}. This word can be rendered as “**stupid, senseless, reckless, ignorant, egotistic, or mindless with no purpose.**” Paul is saying that spending time in his defense is senseless because it is not getting out the gospel.

His defense of his ministry might appear as boasting or foolishness, but it served a purpose. He feels he must do it because of the opposition of this critical group in Corinth. This is why he asks them to bear with his foolishness, to suffer him to be foolish so that he can defend his apostleship.

Paul was uncomfortable having to defend himself, but it was necessary. He had taken spiritual responsibility for these folks. If his influence was destroyed, then these folks could be led astray by false teachers and become ineffective for Christ. The point we are making here is the fact that when you take spiritual responsibility, you may need to do things that you may find difficult to do, but they need to be done.

Serving the Lord is not easy sometimes. The path that Christ walked was a difficult one and so is the path of the dedicated Christian. You may encounter *stress, strain, sacrifice, suffering, slander, sadness, and sorrow*. The person who is spiritually responsible may face these types of *obstacles* and *opposition*, but he goes forward for Christ because of his love for the Savior and others. People who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior may think you are a fool because they think spiritual matters are foolish.

**[1 Corinthians 2:14 NASB \(14\)](#) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**



**1 Corinthians 4:13 NASB (13) when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.**

What does Paul mean we are the “scum of the world?” The word “scum” is from the word *perikatharma* {*per-ee-kath 'ar-mah*} which means “garbage or refuse.” It was used to describe the most despicable men. This word also meant the price of redemption. In Greek society, if there was an outbreak of a pestilence or some kind of calamity, the people would offer a worthless criminal, known as the *katharmata* {*kath'-ar-mah*}, as a human sacrifice to their Greek gods.

Let me ask, “Are you willing to be considered garbage by this world in order to take on the task of spiritual responsibility?” If you are willing to pay this price, God will use you and will bless your life beyond your imagination.

Archaeologists digging in the remains of a school for imperial pages in Rome found a picture dating from the third century. It shows a boy standing, his hand raised, worshipping a figure on a cross, a figure that looks like a man with the head of a donkey.

Scrawled in the writing of a young person are the words, “Alexamenos worships his God” Nearby in a second inscription: “Alexamenos is faithful.” Apparently, a young man who was a Christian was being mocked by his schoolmates for his faithful witness, but he was not ashamed. He was faithful, willing to be treated like a fool for the sake of Christ. Are you?

## II. THE PASSION OF PAUL—2 Corinthians 11:2

**2 Corinthians 11:2 (NASB)**

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

Paul states he is jealous for these believers with a godly jealousy. What does this mean? The word “jealousy” is from the Greek word *zeloo* {*dzay-lo'-o*} which means “to burn with zeal in the pursuit of good; to earnestly desire or strive after something.” The word indicates the passion of a person. Paul was very **zealous** and **passionate** about presenting these believers as a chaste virgin to the Lord. He had taken spiritual responsibility for them.

Let me say right here that if you are going to take on the task of spiritual responsibility, you need to have some *passion* and *zeal* for the Lord, for without it, you will soon fizzle out. The fire of God in our heart warms our love for the Savior and His Word.

**Jeremiah 20:9 NASB** But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart it becomes like a

**burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding *it* in,  
And I cannot endure it.**

The **fire of** God in our heart also **fight**s off the **frost** of our sinfulness and the cold shoulders we receive from others.

**Matthew 24:12 NASB** Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

Now what is Paul talking about when he uses these terms “**espoused**” and being presented as a “**chaste virgin to Christ?**” Let me explain. God had jealously guarded His people Israel from the *deceitfulness* of *deceivers* who sought to *draw* their affections away from Himself.

**Hosea 2:19-20 NASB** "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, (20) And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.

Paul felt the same concern for the Corinthians that the Lord had for Israel. His jealousy was in that sense “**godly.**” The apostle pictured himself as the father of a virgin bride. As their spiritual father, he had a personal interest for the welfare of the Christians at Corinth. He guarded them like a father who watches protectively over his daughter before she is given in marriage to her future husband. He spoke of this relationship as a spiritual father in his first letter to the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 4:15 NASB (15)** For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

Paul took responsibility for the spiritual purity of the Corinthian congregation, which he wanted to present to the Lord Jesus Christ. His desire was to keep his daughter, the Corinthian church, pure until she would consummate her marriage to Christ, an event which will take place at the Rapture.

**Ephesians 5:27 NASB** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

**1 John 3:2-3 NASB** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The New Testament often mentions the spiritual relationship of the bride, which is the Church, and the Bridegroom, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. The bride of Christ is the Church which consists of all those folks that have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation.

**Ephesians 5:25-32 NASB** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, (26) so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (28) So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; (29) for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, (30) because we are members of His body. (31) FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. (32) This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

**Revelation 19:7-9 NASB** "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (8) It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) Then he \*said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he \*said to me, "These are true words of God."

Paul explained our relationship with Christ by talking about the *Jewish betrothal* or *engagement period*. In the oriental culture of that day, a betrothal or engagement was equivalent to marriage without sexual consummation. The betrothal period lasted for about one year, during which bride and bridegroom prepared for the wedding ceremony.

From the day of her betrothal, the woman legally was the wife of her future husband but she remained a virgin until the wedding day. In addition, the engagement might not be broken. If this happened, it was considered a divorce. Only death might scripturally end an engagement or betrothal. Unfaithfulness of either party was regarded as adultery and had to be disciplined accordingly.

The bride had to remain a virgin to be presented to her husband. On their wedding day, they would be joined together completely. This custom is the idea behind the word "espoused." It is from the word *harmoza* {har-mod'-zo} which means "to join or fit together."

This word was used to describe a carpenter who fastened beams and planks together to build a house. Like pieces of a puzzle, a husband and wife are to fit together to form a beautiful, complete picture.

As each piece of a puzzle has its own characteristics and features, a husband and wife bring their two different, unique lives together to form a home and family that hopefully will be something beautiful and bring glory to Jesus Christ.

As believers in Christ, our lives perfectly fit together with His life when we are surrendered to Him. Jesus forgives all sinners who will come to Him for cleansing and forgiveness. He accepts us as we are, and under His control, He lives His life through us and uses our characteristics, abilities, and personalities to make something beautiful out of our lives. In **1971, Bill Gaither** put it this way:

*If there ever were dreams, that were lofty and noble  
They were my dreams at the start.  
And hope for life's best, were the hopes that I harbor,  
down deep in my heart*

*But my dreams turned to ashes,  
And my castles all crumbled, my fortune turned to loss  
So I wrapped it all in the rags of life  
And laid it at the cross.*

*Something beautiful, something good  
All my confusion He understood  
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife  
But he made something beautiful of my life.*

The Apostle Paul's passion was to present to Christ, a beautiful, pure church. He exerted himself to keep the church pure from teaching that was contrary to the gospel as he strived to present her to Christ. This is what he meant by the term "**virgin.**" It meant one unaffected by false doctrine. Paul was anxious that the church's love should be for Christ alone, just as a pure virgin saves her love for one man only.

He felt a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthian saints. His desire was that in a coming day, at the Rapture, he could present them to the Lord Jesus, uncorrupted by the false teachings that were prevalent in his time.

At salvation, they pledged their loyalty to Christ, and Paul wanted to make sure they remained faithful. It was because he was thus jealous over them and had a compelling concern that the Church remained pure for her Bridegroom, that he was willing to indulge in what seemed to be folly. He wanted these saints to be a beautiful bride for the Lord.

**Let me ask, "Is the Lord making something beautiful out of your life? Are you yielded to Him and letting Him live His life through you by obeying His Word? Do you have a passion or zeal to serve the Lord and make your life count for Him?"** These are important elements in taking on the task of spiritual responsibility.

**James Guthrie** was a man who had a passion for the doctrinal purity for believers in Scotland. He took on the task of spiritual responsibility at the cost of his life. For many years, the bleached skull of James Guthrie looked down on the crowds at Netherbow Port, horrifying the little boy who sometimes couldn't keep from glancing up at his father's skull. Guthrie's head and hands had been nailed there by Scottish authorities following his execution.

In life, Guthrie had been **unflappable** and **self-possessed**, having a knack for stilling arguments and making peace. He taught philosophy at the University of St. Andrews and preached the gospel in the Scottish town of Stirling. James believed that Christ, not the Scottish king, should rule the church, and for that belief, he was eventually arrested on charges of treason.

At his trial, Guthrie assured the crown that, while he respected its civil authority, he didn't believe the king should control church affairs. For that, he was sentenced to die. On the day of his execution, **June 1, 1661**, he rose about four A.M. for worship, as unflappable as ever. [Psalm 118](#) was on his mind, and when someone asked how he felt, he replied with the words of [verse 24](#): **“Very well. This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”** How could he have peace in the hour of his death? He was standing on the Word of God and had committed his life to the Lord. He was doing what was right.

His five-year-old son was brought to him, and, taking the boy on his knee, he imparted final expressions of fatherly love and counsel (which must have been effective, for young William later became a preacher himself). Guthrie was then hanged and his head affixed on Netherbow Port.

To some, that skull was a reminder of a man who was foolish. To believers who were spiritually responsible, it was a *reminder* and *challenge* to be willing to take a stand for God's truth no matter what the cost. Are you willing to take spiritual responsibility in doing what is right no matter what the cost? What price are you willing to pay to reach others for Christ and help them grow in the Lord?

### III. THE PERTURBATION OVER PERVERSION—

#### [2 Corinthians 11:3](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 11:3 \(NASB\)](#)

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

The person who takes on the task of spiritual responsibility is *concerned, alarmed, fears or has perturbation* about believers being led astray by the perversion of lies and false doctrine. Paul reflects this fear or perturbation in this verse. He was afraid that as Eve was deceived by the craftiness and deception of the serpent, the sincerity and devotion of the Corinthians would be corrupted and they would be led astray.

The critics of Paul were attempting to lead the people astray by their false doctrine and by calling his authority as an apostle into question. The Corinthians' sincere and pure devotion to Christ was being threatened. The apostle did not want the believers to lose their love for the Savior. Paul illustrated the seriousness of this seduction by comparing it with the events that took place in the Garden of Eden when Eve was deceived by the serpent.

Eve illustrates how easily a believer can be deceived and led away from Christ if he is not careful. Satan is a very powerful adversary. Do you remember all the advantages Eve had in the Garden of Eden? Here was a woman who was created in absolute perfection, without a sinful nature at all. She lived in a perfect environment and had fellowship with God Himself. Her life abounded with blessings. In spite of all that God provided for her, it wasn't good enough. Satan, the *Master of Deception*, led her to believe she was missing out on something special and she turned her back on God's promises and warnings.

We are reminded here that spiritual responsibility requires discipline. Keeping the Lord Jesus Christ first in our lives can be very difficult when we have so many distractions threatening to sidetrack our faith or our dedication. We are pulled by so many temptations that the world throws in our path.

If we are not careful, we can become like Eve and feel we are missing out on what life has to offer. Just as Eve lost her focus by listening to the serpent, we too, can lose our focus by letting our lives become overcrowded and confused with materialism, and trivial or fleshly matters. This is why we are challenged repeatedly to stay in the Word and on guard against Satanic temptation.

**Matthew 22:29 NASB** But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.  
**2 Corinthians 2:11 NASB (11)** so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.  
**2 Corinthians 4:4 NASB** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.  
**Ephesians 6:11 NASB** Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Let me ask, "Is there anything that weakens your commitment to keep Jesus Christ first in your life? If so, how can you minimize the distractions that threaten your devotion to Him? Is there someone in your life that is lost or has gotten spiritually sidetracked?" If so, take spiritual responsibility for them and begin to pray that the Lord would grip their heart. This is what the wife of **Ronnie Byers** did.

**Ronnie Byers** had grown up an indulged child. As a teen, he became self-centered and oblivious to the needs of others. He married, fathered two children, bought a nice house, and purchased the most expensive bass boat he could find.

But he soon wanted to flee all of his responsibilities. Telling his wife he no longer loved her or the children, he moved into a motel. There he found a Gideon Bible open on the night stand. Ronnie glared at the book. He hated it, but it tenaciously nipped at him like a dog that wouldn't be shaken. He promptly closed it.

The next day he returned to his motel room to discover the Bible open again. This time he threw it on a lower shelf. The next day it was back by his bed. He buried it under the mattress, but the next afternoon there it was on the night stand. He next hid it in a drawer beneath his underwear, but the next day it was open in its rightful place. The cleaning ladies kept putting it back where it belonged.

While all this was going on, Ronnie's wife had begun meeting with four of her friends at five o'clock each morning to pray for him. "Every time he sees a Bible," they prayed, "may he feel convicted." At length, Ronnie decided to kill himself with the gun he kept in the night stand drawer, but as he reached for the gun, he again spied the Bible. It was open to [Psalm 103:12](#)—"*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*"

Ronnie later said, "God spoke to my heart through that verse, and I repented of my sins." He quickly found his wife and told her what had happened. His home was restored, and Ronnie Byers eventually became a preacher of the very gospel that he had once buried beneath his underwear. God honored the prayers of a loving wife that took spiritual responsibility for her husband.

#### IV. THE PRESUMPTION OF THE CORINTHIANS—

##### [2 Corinthians 11:4](#)

###### [2 Corinthians 11:4 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Paul was concerned about the gullibility of the Corinthian believers. The problem was the people were very trusting in any message. If false teachers would come to them and preach about a *different* Jesus, a *different* spirit than the Holy Spirit, or a *different* way of salvation, they would happily accept whatever anyone would tell them.

The interlopers wanted to give the Corinthians a worldly spirit in place of the Holy Spirit, but a worldly spirit enslaves people and fills their hearts with fear. Such a spirit is *empty of power, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

These believers were in danger of accepting a different gospel. When you take spiritual responsibility, you are concerned about people being led astray by false teaching. Paul dealt with this problem in the letters to the Galatians.



**Galatians 1:8-9 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

**<sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

Because the Bible is God's infallible Word, those who teach anything different from what it says are both *mistaken* and *misleading*. If someone's preaching denies the virgin birth of Jesus, the deity of Christ, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and His return to earth again, they are not talking about Jesus Christ, the Son of God we read about in the Bible.

Is a different gospel being preached today in American churches? Oh my, unfortunately this is going on in thousands of churches. When a church preaches that salvation is found in belonging to the Roman Catholic church, that is a false gospel. When someone preaches that good works get you to Heaven, that is a false gospel. When the message is "baptism is a requirement for salvation," that too, is a false gospel. Salvation is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone!

**What about Jesus?** Are there many unscriptural teachings about Jesus today? Are religions and cults preaching a different Jesus in our time? Yes! You can find an entire smorgasbord of "**Jesus Christ's**" being served to the public on the platters of perversion and deception.

- 1) **The Jehovah Witnesses** state that Jesus is Michael the archangel. He was the first creation of God, he came to earth as a man, and he died on a stake, and arose invisibly as a ghost. The Bible states, however, that He was not created by God in the beginning, for He was God. When He arose, He was visible and was in His glorified body.
- 2) **The Mormons** believe that Jesus was one god in a pantheon of many gods. He is the brother of Satan and both the blood and the cross are considered foolishness. This is why you don't see a cross on a Mormon church. To the Mormons, Jesus was our elder brother who pointed the way to Heaven, but He isn't the Way as the Bible teaches. Mormons also believe that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, but once He took His physical form, He had to justify or earn His own spiritual salvation through His works while in the flesh, just as each of us must. Jesus' death on the cross provides a "**general salvation,**" whereby all of us will be resurrected to be judged for our works and our obedience to the commands of the Mormon church. As you can see, the Mormon Jesus is not the same one that is talked about in the Bible.
- 3) **Catholicism** teaches that the church was built on Peter not Jesus Christ. Our mediators are prayers made to Mary and dead saints, not Jesus Christ. In fact, worship of Mary is encouraged. Idols are abundant in Catholic homes and churches, to which people offer their prayers. This is a violation of the first three commandments of the Ten Commandments ([Ex. 20:3-5](#)). In the Catholic Church, if you want cleansing for your sin, you confess to a priest, not Jesus. Catholics



also teach the Mass and the sacraments are necessary for salvation and that salvation comes only through the Roman Catholic Church. This is unscriptural.

- 4) **Mary Baker Eddy** taught in the Christian Science movement, that Jesus was a pleasant divine idea.
- 5) **Herbert W. Armstrong**, founder of the Worldwide Church of God, says that Jesus was the first man to self-perfect Himself and is now our example of how we can perfect ourselves by membership in Armstrong's church and by giving 30% of your income to them.
- 6) **Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church** say that Jesus was a man who failed, and that Sun Myung Moon is the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- 7) **Unitarians** say that Jesus was a good man but His followers mistakenly deified Him.
- 8) **Maharishi and the Transcendental Meditation movement** say that Jesus was an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anyone.
- 9) **The Bahai** cult says that Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations. They say it does not matter what religion you believe since all religions are basically the same. The Bahai Temple in Evanston, Illinois, is a nine sided building. Each side represents a religion. Big signs on the walls read, "All religions teach the same thing about God."

The Bible makes it clear; however, that Jesus dogmatically is the only way to Heaven. He is the only one qualified to be the mediator between God and man. Men can make all kinds of false claims, but in the end, it will lead to their eternal destruction.

**1 Timothy 2:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus,

**Acts 4:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

**John 14:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

**Proverbs 14:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

*The Pulpit Helps* magazine asked this question, "What is 750,000 miles long, reaches around the earth 30 times, and grows 20 miles longer each day? Answer: The line of people who are without Jesus Christ." The so called "**wisdom**" of men has condemned them to eternal destruction because of their rejection of Christ.

Some men feel secure that their money will earn them merit with God, but they are **sadly mistaken** and **spiritually bankrupt**.

Money can buy a bed **but not** sleep, “**things**” **but not** genuine friends, a toy **but not** a child’s happiness, a pen and paper **but not** an author, a house **but not** a home, an agreement **but not** peace, paint **but not** an artist, a chair **but not** rest, a computer **but not** wisdom, a flag **but not** patriotism, a book **but not** knowledge, a name **but not** a man of character, an altar **but not** salvation, and a cross **but not** a Savior.

Lost in the jungle, a man sought desperately to find his way to safety. His strength was ebbing fast as the insects and stifling heat did their deadly work. Suddenly he heard what he thought to be a bell, tolling in the distance. Believing he was nearing civilization, he struggled bravely onward, but he never seemed to draw closer to the sound. Finally, he fell to the ground exhausted, never to rise again. **The mysterious bellbird had claimed another victim!**

This story is related in detail by **G.B. Robeson**. He says that many a traveler in the heart of the rain forest of Central and South America has been led to his death by the uncanny call of this seldom-seen bird. Its enticing, reverberating “**toll**” produces an almost overpowering temptation to seek its source.

Similarly, Satan employs subtle devices to ensnare the human race. As lost souls seek to disengage themselves from the vines of sin, they are allured by the tempter’s “**bell**” ringing in the distance. “**At last,**” they think, “I’ve found a way of escape,” and so, following the call of false religions deeper and deeper into the jungle of despair, they are eventually lost for eternity.

Multitudes are following the deceptive call of the devil’s “**bellbird**” because it “**seems right**” to them. O that they might realize the truth of these words before it is too late: “The end thereof are the ways of death.” What are you listening to? What do you believe? The spiritually responsible person is grounded in the Word of God.

## **V. PAUL’S PRIORITIES AND PRESENCE OF MIND—** **2 Corinthians 11:5-6**

### **2 Corinthians 11:5-6 (NASB)**

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

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

The Apostle Paul did not consider himself inferior to the “**most**” or “**eminent apostles**.” This reference to “**eminent apostles**” is believed to be referring to the skeptical, phony critics of Paul who claimed to be apostles. They claimed to be “**eminent apostles**” but were far from it and were no better than Paul. They may have been more eloquent speakers, but they spoke lies and were servants of Satan.

This word “**unskilled**” does not mean Paul was rude with people. It comes from the Greek word *idiotes* {*id-ee-o'-tace*} which forms our English word “**idiot.**” It refers to “**an unlearned, unskilled, or illiterate man as opposed to one who was educated.**” This word began by meaning a private individual who took no part in public life. It went on to mean someone with no technical training, what we would call a layman.

**Remember, Paul is being barraged with condemnation and criticism** about his *appearance, character, and speaking abilities*, yet, he remains confident in Christ. He acknowledges he may be *rude* or *unskilled* in his speaking abilities compared to those trained in the Greek oratory schools, but he was not lacking in his knowledge of the Lord. This was a priority of his life. He has made this clear to them in every possible way.

**Philippians 3:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup>That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;**

Paul believed in a *simple presentation* of the Gospel, and some people thought this showed *simple-mindedness*. This is why his speaking performance was often used against him by false teachers. Brethren in all our *teaching* and *preaching, content is just as important* as the presentation of truth. A simple, clear, practical presentation that helps listeners understand truth and how to apply that truth will be of great value to the listener. Keep the message *simple, understandable, and practical*.

Paul says that these false, but arrogant apostles may be far better equipped orators and have greater speaking abilities. They may be the professionals, and he the mere amateur in words. His critics may be the men with the academic qualifications and he, the mere layman.

The fact remains, however unskilled he may be in technical oratory, he knows what he is talking about and they do not. He was confident in his **call** and **commission** from the Lord Himself to be the apostle to the Gentiles. This was his presence of mind. His *stability, serenity, sanity, and strength* came from the Lord. Just because he came to them as a tentmaker and because he walked in the **meekness** and **gentleness** of Christ does not mean that he was not an apostle or did not know what he was talking about.

**William Barclay** shares a story which tells how a company of people was dining together. After dinner it was agreed that each should recite something. A well-known actor rose and, with all the resources of his eloquence and dramatic art, he proclaimed the twenty-third psalm and sat down to tremendous applause.

A quiet man followed him. He too, began to recite the twenty-third psalm and at first there was rather a titter. But before he had ended there was a stillness that was more eloquent than any applause. When he had spoken the last words there was silence, and then the actor leant across and said, “**Sir, I know the psalm, but you know the shepherd.**”

Paul was the man who knew the Lord personally. His apostleship was not a matter of **show** but of **substance**. What Paul said was more important than how he said it. The Corinthians could not deny the content of his message and its transforming consequences. In fact, his message had a sting to it which provoked the condemnation of his critics. It may not have been eloquent, but it was effective, to the point, and hit the bull's eye. This made Paul unpopular with his critics for sure.

**Kent Hughes** shared a story about spiritual responsibility and sharing the truth. Many years ago a number of government officials in **The Hague**, who were more fashionable than religious, invited **Van Courtonne**, the famous court preacher of Paris, who was of Dutch descent, to preach in their State Church chapel.

Because Van Courtonne considered their interest more **social** than **spiritual**, more a curiosity than a zeal for truth, he declined to come. When the invitation was repeated several times, he agreed to accept—on the condition that all the government officials would be present for the preaching service. They agreed to his terms.

The famous Van Courtonne appeared and preached on **“The Ethiopian”** from [Acts 8](#). His sermon had four points:

1. A government official who read his Bible—something rare.
2. A government official who acknowledged his ignorance—something rarer still.
3. A government official who asked for instruction—something extremely rare.
4. A government official who was converted—the rarest thing of all!

Van Courtonne never received a second invitation. His message was **too clear and too understandable**, leaving the politicians licking their wounds and under conviction. Van Courtonne took spiritual responsibility for these government officials and firmly preached the truth to them.

Paul did the same thing when he preached to the Corinthians. Beloved, when you take spiritual responsibility for others, there may be times where you may need to be firm with your listener by sharing the bare truth with them to wake them up. **This is not easy and it requires courage, balanced with compassion, but it is necessary.** Some people don't get it, unless you spell it out for them.

## V. THE PROVISIONS FROM SUPPORTING CHURCHES— 2 Corinthians 11:7-9

### **2 Corinthians 11:7-9 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?  
<sup>8</sup> I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you;  
<sup>9</sup> and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

The Apostle took many steps to keep from being a burden to the Corinthians when he established a church in Corinth. This apostle humbled himself by doing manual labor to support himself so that these people would be exalted and honored by putting their faith in Christ and becoming sons of God.

The Gospel elevated the Corinthians from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, from the domain of Satan to the kingdom of Christ, from eternal death to eternal life. They would enjoy the glories of Heaven in Christ and be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

### **John 5:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

He preached the truth to them without expecting anything in return. The critics of Paul could not understand his attitude of not wanting to be a financial burden. They were very frustrated with his reasoning and his financial independence. According to the Greek way of thinking, it was beneath a free man's dignity to work with his hands. The dignity of honest toil was forgotten, and the Corinthians did not understand Paul's point of view.

His critics also held to the philosophy that teachers were supposed to make money out of teaching. There never was an age in which a man who could talk could make so much money. Traveling speakers and professional philosophers in Paul's day were accorded status by the fees they charged. A good speaker would charge a large sum, a fair speaker would be a little cheaper, and a poor speaker would speak for free. In fact, a cheap fee was thought to imply that the message wasn't important.

Therefore, Paul's refusal to accept money for his ministry in Corinth was negatively interpreted to mean several things.

1. An admission that his teaching was of low caliber,
2. His message wasn't worth much,
3. He gave the gospel away because nobody would pay for it,
4. He was not really an apostle.

The false teachers may have argued that because Paul asked no fee for his preaching, he must have been an amateur, with little authority or competence. Believers today must be careful not to assume that every speaker who is well known and demands a large honorarium is superior at explaining and applying God's Word. Such thinking is a fantasy.

**2 Corinthians 11:7-9 (NASB)**

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

<sup>8</sup> **I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you;**

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

Paul was able to start this church at Corinth because of plying his trade as a leather worker and by the support that he received from other churches. This is what he meant by the phrase **“I robbed churches.”** It was not easy for Paul to accept the voluntary, unsolicited support from the Macedonians who were already poor. He felt like he was plundering these people.

In fact, the word **“robbed”** was a strong term, used to describe the stripping of the armor off a dead soldier. Yet, the Lord had impressed the Macedonian believers to take spiritual responsibility for Paul and be a channel of blessing.

Paul did not let his pride get in the way and he did not want to rob these people of God's blessings. In humility, he graciously accepted their gifts of love and investment in the souls of men. He knew the Lord would care for them. There is an important lesson here.

Taking spiritual responsibility for someone may involve your financial support. This would especially include the financial support of the church ministry and staff of your church, an evangelist, a missionary, or perhaps, a student attending Bible College as he trains for the ministry.

Your support enables these people to devote their full time and energy to the Lord's work and the ministry of the church. This in turn strengthens the church and its families. Realize that if the Lord leads you to take spiritual responsibility and give toward such causes, He is going to supply your needs. That's His promise to you. You can't out-give God. Do what He leads you to do with a cheerful heart.

**Philippians 4:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> **And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

**2 Corinthians 11:9 (NASB)**

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

The support he received from the Macedonian churches prevented Paul from being a burden to anyone and it would continue to keep him in a financially sound situation where he would not be a weight in the future. This is the idea behind the word “**burden.**”

The word “**burden**” is from the Greek word *katanarkao* {*kat-an-ar-kah'-o*} which means “**to cause to grow numb; to be a heavy or dead weight; a burden.**” The word comes from the image of the electric eel numbing its victim with its shock. A numbed part of the body would be a burden to the victim.

Paul had not used any devious tricks to catch these believers by surprise, attack them, or rob them. Both in his preaching of the Gospel and his handling of finances, he was open and honest.

This man was a man of character and refused to be a dead beat or drain on the finances of others. The apostle did not want people to dread his presence or regret their hospitality toward him. Paul did not want people thinking, “When is he going to leave? How much longer do we have to feed this guy?”

The apostle would not allow this to happen because he knew that this turns people off. He was trying to turn them “**on**” to Christ by sharing the Gospel with them. If he was a financial burden or a dead weight, he would become a stumbling block.

**Romans 14:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.



## VII. THE PERSISTENCE OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 11:10-12](#)

### [2 Corinthians 11:10-12 \(NASB\)](#)

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

<sup>11</sup> **Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do!***

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

Paul is determined that no one will rob him of his ground of boasting in the regions of Achaia, where Corinth is located. He is doubtless referring here to his critics who used his abstinence of receiving support from the Corinthians as an argument against him.

Paul's critics believed he was not a true apostle, and that is why he did not insist on being supported by these Christians. In spite of the charges of these false teachers, he will continue to boast that he served the Corinthians without taking any money from them. He was not ashamed that the Gospel was offered freely to these people. He had great love for them.

He did not, however, want to make it easy for those who opposed and criticized him. It seemed that no matter what the apostle did, he was criticized. If he had taken money from the Corinthians, his opponents would have said he was just preaching for what he got out of it.

By not taking money from them, he subjected himself to the charge that he did not really love them. But God knows the truth of the matter, and Paul is content to leave it with Him.

It seems clear that the Judaizers expected, demanded, and received money from the Corinthians. Like most cultists, they would not have served unless it paid them financially. Paul was determined to continue his policy of not receiving money from the believers in Corinth.

If the false teachers wanted to engage in a boasting match with him, let them follow his policy, but he knew they would never be able to boast of serving without monetary reward and not be able to claim that their work was the same as Paul's. Their work was totally different from Paul's.

There is an important truth found in these verses. Spiritual responsibility requires persistence in doing what is right, even in the face of opposition. Paul made it clear that no man was going to stop him in the way he was conducting himself with the believers at Corinth. Paul was *alienated*, *denigrated*, and *incarcerated* at times yet, he persisted to do what the Lord led him to do because he was spiritually responsible. He had no regrets about living for Christ. Do you have the same resolve in your own heart?



**1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB)**

<sup>58</sup> **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain in the Lord.***

**William Borden** grew up with a family fortune that included the **Borden Milk Company**. He was handsome, extremely bright, and a gifted athlete. From his family's mansion on Chicago's Gold Coast, he cast a maturing eye over fame and power, but he primarily focused on Jesus Christ.

**In 1906**, as a freshman at Yale, he traveled to Nashville to attend a convention of the Student Volunteer Movement, devoted to overseas missions. **Samuel Zwemer**, missionary statesman, was there with his maps, and his message melted Borden's heart regarding the Islamic world.

**Zwemer proclaimed:** *Shall we stand by and allow these millions to continue under the curse and snare of a false religion, with no knowledge of the saving love and power of Christ? Of course it will cost life. It is not an expedition of ease nor a picnic excursion to which we are called.... It is going to cost many a life, and not lives only, but prayers and tears and blood. We do not plead for missions. We simply bring the facts before you and ask for a verdict.*

Borden returned to Yale committed to Muslim missions. In time, he gave his fortune to Christian causes and left the shores of America for China, dying en route of spinal meningitis.

Under his pillow was stuffed a last message: **“No Reserve! No Retreat! No Regrets!”** His story was broadcast in newspapers across America, and his biography by Mrs. Howard Taylor resulted in numbers of young people surrendering themselves to missionary service. **Beloved, may we too, have no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets! May the Lord help us all to be spiritually responsible people!**

## VIII. THE PRETENSE OR DECEPTION OF FALSE TEACHERS— 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

### 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NASB)

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

<sup>14</sup> No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

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

Observers tell us that in the spring of the year the cuckoo bird can be seen mimicking the flight of the sparrow hawk. Flapping, gliding, and soaring like a natural predator this impostor frightens songbirds and distracts them to the point that they leave their nests unattended.

She then moves in and devours an unguarded egg, leaving one of her own in its place. A counterfeit egg has replaced the true egg of a songbird. This is a fitting illustration of how Satan works in the church among believers and the unsaved.

Spiritual responsibility requires discernment in recognizing deceptive teachers or preachers when they surface and spread their message. The apostle warns us here to not underestimate their ability to trick people and camouflage their corruption.

Paul says these guys are deceitful workers.

- 1) They lie about their love and loyalty for the Lord.
- 2) Their guile is motivated by their greed.
- 3) They cheat people by robbing them of God's candor and concepts for living. This robs folks of God's blessings that come from obedience to His truth.

The apostle continues to warn us about those who can deceive us. He states that deceitful workers were “**disguising**” themselves into apostles of Christ. They disguised or masqueraded themselves as something they were not.

There was a change on the outside, but there was no change on the inside. Satan's workers, like Satan himself, never appear in their true character; they always wear a disguise and hide behind a mask. They are not the Lord's apostles.

The worse a man is, the stronger the temptation he has to assume the forms of goodness. Were corrupt men to show the true state of their hearts to their contemporaries, people would recoil from them with horror and disgust, and they would be utterly unable to enjoy social interaction or to transact their business affairs with them.

As a rule, the worse a man is the more strenuous his efforts are to assume the traits of virtue that he does not possess. Selfishness clothes itself in the robes of benevolence, and error speaks in the language of truth without being truth.

## 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NASB)

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

<sup>14</sup> No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

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

A man is not a true preacher of Christ because of his outward appearance. Paul warns, **“No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”** We should all look well into the real moral character of those who set themselves up as the representatives of Christ and the teachers of religion. This is what the Apostle John warned us to do.

## 1 John 4:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

It should be no surprise that there are deceivers and false teachers today that masquerade as men of truth. Why? Satan does the same thing. He is transformed into an angel of light. People have the idea that Satan has cloven feet and horns. This kind of erroneous idea comes from the great god Pan of Greek mythology, who was portrayed as half-animal and was worshiped as Dionysus.

Likening Satan to Pan certainly is not the scriptural point of view. Satan himself is a subtle serpent, a roaring lion and also an angel of light. If he would make himself visible to you, you would see a being of breathtaking beauty.

If Satan *disguises* himself, we should not be surprised when his servants or ministers *disguise* their deception and evil by a *disguise* of righteousness. Realize from this verse that Satan has servants too.

For this reason, be careful who your friends are and what preachers you listen to on the radio or television. Satan is most effective in the church, when he comes not as an open enemy, but as a false friend; not when he persecutes the church, but when he joins it; not when he attacks the pulpit, but when he stands in it.

Be also careful in your dating. Many Christians have been led astray by a handsome boyfriend or beautiful girlfriend that could care less about Jesus Christ, the Bible, and church. Many end up getting married to an unbeliever, only to get out of church completely and their kids grow up not knowing the Lord at all. What a tragedy!

The ripple effects of your rebellion or backsliding travel far into your future and affect many more people than just yourself. In fact, your foolish choices affect people that are not even born yet.

Beloved, being deceived by false appearances will leave you with a painful reality. This truth is amply illustrated in the world of nature. For example, in July of 2004, the Arizona Game and Fish Department began nursing more than 30 emaciated, dehydrated, banged-up pelicans. During the previous two weeks, the injured pelicans had been found from Yuma to Phoenix.

The brown pelicans were injured when they descended from the sky, sailed low over sidewalks and asphalt highways, stretched out their feet as though to make a perfect splash landing in water, and then tumbled end-over-end when they hit the pavement.

The pelicans, apparently suffering a food shortage in California, flew to Arizona looking for fish. From the sky, the shimmering hot air over the black asphalt appeared to the Pelicans as water. Down they flew for fish and a refreshing dip in a lake. What they found instead was solid pavement, dehydration, hunger, and near death.

Reality hits hard, especially when you have been deceived or put your hopes in something that turned out to be a lie. Such is the case with false prophets who follow Satanic teachings.

Beloved, Satan does not want us to see him as he really is for we would reject what we discovered. He disguises the path that he lures people upon. The initial steps are *tempting, tantalizing, and fun*, but the end of the road is characterized by *trials, trauma, trouble, trepidation, tears, and termination*.

There are two big lies that Satan has been perpetrating ever since the Garden of Eden. The first is that God is mean, vindictive, and a bully whose main role in life is to keep us from being fulfilled and happy. When we step out of bounds, He takes delight in making us pay.

The second lie is that God really *doesn't care* what we do and probably *doesn't know*. If the Lord does know, His business is to forgive us. He'll always forgive no matter what, so it really *doesn't make* much difference how we live and what we believe. We will get away with it. This is not what the Bible teaches, however.

**Galatians 6:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.**

Is there really a problem today with false teachers and deceptive doctrines that are leading believers astray? Unfortunately, the answer is “**Yes.**” The world is filled with false religions or cults today that are anti-Christ and anti-Bible. What is a cult? How do you recognize one? What are some of the characteristics of a cult? Let’s answer these questions.

## A. Doctrinal Characteristics of a Cult

There are **four characteristics** in the doctrinal dimension of a cult.

- 1. The Development of New Revelation** —Cult teachings often change and new revelations are needed to justify the changes.
- 2. Denial of the Sole Authority of the Bible** —In order for the cults to push their idea of new revelation, they need to reject the sole authority of the Bible and put it on the same, or in fact, lower level as their new revelations.
- 3. A Distorted View of God and Jesus** —Many cults do see Jesus as who He is—the Son of God. This is how they lure people. However, they believe Jesus is to a lower degree like a god, but not The God. Cults reject the Trinity and they reject the existence of the Holy Spirit. Cults also reject the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 4. Denial of Salvation by Grace** —Cults reject the idea of salvation by grace. They mostly hold to salvation by works. You must work for the group. You must raise money for the good of the group.

## B. Sociological Characteristics of a Cult

There are **eight key characteristics** in the sociological dimension of a cult.

### 1. Authoritarianism—

This is the acceptance of an authority figure who often uses mind-control techniques on their followers for control. The word of these authority figures (founder or prophet) are considered ultimate and not to be questioned. Doubt and dissent are punished. The leadership dictates, sometimes in great detail, how members should think, act, and feel. For example, members must get permission from leaders to date, change jobs, or get married. Leaders may prescribe what types of clothes to wear, where to live, how to discipline children, and so forth.

### 2. Exclusiveness—

Cults usually believe that they alone have the truth as opposed to other Christian denominations. Some cults practice communal living to make it easier to maintain control over cult members.

### 3. Dogmatism—

Cults believe that they alone have the truth and they are the only ones to interpret the Bible correctly. The group controls what converts may read or hear. They would especially oppose visits to Christian book stores.

### 4. Close-mindedness—

Cult members are so devoted to their cult that they are unwilling to even consider any other point of view even if they know they are wrong.

### 5. Susceptibility—

Many people that join cults are gullible and some are psychologically vulnerable. This goes hand-in-hand with close-mindedness in that they will ignore anything that contradicts their claims while practicing blind faith that is absent of sound reasoning.

Mind-numbing techniques are used to control and shape thinking such as hypnosis, peer pressure groups, verbal abuse, meditation, chanting, speaking in tongues, denunciation sessions, debilitating work routines, sleep deprivation, and confession. All these are used to suppress doubts about the group and its leader(s) and to maintain control of the group.

**6. Isolationism—**

Extreme cults create fortified boundaries and are hard on those who are thinking or are attempting to desert. Members' subservience to the group causes them to cut ties with family and friends, and to give up personal goals and activities that were of interest before joining the group. Study of cult teachings and service become mandatory. New members become too busy to question. Family, friends, jobs and hobbies are squeezed out, further isolating the new member.

Isolationism is also used among the group as a form of discipline for doubting or questioning. It creates fear among cult members to obey their leaders giving them even more control.

**7. Antagonism—**

Isolationism leads to antagonism toward the outside world. Other Christian groups are considered evil and bad.

**8. Accountability of the Leader is Rejected—**

Cult leaders do not consider themselves accountable to governmental authority or laws. This leads to gun battles, riots, and sometimes “mass suicides.”

### **C. Moral Characteristics of a Cult**

There are **four characteristics** of the moral dimension of a cult.

**1. Legalism** -Since cults reject salvation by grace, they often practice legalism. This is a setting down of rigid rules that are not Biblical. This is also for the leaders to control their members.

**2. Sexual Perversion** -In cults there are huge cases of sexual perversion. Some cults allow polygamy (more than one wife). Some cults sexually lure people into their cult. The leaders of some cults have been reported to having sex with a great deal of women in their cult including young girls and teenagers. Homosexual abuse of young boys has also been reported.

**3. Physical Abuse** -Some cults are guilty of engaging in physical abuse. Many ex-cult members accuse their former leaders of beating them, and depriving them of sleep and food as a way of control. Many times these attacks are directed at children. There is also psychological abuse (fear, isolation, intimidation, verbal abuse). The ultimate physical abuse is killing members by making them drink poison or another way.

**4. Intolerance toward Others** -Many cults have a low tolerance toward people of other groups. This is seen in antagonism and sometimes leads to killings. It is good to note again that not every cult has all of these characteristics, but every cults has at least one or more of the characteristics listed here! If we are to be spiritually responsible, it is important that we know how to recognize a cult, not only for our own benefit, but also for the benefit of helping and protecting others.

In a **April 7, 1997 Newsweek article**, entitled *The Most Horrible Night of My Life*, **Tim Stoen** records his experience in the Jim Jones cult. Tim went to Wheaton Christian College. When he graduated he became fed up with the racism and poverty in America. He wanted to find a Utopian society where people of all races and classes could live together in harmony.

**In February of 1977**, Tim thought he had found that Utopia. It was a group called the *People's Temple*, and Tim became their lawyer. Stoen was also the advisor to the group's leader, **Rev. Jim Jones**.

Tim Stoen didn't come from a dysfunctional family and he was a success as a lawyer. He joined the People's Temple because it fulfilled his dreams. For five months he worked in their compound, called Jonestown, doing diplomatic work with the government and also working in the sawmill. In the afternoon he taught reading and writing to his 5-year-old son John Victor.

When he returned to California in 1977 for a brief visit, his wife Grace forced him to see how the Utopia of Jonestown was rotten. She told him about Jones' increasing paranoia and threats against her personally.

Suddenly, Tim realized that Jones recognized only power. He trusted Jones so much that he had left his son with him in Jonestown during his visit home. When he tried to get him out, Jones refused.

**In 1978**, they accompanied Rep. Leo Ryan on his mission to Guyana to investigate human-rights abuses. Jones wouldn't even let the Stoens come to the compound. While waiting in their hotel, they heard that Representative Ryan and his four companions had been killed on the Jonestown airstrip.

The Stoens realized immediately there would be a collective suicide. They knew their son, along with the other 913 people in the compound, would die, and there was nothing they could do about it.

Jim Jones ran a tape recorder when the suicide was occurring. Among the things he said was, "We win when we go down. Tim Stoen will destroy himself." That did not happen. **In May, 1991, Tim Stoen became a Christian.** He accepts responsibility for protecting Jim Jones all those years, but because of God's forgiveness and grace, he is at peace.

Beloved, this story confirms what we have been studying in **2 Corinthians 11**. There are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. We should not marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

## Chapter 24.

### The Thorns of a Rosy Life

#### 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 (NASB)

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

<sup>17</sup> What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

<sup>18</sup> Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.

<sup>19</sup> For you, being *so* wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

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

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

<sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

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

<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

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

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

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

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

<sup>29</sup> Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

<sup>30</sup> If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

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

<sup>32</sup> In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,

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

When a person puts their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they make a decision that will **empower** and **enable** them to face their life when it is not so fantastic, when the thorns of a rosy life begin to **prick** them with **pain**, **pressure**, **persecution**, and **pessimism**.



In this portion of [2 Corinthians](#), we get a glimpse of the horrors that Paul faced in his efforts to make his life count for the Christ. Being a Christian who is *determined*, *devoted*, and *dedicated* to the Lord is not an easy task at all.

It is a life that is characterized by great joys and blessings that are accompanied by severe *trials* and *troubles*. Satan and his crowd do not like it when Christ is exalted and glorified. He rears up his ugly head to oppose what we are doing.

The **menu of maladies** recorded in this section remind us that there are thorns in a rosy life and they hurt. The next time you think you have problems, read this section and you will realize your difficulties are, in most cases, not so bad when you compare them to what Paul confronted in his life.

When I read what he faced, I realize how strong his **faith** and **confidence** in the Lord were and begin to understand his **determination** and **persistence**. He was really something else! In comparison to Paul, I feel like a wimp. I would say that most of us do. Yet, Paul openly and honestly acknowledged his own **weaknesses** and **shortcomings** without hesitation.

God used Paul because he was truly a humble man. He was the man who referred to himself as the chief of sinners. Paul was humble because he understood the majesty of our Lord and had a consuming desire to worship and serve Him. He was yielded to the Lord's control and filled with God's Spirit.

**Ephesians 5:18 (NASB)**

**<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,**

Humility is a by-product of the control of the Lord over our lives. If we resist God's **control**, **direction**, and **leading**, then any humility we might have, goes out the door because our pride is kicking it out. The awareness of God's presence in our lives humbles us because we realize how big He is and how little we are in reality.

When we lose the **awareness** and **control** of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we lose our humility. We tend to **run** and **gun** through life and forget about the Lord, doing our own thing in our own way with no mindfulness of the Lord at all. This is why we are constantly reminded in the Bible of the importance of having humility. Without it, a rosy life becomes very thorny.

**Micah 6:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?**

**Philippians 2:3 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**

Beloved, the **indication** and **degree** of the humility of a person are seen in the ability to boast when it is necessary, yet remain humble. When we fail, humility comes easy. Humble pie comes in a variety of flavors and we all have had our fill.

On the other hand, when we are successful, our humility is *strained* and *pressured* by our pride. Paul was extremely successful as a servant of God, yet, he kept his head screwed on straight. His ego did not suffer from the “swelled head” syndrome.

What we will proceed to do here is look at Paul’s boast and the menu of burdens he faced as he served the Lord. We will see that his rosy life had many thorns.

## I. THE PLEA FOR PATIENCE—[2 Corinthians 11:16-18](#)

### [2 Corinthians 11:16-18 \(NASB\)](#)

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

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

<sup>18</sup> **Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.**

Paul did not want these folks to think he was a fool. If they did think he was one, he wanted them to listen to him anyway just as they would gladly listen to a foolish person. Paul needed to present his case about himself and his credentials as an apostle.

In his boasting he was not talking as the Lord would, as the Lord never defended Himself in this way, but Paul chose to, though reluctantly. He was saying, “I need you to hear me out.” That was his plea.

Can you understand what he was feeling? How many times have you needed for someone to hear you out? You may have been accused of something or suffered a misunderstanding with someone and you needed to explain what happened to clear the air. You were pleading for patience. This is where we find the Apostle Paul.

Beloved, if someone needs for you to hear them out, then sit down and let them explain what is going on in their heart. You may not agree with what is being said, but you can listen.

Through the years I have found that many Christians have a problem with this. If conflicts arise, they would rather remain angry than resolve the problem or misunderstanding.

Some Christians will not hear out a matter, because they have been misinformed and have already made up their minds. Others will not listen because the position they are taking is **untruthful or unscriptural**, they cannot **defend it**, and they don’t want to be **confronted about it**.

Beloved, our unwillingness to listen to someone to resolve a problem is an indication that we have a problem, especially with pride and bitterness. When we fail to hear people out, we create thorns for their lives and also for our own. Our rosy life can become very thorny because our problems are not resolved. This was Solomon's warning.

**Proverbs 18:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.**

What does Solomon mean by this word “**answer?**” It is derived from the Hebrew word *shuwb* {*shoob*} which means “**to turn away; to draw back in restraint, repel, reject, or refuse.**”

When we refuse to deal with a matter before we have heard out the facts, it brings folly and shame on us. This means we are acting like a fool. This word “**shame**” is a strong word that is derived from the word *kelimmah* {*kel-im-maw'*} which means “**disgrace, dishonor, insult, reproach, or shame.**” We bring **dishonor** and **disgrace** upon ourselves when we won't listen to those who are trying to explain themselves.

**Proverbs 25:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> **It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.**

Searching out a matter is linked with **honor** and **integrity**. If someone is asking you to hear them out, then give them an ear. Most important of all, we need to give the Lord an ear and let Him speak to us.

Many signs and billboards in the path of Hurricane Charley were no match for the violent storm. However, one billboard resisted the hurricane's 100-mile per hour winds. While the billboard still stands, the advertisement that was there when Hurricane Charley hit was peeled back to reveal an earlier message.

When the sun rose the next morning on Sand Lake Road in Orlando, Florida, the words on the billboard clearly read: “We need to talk. God.” Beloved, let the Lord speak to you through His Word, His Spirit, and His people. When we are unwilling to do this, we create thorns in our rosy life.

## II. THE PATIENCE OF THE CORINTHIANS— 2 Corinthians 11:19-20

### 2 Corinthians 11:19-20 (NASB)

<sup>19</sup> For you, being *so* wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

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

As Paul presents his case for a hearing, he uses the patience of the Corinthians as a reminder of why they should hear him out. Even though they were wise, they gladly put up with or endured those who were foolish.

In fact, they were patient with people who enslaved them, who **exploited or forcibly** took their **property and goods**, who took *advantage* of them, who *arrogantly* exalted themselves, or physically harmed them by slapping them. They were pretty patient people. That's incredible!

Let's stop for a second. Are you that patient? Sometimes we really don't know until this kind of stuff actually happens to us. Beloved, there will be times that you will encounter thorny people who will take advantage of you, rip you off, act like a pompous brat or slap you around.

Realize it is the Lord that enables us to respond with patience. Our thorns of tribulation are for the purpose of *developing* and *strengthening* our **faith** and **maturity** in Christ.

### Romans 5:3 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

### James 1:3-4 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

<sup>4</sup> And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

**Dr. Gardner Taylor** tells a story from when he was preaching in Louisiana during the Depression. Electricity was just coming into that part of the country, and he was out in a rural, black church that had just one little light bulb hanging down from the ceiling to light up the whole sanctuary.

He was preaching away, and in the middle of his sermon, all of a sudden, the electricity went out. The building went pitch black, and Dr. Taylor didn't know what to say, being a young preacher. He stumbled around until one of the elderly deacons sitting in the back of the church cried out, "Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!"

Beloved, sometimes that's the only time some people see Him... in the dark. Why? Because that's when they are really looking for Him because they are scared. The good news of the Bible is that whether we can see Him in the dark or not, He can see us no matter where we are. Amen!

Our job is to trust in Him, especially in those times when we are pricked by the thorns of our rosy life.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.

<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

**III. THE PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES PAUL FACED—**

**2 Corinthians 11:21-29**

**2 Corinthians 11:21-29 (NASB)**

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

<sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

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

<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

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

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

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

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

<sup>29</sup> Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

In this section, we find a list of the trials that Paul endured in his service for the Lord Jesus Christ. He offers this information because he was under attack from false teachers who accused him of being a *fraud* or *fake*.

Paul was trying to show these Christians he was the real thing and wanted to keep the Corinthians from slipping under the spell of the false teachers and turning away from the gospel. Some of the problems mentioned in this section are mentioned in the **book of Acts, especially in chapters 14 and 16.**

Because Paul wrote this letter during his third missionary journey, his trials weren't over. He would **experience** further *difficulties* and *humiliations* for the cause of Christ ([Acts 21:30-33](#); [Acts 22:24-30](#)).

**Acts 21:30-33 (NASB)**

<sup>30</sup> Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

<sup>31</sup> While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

<sup>32</sup> At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

<sup>33</sup> Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he *began* asking who he was and what he had done.

**Acts 22:24-30 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.

<sup>25</sup> But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

<sup>26</sup> When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman."

<sup>27</sup> The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes."

<sup>28</sup> The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born *a citizen*."

<sup>29</sup> Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

<sup>30</sup> But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The trials he encountered remind us that we do have thorns in our rosy lives. These *trials* and *hurts* we experience for Christ's sake ***build our character, demonstrate our faith, and prepare us for further service*** to the Lord.

What did Paul willingly face for the cause of Christ? What were some of the thorns in his rosy life? As we examine each one, maybe you will realize that your trials are not as great as you thought they were.

When we read the catalogue of all that Paul had endured, the one thing that must strike us is how little we know about him. We see that Paul was a greater man than perhaps we thought, for Acts merely *skims the surface* of what he did and endured.

### 1. The thorns from the Pressures of abundant labor: “*in far more labors*” [v. 23](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 11:23 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Paul was not a goof-off. He endeavored to make his time count for the Lord. He *traveled incessantly*, and *took great risks* by preaching everywhere in order to bring the gospel to the lost. He worked tirelessly for the Lord, encountering great hardships. Let me ask, “Do you use any of your time to do something for the Lord? Do you make any effort to reach someone for Christ or get them to church?”

#### [Ephesians 5:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

### 2. The thorns of Plagues, Public calamities, and Punishment from Beatings: “*beaten times without number*” [v. 23](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 11:23 \(NASB\)](#)

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

The word “**beaten**” is from the Greek word *plege {play-gay}* which not only means “**beatings, but also plague or public calamity.**” Some people did not like what Paul had to say. In fact, when people turned to Christ, those who made their living from idolatry opposed Paul.

#### [Acts 19:25-28 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.

<sup>26</sup> “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*.

<sup>27</sup> “Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as

worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."

<sup>28</sup> When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Let me ask at this point, "Do you have the courage to stand up for Christ when the crowd you are with is going in a different direction or wants to do something that is wrong or questionable?"

### 3. The thorns of Prison: "*in far more imprisonments*" [v. 23](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 11:23 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Preaching the gospel got Paul into trouble with those who opposed it. It seems he spent a lot of time in prisons, especially in Rome where he was imprisoned for two years. *We never read* of false apostles being imprisoned for preaching the gospel.

**Imprisonment for Christ was one of the marks of a true servant of the Lord.**

In spite of the hardship of prison, God used Paul in his predicament. From the stench of prison cells came forth the **sweetness of the books of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians**. The seeds of the gospel were planted in the hearts of guards and prisoners alike in the cells of prisons.

#### [Philippians 1:12-14 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

<sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

<sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

#### [Philippians 1:18 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

It was in the book of Philippians that Paul stressed the importance of joy in the Christian life.

#### [Philippians 4:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

#### [Philippians 1:18 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,



Even today, there are Christians being imprisoned for preaching the gospel or being put to death. In **Vietnam**, the **Montagnard people** have reported that **43 people** have been *arrested, tortured, and killed* by Vietnamese security forces in the last nine years (2000-2009) for their service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These were pastors and Christian laymen that preached about the Lord and shared the Gospel. **Missionary Norris Bailey** reports that on **October 12, 2004**, **Mr. Kpa Kloh** was *arrested, tortured* and sent to **Phu Yen Prison** for preaching about Jesus Christ. He has been tortured over the last 3½ years with unspeakable brutality. On **February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008**, he was tortured again which led to his death on the next day. He left behind a wife and six children.

Two months later, in **April**, the Vietnamese security police of Daklak province murdered another Montagnard Christian, Mr. Y-Ben Hdok. He was 29 years old who left behind a wife and his parents after the Communists put a rope around his neck, tied it to a jeep, and dragged him around until he died.

Both of these Christians fought a good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith. May we be **challenged** by their *courage, commitment, consistency, and character*. When we feel trapped by our trials, may we learn to rejoice.

#### **4. The thorn of the Pain of Death: “often in danger of death” [v. 23](#)**

##### **2 Corinthians 11:23 (NASB)**

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

Paul saw the death of many friends in his endeavors to get the gospel to the lost. Some were tortured and killed. Others were drowned at sea or suffered from disease and sickness. Watching loved ones go home to be with the Lord is painful. We miss those who have had such an impact on our lives. It makes our anticipation of Heaven greater.

It will be a great reunion day when our memories of loved ones with the Lord, that have survived the sands of time, become a reality again, and we can embrace them with our arms and wipe away the tears of joy. When we face the thorns of death, we can find comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ. He truly is the God of all comfort.

##### **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NASB)**

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

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

**5. The thorns from the Pummeling of Whips: “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods,.....” [vs. 24- 25](#)**

**2 Corinthians 11:24-25 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.**

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

Paul was beat up and mobbed. He also suffered severe whippings. The credentials of his apostleship dripped with his own blood and the scars that marred his entire body were the evidence of his *authenticity, allegiance, audacity, and adoration* for the Lord. To Paul, his scars were proof positive that he was a servant of Christ. *Suffering, not success*, authenticated Paul’s ministry.

One beating would have been enough for most folks, but not for Paul. **Five floggings totaled 195 stripes.** Imagine Paul’s anguish as he awaited the excruciating pain that was coming to him from the next whipping.

**Even more, imagine his love for his people,** the Jews. When Paul entered a town he went to the Jews first which in many cases meant a thirty-nine- stripe flogging in the synagogue for false teaching and blasphemy. Because of his love for the souls of his people, he was willing to face this trauma.

This Jewish punishment was the most severe beating allowed by the Scriptures ([Deuteronomy 25:1-3](#)). Being beaten in the synagogue was very humiliating and terribly painful. No more than forty stripes could be administered at one beating, and that is why they were limited to thirty-nine, because if the executioner exceeded forty, he himself was liable to be flogged.

It is amazing that not one of Paul’s floggings is mentioned in the book of Acts or any other source. Therefore, the five floggings all occurred early in Paul’s ministry—and were likely followed by more!

The manner in which this punishment was inflicted is described in the *Jewish Mishna* which is the book in which the Jewish traditional law was codified. Here is what it stated: The two hands of the criminal are bound to a post, and then the servant of the synagogue either pulls or tears off his clothes till he leaves his breast and shoulders bare. A stone or block is placed behind him on which the servant stands. He holds in his hands a scourge made of leather, divided into four tails.

He who scourges lays one third on the criminal’s breast, another third on his right shoulder, and another on his left. The man who receives the punishment is neither sitting nor standing, but all the while stooping, and the man smites him with all his strength with one hand. If he dies under his hand, the scourger is not culpable, but if he gives him one stripe too many, and he dies, he must escape into exile because of him.

The severity of this punishment depends on the *nature of the scourge*, and *the strength of the executioner*. That is what Paul suffered five times, a *scourge so severe* that it was liable to kill a man. It is also observed that the Jews did not repeat a scourge except for enormous offenses. *Yet, they had scourged the apostle five times.*

Paul also mentions he was beaten with *rods three times*. The rod was the instrument of Roman and therefore a Gentile form of punishment. The attendants of the magistrates were called the lictors and they were equipped with rods of birch wood with which the guilty criminal was chastised. Three times that had happened to Paul.

It should never have happened to him at all, because, under Roman law, it was a crime to scourge a Roman citizen, but when the mob was violent and the magistrate was weak, Paul suffered this beating even though he was a citizen of Rome. Paul's only recorded beating with the rod in Scripture took place in Philippi as described in the beatings of Paul and Silas in [Acts 16](#).

**Acts 16:22-23 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods.**

<sup>23</sup> **When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;**

When the Romans beat with rods, the prisoners were stripped naked and beaten until the magistrates were satisfied. In [2 Corinthians 11](#), Paul lists three such separate beatings with the rod.

His body became a living monument to his suffering, as he would write at the conclusion of his letter to the Galatians about his scars. The white and pink lines that were etched into his back, shoulders, and chest were like medals of honor to this soldier of the cross. They were the marks of ownership and allegiance to his master.

**Galatians 6:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the **brand-marks** of Jesus.**

The word “**marks**” is an interesting word here. It is from the Greek word *stigma* {*stig'-mah*} which means “**a mark pricked in or branded upon the body.**” To ancient oriental usage, slaves and soldiers bore the name or the stamp of their masters that was branded or pricked (cut) into their bodies. This was done to indicate what master or general they belonged. There were even some devotee's who stamped themselves in this way with the token of their gods.

Paul's scars were the brands of the Lord on his life. It is because of Jesus, he willingly bore these marks and sufferings. *They were scars of his love for the Lord.*

**Let me ask, “Are you willing to bear any scars for Christ? Are you willing to lose friends for the cause of Christ? Are you willing to bear reproach and rejection for His sake?”**

Beloved, losing the fear of the opinions of people is vital if you are going to be an effective witness for Christ. There can only be one master, Christ or this world.

**Proverbs 29:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> **The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.**

**Matthew 6:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

#### **6. The thorns of the Pelting of Stones: “*once I was stoned*” [v. 25](#)**

**2 Corinthians 11:24-25 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **Five times I received from the Jews *thirty-nine lashes*.**

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

In his service for Christ, Paul was also stoned. It is bad enough when people throw rocks at your house, your car or church bus. I’ve been through that and it’s not fun at all, but to have rocks thrown at your body must be terrifying.

The Bible gives us a full account of Paul’s stoning at Lystra where his attackers left him apparently dead ([Acts 14:19](#)).

**Acts 14:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> **But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.**

The physical trauma inflicted by such events is a matter of historical record. No doubt Paul’s face also bore the marks of Jesus. The only reason Paul escaped alive at Lystra is that the stoning was the inefficient work of a Jewish mob.

If it had been a judicial stoning as proscribed in the **Jewish Mishnah ([Sanhedrin 6:1-6](#))**, the outcome would have been otherwise. They would have killed him.

7. The thorns of Plummeting Ships: “*three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep;*” [v. 25](#)

[2 Corinthians 11:24-25 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

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

Shipwrecks were common in the ancient world due *to fragile vessels, poor navigation, misleading maps, and guessing at the weather*. Paul’s three shipwrecks occurred before the famous shipwreck on the island of Malta described in [Acts 27](#). So Paul was involved in at least four shipwrecks.

One of them was particularly miserable because it was far out in the ocean. The apostle floated for twenty-four hours in open sea facing the dangers of *drowning, sharks, starvation, and grappling with his own fears* in the deep. Why was he at sea in the first place? He was taking the Gospel to those who needed to hear it.

The shipwrecks that Paul faced were unexpected accidents in his life. Those times do come and they are thorny and painful. What do we do to cope with these kinds of circumstances?

The key is waiting on the Lord and seeking refuge in Him. Cling to Christ with all of your heart, mind, and soul. When you truly anchor yourself in Him, He will give you peace and direction.

[Psalms 32:7-8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

[Jeremiah 33:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> ‘Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’

[Psalms 46:1 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

[Psalms 27:14 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.

A pastor and his family were on their way home from church one Sunday afternoon. His wife was at his side and his 19- year-old daughter was in the back seat. Things were going fine until suddenly their car was struck head-on by a semi-truck. The daughter was thrown from the car and suffered painful injuries. The mother died and the pastor died twenty minutes later.

Little did this teenage young lady realize she had heard her dad's last sermon and would no longer enjoy her mother's warm embrace. Parentless, the 19 year-old daughter had to go through the ordeal of healing and she did with God's help and grace. This was just the beginning, however, of many other trials she would face, including the death of one of her children, also by a car accident later in her life. Her rosy life has had some sharp thorns.

Yet, she will tell you that the Lord has been good to her and has placed people all along the path of her life to help her, guide her, encourage her, and meet her needs. When you speak with her, you sense her love for Christ and the strength and joy He has given to her.

She graces Dallas First Baptist church with her presence every Sunday. If you will sit down and speak with Maggie Wartenbe, you will understand what I am saying. She has learned and is still learning to cope with the thorns in her rosy life. The wisdom and strength she has gained from her trials are like deep wells for our drinking and benefit.

**8. The thorns from the Perils of Traveling:** *".....I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."*  
[vs. 26-27](#)

**2 Corinthians 11:25-27 (NASB)**

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

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

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

In serving the Lord, Paul also faced thorns from the dangers of crossing *rivers, robbers, riots, the ruse* of false or counterfeit believers, and the *rigors of the wilderness with its cold, thirst, hunger, sleeplessness, and wild animals*. The book of Acts records **six Jewish plots** against Paul and **three perilous encounters** with Gentiles.

No matter what circumstances Paul faced, no matter how thorny his life was at times, he learned to be content, and we should, too.

**Philippians 4:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**

**1 Timothy 6:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> **If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.**

Have you learned to be content with what God has provided for you?

**9. The thorn from the Pressures of the care of the churches: “.....there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?” vs. 28-29**

**2 Corinthians 11:28-29 (NASB)**

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

<sup>29</sup> **Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?**

Paul’s concern for others, not himself, weighed heavily upon him. The phrase “**pressure on**” is from the Greek word *episustasis* {ep-ee-soo'-stas-is} which means “**a troublesome throng of people seeking help, counsel, or comfort.**”

The idea here is, that these cares rushed upon him, or pressed upon him like a crowd of men or a mob. This is one of Paul’s most energetic expressions, and denotes the incessant anxiety of mind to which he was subject. This is why it is also translated “**pressure or burden.**”

Paul was very concerned and burdened about the churches he started. He loved these people and was anxious about them being deceived by false teachers or inner strife that would divide the churches.

He was also concerned about the persecution and suffering that were taking place in these churches. He was sensitive to the weaknesses the believers were facing and was angry when they were led astray. All these concerns were like a rushing wave engulfing him.

**This brings us to a good question, “Are you concerned about the needs of others and their spiritual welfare?” The charge of Scripture is to love others.**

**James 1:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> **Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**

The word “**visit**” is from the Greek word *episkeptomai* {ep-ee-skep'-tom-ah-ee} which means “**to look after someone in order to help or benefit them; to care or provide for someone.**” It not only has the *idea of inspection*, but *involvement in their lives*. This is what visiting is all about. It is getting involved.



### **Philippians 2:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

A soldier was wounded in a battle and ordered to the nearest military hospital. Arriving at the entrance, he saw two doors: one marked “**For Minor Wounds,**” the other “**For Serious Wounds.**”

He entered the first door and walked down a long hallway. At the end of the hall, he saw two more doors. The first read “**For Officers,**” the other “**For Enlisted Men.**” The soldier went through the second door.

Again, he found himself walking down a long hallway with two doors at the end. One read “**For Party Members,**” the other “**For Non-Party Members.**” The wounded soldier took the second door and found himself back out on the street. When he got back to his unit, his buddies asked, “How’d your trip to the hospital go?” “The people really didn’t help me much,” he said, “but, man, are they organized!” **Organization is great, but our purpose is to reach people for Christ.**

Beloved, reaching out to people with the gospel and showing them your love and concern will help them to see the Lord in your own life. Be alert to opportunities to be a blessing to other people and let the Lord use you to encourage someone who needs it. He will show you who needs’ help. They will be blessed, but so will you.

## **IV. THE PREFERENCE OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 11:30-31](#)**

### **2 Corinthians 11:30-31 (NASB)**

**<sup>30</sup>If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.**

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

If Paul had to boast, he would much rather boast about his weaknesses. He assured them he was not lying and that the Lord was the witness of his heart’s attitude. Because of his humility, Paul found the idea of boasting about himself to be absolutely detestable. Yet, that is exactly what he was forced to do in writing this letter. His fragrant, rosy life was pricked by the thorns of opposition.

The false teachers at Corinth were undermining Paul’s *character* and *credentials* as an apostle. If they could succeed in doing this, they would undermine Paul’s message which would lead to *defeat* and *disaster* in the Corinth church. Some were being swayed by the lies about Paul.

He had no choice but to present his case that he *was a credible man* of God with a *credible message* about *an incredible God*. He was much more comfortable speaking about his *weaknesses* than his *accomplishments*, but it was necessary in this circumstance to present his case that he was not a fool.



## V. THE PERSECUTION AT DAMASCUS—[2 Corinthians 11:32-33](#)

### [2 Corinthians 11:32-33 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> **In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,**  
<sup>33</sup> **and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.**

Paul abruptly closes this section with the events that took place at Damascus where he barely escaped with his life. This circumstance is mentioned as an additional trial. It is evidently mentioned as an instance of peril which had escaped his recollection in the rapid account of his dangers enumerated in the previous verses. It is designed to show what imminent danger he was in, and how narrowly he escaped with his life.

**King Aretas**, king of the Nabateans (Edomites) from 9 B.C. to A.D. 40, had appointed a governor to oversee the Nabatean segment of the population in Damascus. Somehow the Jews in Damascus had been able to enlist this governor to help them try to capture Paul. Guards were kept for the purpose of capturing Paul, but he escaped by being lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall.

### [Acts 9:22-25 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> **But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.**  
<sup>23</sup> **When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,**  
<sup>24</sup> **but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;**  
<sup>25</sup> **but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.**

Paul's life was filled with many thorns, but the Lord watched over him and preserved his life until it was time for him to go home to be with the Lord. **Beloved, nothing will happen to you without God's consent.** No matter what thorns you encounter in your life, you can rely and trust in Him. He can use the simplest of things, such as a basket, to meet the needs you are facing and make your life a little rosier.

## Chapter 25.

### A Glimpse of Heaven

#### 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NASB)

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

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

<sup>3</sup> **And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—**

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

In the previous message, we found Paul in an uncomfortable position of having to defend his credentials as an apostle. False teachers were accusing him of being a *fake* and *fraud*.

Paul defended his ministry by revealing his successes and what the Lord had done through him. Being put in a position of having to boast about his accomplishments was not what Paul wanted to do. He would much rather share the gospel with others than talk about himself because he felt that boasting about his ministry was unprofitable, yet, it was necessary. In fact, he felt it was foolish that he had to speak about himself, but he asked the Corinthians to give *him an ear* and *hear him out*.

The apostle continues to share with the Corinthians some very interesting experiences that he has never revealed before to others. He shares with them a supernatural vision or revelation that he received from the Lord.

The word “**vision**” is used in the Scriptures often, to denote the mode in which divine communications were usually made to men. This was done by causing some scene to appear to pass before the mind as in a landscape, so that the individual seemed to see a representation of what was to occur in some future period.

It was usually applied to prophecy, and is often used in the Old Testament. Before Paul reveals his vision, he makes it clear that this is not profitable, though it was necessary. This is important for us to note.

**In a day where some preachers place huge emphasis on dreams and visions, claiming to have some new revelation from God, they would do well to consider Paul’s downplay on visions and dreams and the fact they were not helpful.**

Paul concealed the vision that he spoke about in this chapter for fourteen years. If it would have been edifying for the church, he would have revealed it long ago. *Visions do not benefit the church, they are not verifiable*, and they tend to make a person proud if he is not controlled by the Holy Spirit.

A preacher that stands up and says he has a new revelation from the Lord should send off sirens and red flags in your mind. **Watch out! Watch out! Watch out for false teaching!**

**We have no need for new revelations or visions today because we have the complete canon of the Word of God as far as we know.** What we need to know about salvation, the past, the present, and the future are all revealed to us in the Old and New Testaments. Many visions that prophets received from God in the Old or New Testament have stood the test of fulfillment. Some have yet to be fulfilled.

The revelations of God's prophets and apostles have also stood the scrutiny of God's people, and the compliment of other Scriptures. Any dream or vision that contradicts Scripture is not from God. What the Lord has for His church now is found in the precious Word of God.

This is to be the basis of our beliefs, our living, and our choices. For this reason we should read the Bible regularly and in so doing, we will grow and mature in Christ.

**2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**

**Acts 20:32 (NASB)**

**<sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

**1 Peter 2:2 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,**

Beloved, the true measure of a man of God **does not lie** in his claims of *revelations, visions, and experiences with God, or the force of his personality, the size of his ministry, his educational degrees, or any other human criteria.*

A godly Christian man is marked by how much he has *suffered in the war against satanic darkness, how concerned he is for people, how humble he is, and how accurately he handles and lives out the Word of God in his own personal life.*

**2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)**

**<sup>15</sup> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**

Let me ask here, "What in the world are you doing with your life? Are you making any effort to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and reach others for Him?"

The story is told of children of a well-to-do family who decided to give their father as a birthday present, a book containing their family's history. They commissioned a professional biographer to write the book, carefully cautioning him about the family's "black sheep"—their Uncle George who had been executed in the electric chair for murder. They felt that it would be best if the biographer left Uncle George out of the book.

"No need to do that," said the biographer. "I can report the situation in such a way that there will be no embarrassment at all to your father or to you. I'll merely write that Uncle George occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution. He was attached to his position by the strongest ties, and his death came as a real shock."

**Beloved, let me ask, "How would a biographer write about your life? Would he have to disguise the truth? What do you think people might say about you after you die?"**

**Answering questions like these will help you to examine yourself and recognize the kind of life you're living right now.**

When we look at Paul's life, we find that the Lord revealed many things personally to him because he was a man who was determined to live his life for Jesus Christ. The book of Acts provides for us a record of six visions {[Acts 9:3-12](#); [Acts 16:9-10](#); [Acts 18:9-10](#); [Acts 22:17-21](#); [Acts 23:11](#); [Acts 27:23-24](#)}.

The vision that Paul reveals to us here is fantastic. In fact, he was so humbled by what the Lord showed to him that he shares the story about himself in the third person instead of the first person. He says, "I know a man in Christ." He was talking about himself as [verse seven](#) indicates:

**2 Corinthians 12:7 (NASB)**

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

The apostle states this special vision took place **fourteen years before** the penning of the book of [2 Corinthians](#). [Second Corinthians](#) was written approximately **55-56 A.D.** Fourteen years earlier would place this event around **42 A.D.**, sometime between Paul's return to Tarsus from Jerusalem ([Acts 9:30](#)) and his commissioning by the Holy Spirit ([Acts 13:1-3](#)). We know very little about this period of Paul's life except that during it he ministered in the region of Syria and Cilicia ([Galatians 1](#)).

The Lord did something very special for Paul that would help him to endure the suffering he would face in his efforts to win others to Christ. The Lord gave him a glimpse of Heaven. A peek at Heaven would put fire in his bones and a resolve in his heart to face whatever Satan threw at him. God often gives to His people, some clear and elevated spiritual comforts before they enter into trials, as well as while they are in them.

The beauty of Heaven that is described in the Bible gives us *assurance* and *anticipation* of what lies ahead for us. The hope we have in Jesus Christ replaces our *sorrow* with *serenity*, our *fear* with *faith*, our *burdens* with *blessedness*, and our *emptiness* with *enthusiasm*.

After keeping this event bottled up for 14 years in his soul, Paul shared his vision. The apostle was not quite sure what actually happened. He was not sure if he was in his body or out of it and mentions this twice. He did not know whether his body and soul were caught up to the third heaven like **Enoch** or **Elijah**, or whether his soul temporarily went out of his body. Paul says, "God knows the truth." All Paul knows is he was "**caught up**" to the third heaven and to Paradise. He was there. This is very interesting.

The word "**caught up**" is from the Greek word *harpazo* {*har-pad'-zo*} which means "**to seize or carry off by force; to snatch away with eagerness.**" It was used to describe a wolf snatching its prey. **This is the exact same verb that is used to describe the Rapture of the church.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.**

Beloved, when Christ returns, He will yank us out of this world. He will do it quickly and also firmly, because unfortunately, some Christians have placed their roots deep into this life and have neglected their service for Christ. They are living for now and not for eternity.

Paul was snatched to the third heaven or Paradise as he refers to it in [verse four](#). The Bible refers to three heavens.

1. The aerial heavens, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the heavens above us, until we come to the stars.
2. The starry heavens-the heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated.
3. The heavens beyond the stars. That heaven was supposed to be the residence of God and of angels. It was this upper heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which Paul was taken, and whose wonders he was permitted to behold. He referred to this third heaven as Paradise. The word "**paradise**" occurs but three times in the New Testament, [Luke 23:43](#), [Revelation 2:7](#); and [2 Corinthians 12:4](#).

**Luke 23:43 (NASB)**

<sup>43</sup> **And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."**

**Revelation 2:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'**

**2 Corinthians 12:4 (NASB) “was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which man is not permitted to speak.”**

**The Persian word**, from which the Greek word translated “**paradise**” is derived, means “**walled garden**.” It denotes the pleasure-gardens and parks with wild animals around the country residences of the monarchs and princes. Hence, it denotes in general a garden of pleasure. The greatest honor a Persian king could bestow on one of his subjects was to grant him the right to walk with the king in the royal garden in intimate companionship.

With this background, in the New Testament, the word “**paradise**” is applied to the abodes of the blessed after death, the dwelling-place of God and of happy spirits. Those who die in Christ will fellowship with the King of Kings for all eternity.

**It is noteworthy that this is the only instance** in the Scriptures of anyone who was taken to Heaven, either in reality or in vision, and returned again to the earth, qualified to communicate important truths about the heavenly world from personal observation. **Enoch** and **Elijah** were taken to Heaven, but they returned not to converse with men. Elijah appeared with Moses in conversation with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, but they conversed with Him only about His death, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Beloved, there are great truths which God in His will does not reveal to men. He has communicated enough *to win us, to comfort us, to support our faith, but not to reveal everything to us*. The Lord has revealed to us what Heaven will be in general. It will be a world *without sin, without tears, wrong, injustice, fraud, wars, disease, pestilence, plague, and death*.

In eternity there are boundless truths and glories which are not needful for us to know now and are unnecessary to be revealed to us. What we do know about Heaven will help us to bear the trials we face in this life.

**2 Corinthians 12:4 (NASB)**

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

Unlike modern tricksters, who claim trips to Heaven and visions of God, Paul gave no sensational details or descriptions about his trip to Heaven. He only mentioned what he heard, and that it consisted of inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. He said they were “**not permitted to speak**.”

This is from the word *arrhetos* {*ar'-h-ray-tos*} which can mean “**what cannot be spoken or what ought not to be spoken**.” Whichever idea we attach to it, Paul meant to say that he could not attempt by words to do justice to what he saw and heard. The use of the word “**words**” here would seem to imply that he heard the language of exalted praise,

or that there were truths imparted to his mind which he could not hope to convey in any language spoken by men or was permitted to talk about to others.

**1 Corinthians 2:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup>But just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."**

The late **Harry Rimmer** penned the following letter to **Charles E. Fuller of the Old Fashioned Revival Hour**, shortly before his death. "Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over 50 years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price; but the Donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice.

"I am not holding it for speculation. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials, out of which the greatest Architect of the universe has been building a home for me, which will never need remodeling or repair, because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old."

"Termites can never undermine its foundation for it rests upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No lock or bolts will ever be placed upon the doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that land, where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of being rejected."

"There is a valley of deep shadow between this place where I live, and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that city without passing through that valley. But I am not afraid because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago and drove away all its gloom. He stuck with me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted 55 years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake me or leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and I shall not lose my way because He is with me."

"I hope to hear your sermon on Heaven next Sunday, but I have no assurance I shall be able to do so. My ticket to Heaven has no date marked for the journey, no return coupon and no permit for baggage. Yes, I am ready to go, and I may not be here while you are talking next Sunday evening, but I will meet you there some day."

Beloved, have you put your faith in Christ? If you desire to go to God's Heaven, you must be born again. You must ask Christ to forgive and cleanse you of your sins and trust in Him for eternal life. Christ is the only way to Heaven; all other paths are detours to doom. Are you interested in going to Heaven? Get flight instructions from the Bible and realize it's not your will that keeps you out of Heaven; it's your won't.

**John 3:36 (NASB)**

<sup>36</sup> "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."



## Chapter 26.

### The Blessings From Buffeting

#### **2 Corinthians 12:5-10 (NASB)**

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

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

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

When we go through times of *buffeting, burdens, bother, breakdown, and blistering*, we usually are not overjoyed about what is happening in our lives. Our boat tends to get rocked and our comfort zone is squeezed beyond capacity. Our troubles are so tedious, they tend to drain us of our strength and weaken us.

Yet, the Lord allows these very types of circumstances *to grace our lives* for this specific reason. He uses our times of *buffeting to bring blessing*. That may seem weird, but that is the way the Lord works. In this passage of Scripture, Paul addresses the issue of becoming strong by being weak and receiving God's blessings from His buffeting.

This portion of the New Testament is well known and has been a source of comfort to many suffering believers. Let's see how we receive *blessings* from our *buffeting*.

#### I. THE RESTRAINT OF BOASTING—[2 Corinthians 12:5-6](#)

#### **2 Corinthians 12:5-6 (NASB)**

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

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

The vision that Paul received about Paradise was *wonderful* and *worth* boasting about, but Paul said he would not do this. If he was going to boast about anything, it would be his weaknesses. Paul was a man of humility. Even if he did boast about his accomplishments, he would have nothing to be ashamed of because he would be telling the truth.

God did use him in a great way, yet, he did not let his success go to his head. This man did not want anyone giving him credit beyond what they could see in his life or hear in his message because he was very concerned that the Lord got the glory in his life. He mentioned this attitude repeatedly.

**1 Corinthians 1:31 (NASB)**

**<sup>31</sup> So that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."**

**Galatians 6:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup> But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

When the passion of your life is to lift up the Lord instead of yourself, then you can face whatever obstacles that come your way with greater strength and serenity because you are not focused on getting ahead or making a name for yourself. Your desire will be to shine for Christ.

In the **December-1982**, issue of *Reader's Digest*, a little piece of philosophy appeared that may be helpful to you as you serve the Lord. It is entitled "**Anyway.**" Here is what it said.

1. People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway.
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
3. If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
4. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
5. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
6. The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
7. People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for some underdogs anyway.
8. What you spent years building might be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.

9. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you've got anyway. Better yet, give the Lord your best.

Beloved, it is pretty hard to truly boast of your accomplishments for several reasons.

### 1. The Essential of God's Help:

You cannot do anything without God's help.

**John 15:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

### 2. The Enablement of the Lord:

The Lord enables us to accomplish great things. He provides us with abilities and blessings to accomplish great tasks.

**Lamentations 3:22-23 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup> The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.**

**<sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.**

**2 Corinthians 3:4-5 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup> Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.**

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

**Philippians 4:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

Let me share with you a true story from InterVarsity Press: As a ninth grader, Dave was the smallest kid in his high school. But at five feet tall and ninety pounds, he was the perfect candidate for the lightest weight class on the school's wrestling team. Dave started out as the JV lightweight, but moved up to the varsity position when the boy at that spot moved away. Unfortunately, Dave's first year was not one for the record books. Of the six varsity matches he wrestled, he was pinned six times.

Dave had a dream of being a good enough wrestler to receive his athlete's letter. An athlete's letter is a cloth emblem with the school's initials on it, which is awarded to those athletes who demonstrate exceptional performance in their sports. Those who were fortunate enough to receive a letter proudly wore it on their school letterman jackets.

Whenever Dave shared his dream of "lettering" in wrestling, most of his teammates and friends just laughed. Those who did offer encouragement to Dave usually said something like, "Well, it's not whether you win or lose..." or "It's not really important whether you letter or not..." Even so, Dave was determined to work hard and keep improving as a wrestler.

Every day after school, Dave was in the weight room trying to build up his strength, or running the stadium bleachers trying to increase his endurance, or in the wrestling room trying to improve his technique. The one person who continually believed in Dave was his grandmother.

Every time she saw him, she reminded him of what could be done through prayer and hard work. She told him to keep focused on his goal. Over and over again, she quoted Scripture verses to him, like **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”**

The day before the next season began, Dave’s grandmother passed away. He was heartbroken. If he ever did reach his goal of getting a high school letter, his grandmother would never know.

That season Dave’s opponents faced a new person. What they expected was an easy victory. What they got instead was a ferocious battle. Dave won nine of his first ten matches that year. Midway through the season, Dave’s coach called him into his office to inform him that he would be receiving his high school letter. Dave was ecstatic. The only thing that could have made him feel better was to be able to share it with his grandmother. If only she knew!

Just then the coach smiled as he presented Dave with an envelope. The envelope had Dave’s name written on it in his grandmother’s handwriting. He opened it and read: Dear Dave, I knew you could do it! I set aside \$100 to buy you a school jacket so you could put your letter on it. I hope you’ll wear it proudly, and remember, “You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!” Congratulations, Grandma.

After Dave finished reading the letter, his coach reached behind him and pulled out a brand, new jacket with the school letter attached and Dave’s name embroidered on the front. Dave realized then that his grandmother did know after all.

Christ does give us the strength to achieve great things, and sometimes the power of Christ comes to us through other people. Dave was motivated to work hard because of the encouragement he received from his grandmother. His grandmother was used of the Lord to work in his life. ***Likewise, when we encourage and support one another, we are allowing Christ to work through us in a powerful way.***

**Are you an encouraging person?** Too often, we are like Dave’s friends and teammates. We cut each other ***down*** and ***discourage*** each other so much that we lose heart, but when we have even one person who believes in us, we find the strength to work hard and to reach our potential. Beloved, you can accomplish great things with the Lord’s help and enablement in your life. What a blessing!

### 3. The Extraneousness or insignificance of your Accomplishments

A third reason why we shouldn't boast is the fact that whatever accomplishments you have made may be irrelevant tomorrow. You could be dead or they may be destroyed.

#### **Proverbs 27:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

<sup>2</sup> Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.

#### **James 4:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

A classic example of this point would be the rich man who wanted to build bigger barns.

#### **Luke 12:18-20 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'

<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'"

<sup>20</sup> "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?'

Paul had no desire to boast about his deeds. To prevent him from becoming proud, the Lord regularly gave him a reality check to keep his head on straight. He was buffeted to keep his heart humble and to avoid losing God's blessings. Blessings do come from buffeting.

Notice verse seven.

## II. A REALITY CHECK—[2 Corinthians 12:7](#)

#### **2 Corinthians 12:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn

**in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!**

Paul states that even though he enjoyed wonderful revelations from God, the Lord kept him from becoming proud by giving him a thorn in the flesh. One of the big questions of the Bible refers to this verse.

What was Paul's thorn? We don't know for sure because the Bible doesn't tell us. This word "**thorn**" is from the Greek word *skolops* {*skol'-ops*} which means "**a sharp stake or splinter.**"

Sometimes criminals were impaled upon a sharp stake. Paul's pain was like the pain of a sharp stake. This thorn indicates a savage pain and a picture of intense suffering. Many ideas have been offered to the identity of his thorn.

Some have suggested that it was **malaria, epilepsy, migraine headaches, chronic arthritis, or a disease of the eyes.** Whatever the case, it was a chronic and debilitating problem, which at times kept him from working. This thorn was a hindrance to his ministry.

Paul was a very self-sufficient person, so this thorn must have been difficult for him. It kept Paul humble, reminded him of his need for constant contact with God, and benefitted those around him as they saw God at work in his life. This was a blessing from his buffeting. His thorn did not keep the apostle wholly from his service for Christ.

Scholars believe the messenger of Satan is attributed to his pain which smote him. Others, however, believe that it may refer to false teachers that tormented Paul.

Beloved, you may be suffering from health problems right now and wondering why the Lord doesn't let you get well. Why did you get sick or hurt in the first place? You may wonder if you did something wrong?

That's possible, but sometimes the Lord allows pain and suffering in your life for another reason. It is for the purpose of keeping you humble and dependent upon Him, and to give you the opportunity to glorify Him in your difficult circumstances. Christ is glorified when you praise Him in your pain, pressure, and problems.

**John 9:2-3 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> **And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"**

<sup>3</sup> **Jesus answered, "It was neither *that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him.**

**Dr. Floyd Faust** stated that early in his ministry, he met a man named **Worrall**. He had been stricken with rheumatoid arthritis at age 15. Dr. Faust continued and said: When I met him 30 years later, he was totally paralyzed except for one finger, could barely speak, and was totally blind, but he had a string tied to that one mobile finger that could turn on a recorder.

He wrote for national magazines, authored books, and led a happy and influential life from his bed. This was possible because after initial prayers brought no healing, he accepted his lot graciously and said, “Well Lord! If this is the size plot in life you’ve staked out for me, let’s you and me together show the world what we can grow on it.”

Down the path of humble acceptance, Worrall achieved a happier and more useful life within the limitations of very restricted circumstances than most people ever will manage with excellent physical health. He was determined to glorify the Lord with his life and enjoyed many blessings from his buffeting.

### III. PAUL’S RESPONSE TO HIS THORN—[2 Corinthians 12:8](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 12:8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

**How did Paul respond to his pain?** He took his problem to the Lord. On three different occasions Paul earnestly besought the Lord Jesus that this calamity might be removed from him. **The passage proves that it is right to pray earnestly and repeatedly for the removal of any calamity.** Jesus so prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and Paul so prayed here.

**This section also proves that there is a limit to such prayers.** The Lord prayed three times, and Paul limited himself to the same number of prayer requests. He then submitted to the will of God. This passage does not indicate that we should be limited to exactly this number in our requests to the Lord, but it proves that there should be a limit, and when it is plain that the calamity will not be removed, we should submit to the will of God for our lives. The Lord will remove your burden to pray for a matter when He reveals His will to you. Until then, keep on praying.

When Paul realized his calamity would not be removed, he submitted to the Lord. We should have the same attitude too. You may be praying for someone to be healed, but they are not getting better.

You may be asking the Lord to spare someone’s life, but they may die. David prayed most fervently for his child when he was alive. When his baby died, and it was of no further use to pray for him, he bowed in submission to the will of God. We too, should be submissive to His will.

There will be times when you may pray for the removal of a trial and it's not removed. You may pray for something that you desire but the Lord does not grant your request. Why does He do this?

**1. That we might receive Grace.**

The grace we receive from God from the denial of our request is far more important than the actual desire we seek from the Lord. God's grace enables us to mature and grow in Christ. The Lord uses the calamity to develop maturity in us.

**2. That we might receive Goodness, not something that will hurt us.**

The Lord may deny our request because it is not good for us.

**3. That we might receive Greater blessings.**

God has often some better thing in store for us than would be the immediate answer to our prayer. Who can doubt that this was true of Paul? The promised grace of Christ as sufficient to support us is of more value than would be the mere removal of any bodily affliction.

**4. That we might Grow.**

The Lord did not remove Paul's thorn so that he would remain humble and remain God-dependent. As great a man as Paul was, he still had room to grow in faith. The Lord used buffeting to bring blessing to him.

**IV. THE RELIANCE UPON GOD'S GRACE—[2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#)**

**[2 Corinthians 12:9-10 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>9</sup>And He has said to me, "My grace is **sufficient** for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast



**about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.  
10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with  
distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for  
when I am weak, then I am strong.**

God's response to Paul's three requests to remove his thorn was not the removal of the problem, but grace and strength to face and conquer the problem. The blessing from our buffeting is growth in God's grace.

The Lord says, **"His grace is sufficient."** What does this mean? The word **"sufficient"** is derived from the Greek word *arkeo* {*ar-keh'-o*} which means **"to be possessed of unfailing strength; to be enough, sufficient, or to be contented."** It is the same word that is used in [1 Timothy 6:8](#).

**1 Timothy 6:8 (NASB)**

**8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.**

God's grace is sufficient for us now. It is enough for what we are facing in our life. It is available and ready to go!

1. *The core of our creed, convictions, and character,*
2. *The epicenter of our expectations,*
3. *The root of our righteousness,*
4. *The foundation of our faith,*
5. *The zenith of our zeal,*
6. *The pinnacle of our power and purity,*
7. *The bloom of the beliefs of our faith is the GRACE of God Almighty.*

Grace affects every area of our Christian life and without it we would be of men most miserable. In fact, the reason why many people without Christ are miserable is because they do not know and have the grace of God in their life. What an awful way to live!

Grace affects our past, overcoming the guilt and gloom that our sins have produced. Grace affects our present, overpowering our grief, the grind, and glitches of our life. Grace also affects our future, overlooking our goals, our glimpse of the future, and giving us hope.

We could not spiritually survive without the grace of God. To live the Christian life without the grace of God would be like trying to catch a feather in a hurricane. It would be impossible.

Because of the awesomeness of God's grace, writers have painted their hearts in wonderful songs.

1. It was **John Newton** who proclaimed, “Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, now I’m found, was blind but now I see.”
2. **Haldor Lillenas** in splendor said, “Wonderful grace of Jesus greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it? Where shall its praise begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.”
3. **James Gray** humbly expressed his heart, “Only a sinner saved by grace, only a sinner saved by grace. This is my story, to God be the glory, I’m only a sinner, saved by grace!”

What are these songs about? What is this thing called “**GRACE?**”

The Hebrew root word is *chanan {khar'-nan}* and means “**to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor.**” Jesus Christ stooped to the human race, leaving the glory place of the adoration of angels to come to the gory place of the anger and apathy of men that He might suffer and die for our sins.

**Donald Barnhouse** said, “Love that goes upward is **worship**. Love that goes out is **affection**. Love that stoops is **grace.**” That is what Christ did for us. He stooped in order to save us from our sin.

Others define grace another way. They use an acrostic **G-R-A-C-E** standing for **God’s Riches At Christ Expense**. Grace is also God’s unmerited love and favor toward us. *A key definition of grace is “grace is the power and desire to do the will of God in your life.”*

The grace of God is essential and adequate for every area of our life from *salvation to service, from surviving suffering to being saintly*. These definitions will give you a good grasp on what grace is all about.

Some men go through their lives *degrading, devaluing, discrediting, disgracing, and dishonoring God*. Others make demands and expect God to do man’s will. They feel God owes them something and He better shape up or they will ship God out of their lives.

Their ultimatums for God show they lack understanding about who God is and who they are and are not! **Beloved, GOD OWES US NOTHING!!!** In grace, He gives to us. The nature or character of grace is giving. It is God’s nature to give. He is a God of grace because He freely gives to us. God bestows His grace not because of what we **DO**, or what or who we **ARE**, but because of **WHO GOD IS... HE IS GOD!!!**

The grace of God is *unearned, undeserved, and unmerited*. We are *unworthy, unqualified, and unentitled* to receive it, but we do because it is given freely by a gracious God. Thank God it is free for we could never pay the Lord back anyway.

**Grace's greatest gift is the gift of self.** Grace is God giving Himself to us. That is part of the Gospel message. God giving Himself to us and for us.

**Augustus Toplady** said, “**Grace finds us beggars, but leaves us debtors.**” We are indebted to the Lord. We cannot begin to comprehend and understand what God’s grace is all about. We do know that it gives us *pardon* and *peace* with Him. The grace of God is essential and adequate for every area of our life *from salvation to service, from surviving suffering to being saintly*. This is what Paul reaffirms here in [2 Corinthians 12](#).

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB)**

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

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

God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. The word “**power**” is from the word *dunamis {doo'-nam-is}* which means “**strength, power, or ability.**” God’s power is made perfect or complete in our weakness.

This word “**weakness**” is an interesting word. It is from the word *astheneia {as-then'-i-ah}* which means “**weakness, feebleness of health or sickness, lack of strength; to bear trials or troubles.**” The fact that God’s power is displayed in weak people should give us courage.

Though we recognize our limitations, we will not congratulate ourselves and rest at that. Instead, we will turn to God to seek pathways for effectiveness. We must rely on the Lord for our effectiveness rather than simply on our own energy, effort, or talent.

When we are strong in abilities or resources, *we are tempted to do God’s work on our own, and that can lead to pride*. When we are weak, allowing God to fill us with His power, then we are stronger than we could ever be on our own. God does not intend for us to seek to be *weak, passive, or ineffective*—life provides enough hindrances and setbacks without us creating them. When those obstacles come, we must depend on the Lord. Only His power will make us effective for Him and will help us do work that has lasting value.

Our weakness not only helps develop Christian character, it also deepens our worship, because in admitting our weakness, we affirm God’s strength. The grace and power of God is perfected when we suffer from sickness or trial, because we rely upon Him so

heavily. This is why Paul gladly gloried in his infirmities because he wanted the power of Christ to rest upon him.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB)**

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

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

This word “**dwell**” is from *episkenoō* {*ep-ee-skay-no'-o*} which means “**to fix a tent or to take possession of and live in a house.**” Paul wanted grace to abide or be at home in his life. It was abundant in him, and the Lord enabled him to keep going forward and to have strength in the face of *infirmities, reproaches, insults, times of poverty, hardship, persecution, trouble, difficulties, and distress for the sake of Christ*. God’s grace will help you in these times too.

**Henrietta Mears**, who was used so mightily to strengthen the evangelical church through her discipleship and writing, suffered from her childhood and through the rest of her life with extreme myopia and general eye weakness and irritation. She, like Paul, cried out for relief, but to no avail. In her maturity Miss Mears often remarked, “I believe my greatest spiritual asset throughout my entire life has been my failing sight, for it has kept me absolutely dependent upon God.”

**Henrietta Mears** went forward for Christ, still plagued by her increasing disability, to set the standard for Sunday schools in America. She founded Gospel Light and wrote the million-plus best-seller book, *What the Bible Is All About*. In her weakness, she became strong. The grace of God enables you too, to be strong when you are weak and to enjoy God's blessings when you are buffeted.

## **Chapter 27.**

### **How to Spend Your Life**

## **2 Corinthians 12:11-19 (NASB)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the favorite things I enjoyed doing as a boy of seven or eight was to ride my bike to Flank's grocery store which was about four blocks from my house, and spend my money on a five cent pack of baseball cards and a one pint glass bottle of ice cold Pepsi Cola for a dime.

I liked the baseball cards because each pack had a piece of bubble gum. I would clean yards and find empty glass soda bottles to get money for my treats. In those days, they would give you a nickel for each bottle you returned to the store. Spending my allowance and bottle money was a lot of fun. Most of you understand what I am talking about because many of you like to go shopping today, especially when you can get a bargain. Face it, it's fun to shop! Don't let my wife know that!

In this portion of the wonderful [twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians](#), Paul addresses the issue of spending. He talks about the wonderful joy that he had in spending his life for the Lord and for the Corinthians in order to win them to Christ and help them grow in the Lord. In this section, we are given some valuable principles on how to spend your life with joy and not throw it away.

## I. THE REBUKE OR REPRIMAND OF PAUL— 2 Corinthians 12:11-12

### 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 (NASB)

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

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

Paul was a man who did not like having to talk about himself or his deeds. He fully agreed with Solomon's wise counsel in Proverbs 27.

### Proverbs 27:2 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.

Because his *credentials* and *credibility* were under attack as an apostle, he was placed in a position where he was “**compelled**” to speak up and defend his apostleship. The faithfulness of the Corinthian believers was at stake. The word “**compelled**” is from the Greek word *anagkazo* {*an-ang-kad'-zo*} which means “**to force, to compel or necessitate.**”

Paul felt forced to boast about his ministry. Most of us don't like to be forced to do anything and Paul was no different, especially when it came to talking about himself. He felt it was so foolish to have to do this, but it was necessary that he did.

He gets firm with these believers and reprimands them for what took place. He should have never been put in this position. The church knew Paul and what the Lord did through him. They knew the *truth about his ministry, his character, his message and work.*

These folks benefitted greatly from what he had done for them. He was their spiritual father who brought them the Gospel. They should have “**commended**” him instead of believing those who were condemning him. These believers knew that the allegations against Paul were false.

Let me stop here for a minute. Beloved, we are to live in such a way that we don't put people in a position where they have to reprimand us for doing things that we know are wrong or for right things we should have done.

It is one thing to make an innocent mistake or error, but to engage in activities that are obviously wrong brings shame upon us. This is not the way you want to spend your life. Equally, we bring reproach upon ourselves when we neglect to do what is right as we see in this situation.

Beloved, whether you are a teenager, an employee, a student in school, or a church member, don't put your parents, pastors, boss, or teachers in positions where they have to confront and reprimand you for actions, attitudes, or activities that are clearly wrong and destructive or for your negligence in doing what is right and responsible. You create grief and stress for those who must deal with your wrongs. Give them a break.

This passage is a reminder that when we stand before the **Judgment seat of Christ** one day, we will give an account for what we have done and not done, but could have done. We will answer for our neglect as well as for our faithfulness. All Christians will answer to the Lord for the way they spent their lives. Whatever you do, don't throw your life away!

**Romans 14:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.**

**2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB)**

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

The writer of Hebrews made it clear that those folks who neglect Christ's salvation will answer for it for all eternity. They will not escape God's judgment in Hell.

**Hebrews 2:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,**

**2 Corinthians 12:11-12 (NASB)**

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

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

The Corinthians should have commended Paul. This is what they should have done. **What does he mean by this?** This word "commend" is from the word *sunistao* {soon-is-tah'-o} which means "to stand by or with someone; to uphold or support the authority of someone."

So the apostle is rebuking them and telling them they should have stood by him when he was being attacked instead of being passive spectators. The lack of loyalty for that which was right created mega-problems not only for Paul, but for the Corinthian church. **When Christians do not stand by and support the authority of the Word of God, then Satan gains a foothold in their hearts, and they spend their lives foolishly, wasting it away.**



When Christians *attack* and *undermine* their spiritual leaders, they create an opportunity for Satan to gain ground in their personal lives and divide the church. I have observed since 1983, that people who try to destroy their spiritual leaders, their pastor, youth pastor, deacons, or teachers, they seriously weaken themselves in their spiritual growth.

Many of the people I have seen do this, either get out of church and cool off spiritually, or they start attending churches that are not as serious about Bible preaching and winning the lost to Christ.

They become involved in entertainment ministries or social program churches. Let me say, **“It does make a difference what church you attend. Not all churches are the same.”** Wherever you go or live, spend your life in a good, Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church.

In his reprimand, Paul gets sarcastic with the church. He affirms that he is not inferior to the so called **“eminent apostles”** that were criticizing him in Corinth. The Lord enabled Paul to perform many signs, wonders, and miracles which were signs of a true apostle. Yet, in his humility, he affirms he is just a nobody. Paul attributed his life and work to the grace of God working in him. The same is true for us.

**1 Corinthians 15:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**

**John 15:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

The person who thinks he is something tends to have no time for God, church, Christians, prayer, preaching, and the Word of God **because he has elevated his authority above the authority of God in his life.**

He will not kneel or yield to God’s control because he has shielded his heart from the Lord’s truth. The person who concludes that he is **“something,”** will fall for almost **anything,** which will cause him to lose **everything,** especially his own soul. This will leave him with **nothing** but agony for eternity.

**Proverbs 14:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**

You are nothing without the Lord no matter what you think about yourself or God. Your opinion about God and His truth do not change the character or existence of God and do not alter the truth of His Word.



God is God and His Word is true and will always be true whether you like it or not, or agree with it. The best way you can spend your life is listen to Him, love Him with all your heart, learn His Word, and put it into practice.

When we look at Paul, we find that he was not “**Super Christian**” with a big “**S**” on his robe. He was an apostle. **What does this really mean?** The word “**apostle**” is from the word *apostolos* which means “**messenger, delegate, or ambassador.**”

**The term is mainly used to refer to fourteen men which include the twelve disciples, Matthias, and Paul.**

In New Testament times, the word “**apostle**” referred to a person who acted with full authority for another person. The apostles were ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were chosen by the Lord for their ministries. They were eye witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The Lord used several of them to write the canon or Scriptures of the New Testament.

**John 13:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”**

The **signs, wonders, or miracles** that the apostles performed were evidence of their apostleship and that they were God’s true messengers. “**Signs**” were miracles with emphasis on their significance. “**Wonders**” were unusual events that engendered awe. “**Miracles**” were wonder works resulting from supernatural power.

**What was God’s purpose in these things?** The answer is they drew attention to the apostle’s message, that it was truly from God and that he was God’s credible messenger. We also find that they introduced key times of God’s revelation to men.

There were **three key periods** of miracles that are recorded in the Bible.

1. The period during the lives of Moses and Joshua. The miracles attested the giving of the Law.
2. The period of Elijah and Elisha. The miracles authenticated the revelation of Old Testament scripture and the ministry of prophets.
3. The years of the ministry of Jesus and His apostles. The miracles proved the deity of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the apostles.

**Are miraculous answers to prayer still happening today?** Yes, and the Lord gets the glory. **A. B. Simpson** said: “Whatever God has ever done, He can do again! Whatever God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has done for anyone, He can do for you.”

**Are miracles required to know or confirm God's truth? No.** There is no need for signs, wonders, and miracles to know God's truth today because we have the complete revelation of Scripture in order to know God's message for us. We also have the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to spread the truth of the Scriptures.

The historical and scientific accuracy of Scripture, its *consistency* and *uniformity* with the rest of the verses in the Bible, the fulfillment of its prophecies, and its life-transforming power proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

Anyone who will sit down and carefully study and examine God's Word with an open mind will come to the conclusion of its divine inspiration. A person with a closed mind will not come to this conclusion until he is truly wanting to know the genuine truth about the Lord.

God's invitation to mankind is to search for Him, but don't delay lest someday you wait too long. Every day spent without the Lord is a day of lost blessings and opportunities to live for Him. Seek Him today.

**Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.**

**Proverbs 8:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me.**

**Isaiah 55:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> **Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.**

The turning point in our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is. The following description shows the futility of a life that has left out the Lord and has been foolishly spent:

1. He wore his rubbers when it rained.
2. He brushed his teeth TWICE a day—with a nationally, advertised toothpaste. The doctors examined him twice a year.
3. He slept with the windows open.
4. He stuck to a diet with plenty of fresh vegetables.
5. He relinquished his tonsils and traded in several worn-out glands.
6. He golfed -- but never more than 18 holes at a time.
7. He got at least eight hours' sleep every night.
8. He never smoked, drank or lost his temper.
9. He did his "daily dozen" daily. He was all set to live to be a hundred.

The funeral will be held Wednesday. He's survived by eight specialists, three health institutions, two gymnasiums and numerous manufacturers of health foods and antiseptics. He forgot God. This was his huge mistake. Beloved, don't forget about the Lord in your life.

**2 Corinthians 12:11-12 (NASB)**

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

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

Paul stated that he *wrought* or *performed* miracles, confirming the fact he was an apostle. This word “**performed**” is in the passive voice of the Greek language which means that it was God’s power working through the Apostle Paul that enabled him to perform those wonders and miracles.

Paul was a channel of God’s power. He was not a *trickster, illusionist, or magician*. He was a channel of God’s blessings. Let me say here that the Lord wants to use you to be a channel of blessing. You may not perform miracles or wonders, but you can demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ by your *love, patience, kindness, assistance, and concern for the lives and souls of men*. If you know Christ as your Savior, you are His ambassador.

**2 Corinthians 5:20 (NASB)**

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

In his great book, *Living Faithfully*, **J. Allen Blair** tells of a man who was struggling to get to Grand Central Station in New York City. The wind blew fiercely, and the rain beat down on him as he lugged his two heavy suitcases toward the terminal.

Occasionally he would pause to rest and regain his strength before trudging on against the elements. At one point he was almost ready to collapse, when a man suddenly appeared by his side, took the suitcases, and said in a strangely familiar voice, “We’re going the same way. You look as if you could use some help.”

When they had reached the shelter of the station, the weary traveler, the renowned educator **Booker T. Washington**, asked the man, “Please, sir, what is your name?” The man replied, “The name, my friend, is Roosevelt. **Teddy Roosevelt.**”

Roosevelt endeared himself to others because he had a servant spirit. You can be a channel of blessing to many people if that’s what you want to be. You can start today. Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit and power and point others to the Lord Jesus Christ. Spend your life serving the Lord and being a servant to others.

**Matthew 23:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **But the greatest among you shall be your servant.**

## II. THE REMISSNESS OR FAILURE OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 12:13](#)

### [2 Corinthians 12:13 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Paul's possible sarcasm is seen in this verse too. He addresses his remissness or failure to the Corinth church. How was this church treated differently than the other churches? How were they treated in an inferior way?

Paul sarcastically says, "I failed to be a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong of not letting you be equal to the other churches." He was gently telling them it was their responsibility to help support him, but he did not give them that opportunity like he did all the other churches he started.

Beloved, it is the privilege of believers to support the ministry of the Gospel, for in so doing, we reap God's promises and blessings on our own lives. He does keep His Word. Spreading the Gospel and supporting a ministry that does this is a great way to spend your life and the resources that God has given to you.

### [Luke 6:38 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>38</sup> **"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."**

## III. READINESS AND RESOLVE—[2 Corinthians 12:14-15](#)

### [2 Corinthians 12:14-15 \(NASB\)](#)

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

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

On Paul's first visit to the city of Corinth, he started the church that was there as recorded in [Acts 18](#). He later made a second visit to deal with problems in the church ([2 Corinthians 2](#)).

It was his intention to visit the city again for a third time. He was ready to see them again and made it clear, as before, that he did not want to be paid, fed, or housed. He did not want to be a burden to these folks in any way. This word "**burden**" is from the Greek word *katanarkao* {*kat-an-ar-kah'-o*} which means "**to cause to grow numb or sluggish, to weigh heavily, to be a detriment.**"

Paul was still very sensitive about finances with these people and obviously felt that receiving any support from them personally would be a hindrance.

**Let's pull over and park for a second. Does your example or influence numb, deaden, or cool others off spiritually?** Are Christians encouraged or made stronger by their time with you or are they spiritually discouraged by your *avarice, anger, apathy, or attitude*?

Being a weight that would slow the growth of others was a serious concern that Paul had in his mind. He did not want to be a hindrance or stumbling block to people in any way and took great pains to avoid this.

**Romans 14:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.**

Is this a concern of yours? Are you concerned about your example or testimony and the effect that you have on other people? Let me say that a great way to spend your life is to uplift people *emotionally, spiritually, and even physically* by meeting their needs and directing their attention and focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ who can meet their every need. If they don't know the Lord, try to win them to Christ.

Unlike false prophets, Paul wanted to make it obvious to the Corinthians that he was concerned *about their salvation, and not their money or property*. Paul illustrated his point using the analogy of parents caring for their children, pointing out the truth that children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. The Corinthians were, of course, Paul's spiritual children, and he willingly sacrificed himself for them. He treated them as a loving father who *works hard, sacrifices, and lays up* what is necessary to enable his children to get their bread.

**2 Corinthians 12:14-15 (NASB)**

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

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

The words rendered “**not responsible**” are to be understood in a comparative sense. Paul does not mean that a child ought never to provide for his parents, or to lay anything up for a sick, a poor, and an infirm father or mother. It is a matter of obligation for a child to provide for an aged and helpless parent, but commonly, the duty is that of a parent to provide for his children. Paul felt like a father toward the church in Corinth, and he was willing to labor for them without compensation.

**2 Corinthians 12:14-15 (NASB)**

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

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

The apostle made it clear how he wanted to spend his life. He wanted to invest it in others. He told the Corinthian believers, **“I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you.”** What a statement! It was his joy to spend his life, his strength, his time, his all for their spiritual welfare, just as a father cheerfully spends his life for his own children’s joy and needs.

The words **“most gladly”** are derived from the superlative form of the word *hedista* {*hay'-dis-tah*} which expresses extreme joy and elation. The apostle was thrilled and overjoyed to invest his life in them without any reluctance or hesitancy. He was willing to spend his life in reaching them for Christ. What an example to us.

This word **“spend”** is from the Greek verb *dapanao* {*dap-an-ah'-o*} which means **“to spend freely.”** In a negative sense, it meant **“to waste or to squander.”** This word was used by Mark when he described a woman that spent all her money on doctors (**Mark 5:26**). It was also used by Luke to describe the wastefulness of the prodigal son’s spending spree (**Luke 15:14**).

**Mark 5:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> **And had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse.**

**Luke 15:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.**

The words **“spent”** and **“spend”** reveal Paul’s willingness to freely sacrifice his life in reaching others for the Lord Jesus Christ without hesitation. The word **“spent”** is from the word *ekdapanao* {*ek-dap-an-ah'-o*}. This word is used only here in the New Testament. It means **“to exhaust by expending, to be totally spent or used up.”**

The Apostle Paul was willing to spend or totally use up himself for these people until there was nothing else left to give. He was willing to burn the candle at both ends in order to reach them for Christ and disciple them in the Lord. That is how important this issue was to him and should be to us.

Giving 100% was the attitude of Paul when it came to serving Christ and it ought to be the attitude of every believer. No sacrifice was too great for he was following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Mark 10:45 (NASB)**

<sup>45</sup> "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**Matthew 22:37 (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup> And He said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

How should you spend your life? Live for Christ and make an effort to reach others for Him. Such spending, such exhaustion of *time, strength, talents, and resources* are not a waste at all.

**Jim Elliot** said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The sands of your life flow through the hour glass of time every day. You cannot keep those minutes. Those grains of sand are spent up and gone.

Your labor for Christ, however, and the souls that have been saved through your efforts are not a waste of time. You will see the final results of your spent life in Heaven and you will realize that spending your life for Jesus Christ was worth it all. **Daniel Webster** believed this truth.

At one time, **Daniel Webster** was considered the greatest of all living Americans. He was outstanding as a statesman, lawyer, orator, and leader of men. Twenty-five national leaders attended a select banquet in his honor. One man at the banquet asked Mr. Webster, "Sir, what is the greatest thought that ever entered your mind?" Without hesitation, Webster replied, "**The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was the thought of my responsibility to God.**"

As he spoke, he wept, excused himself from the banquet, and went outside to get control of his emotions. When he returned, Daniel Webster talked for thirty minutes to these 25 national, influential leaders about man's responsibility to God.

Paul sacrificed for these people and spent his life trying to help them, yet, they were lacking in love and appreciation for this man. He was like a father that loved his child, *but the child was ungrateful and did not return any affection.*

Many parents today face this very predicament. They give and give to their children, only to have their love trampled upon by *ingratitude, insolence, and indifference*. Instead of being a son or daughter that the father or mother can be proud of, they become a source of sorrow and grief as their *rotten attitude* and *lack of gratitude* break the hearts of their parents.

Way to go kids! You can really be proud of that kind of behavior, can't you? Young people, you better enjoy your parents now because one day, they will be gone and it will be too late to say, "I love you and thank you." The only thing you will have accomplished is to bring shame upon yourself and sorrow for your parents.



**Proverbs 19:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> **He who assaults *his* father *and* drives *his* mother away Is a shameful and disgraceful son.**

Children that mistreat their parents are an embarrassment and public disgrace. Is this how you want to be known or remembered?

**Proverbs 17:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> **A foolish son is a grief to his father And bitterness to her who bore him.**

**Proverbs 28:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **He who keeps the law is a discerning son, But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.**

In spite of the lack of love and appreciation from the Corinthians, Paul was still willing to be spent for them. His mind was made up and he demonstrated a resolve that could not be shaken.

He is preaching a very loud message with his life here. It is a message that is difficult to live and put into practice. Paul is teaching that we should be willing to labor and be spent for the good of others, even when they are ungrateful.

Our purpose for spending our lives for Christ is not to evoke the gratitude and praise of people, or to be popular, **but to obey God's will for our lives**. Boy, this is not easy when people are ungrateful, but it is necessary if we are going to wisely spend our life for the Lord.

If we get offended every time someone is ungrateful or hurts our feelings, we will constantly be jumping from one church to another whether we are a member or the pastor. Our life will be characterized by constant instability.

If you want to spend your life for Christ, then it is essential you learn to keep your focus and purpose on Him. If you don't, you can become *distracted* and *discouraged* by *difficulties* and *distress*. Our strength and peace are found in spending our lives for the Lord.

**Isaiah 26:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.**

A young lady known as **Lydia Baxter** was saved under the preaching of a Baptist evangelist named **Eben Tucker** in the early **1800's**. She eventually married **Colonel John Baxter** and moved to New York where she spent her life working tirelessly for the Lord Jesus Christ until her body was afflicted with severe health problems that left her bed ridden.



Her attitude was so cheerful and sunny, however, that the Baxter home became a gathering place for Christian workers and leaders. It was a place of encouragement. Lydia was determined to not let her circumstances overcome her.

Lydia once told her friends who asked her how she could be so radiant and happy in spite of all the health problems and difficulties she was facing. She replied, "I have very special armor. I have the name of Jesus. When the tempter tries to make me blue or despondent, I mention the name of Jesus, and he cannot get through to me anymore."

**In 1870**, four years before she died, she penned these words that became a favorite hymn that has **stood the test of time for almost 140 years**. The words that she wrote teach us how to spend our lives for the Lord.

**Take the Name of Jesus with You**

*Take the Name of Jesus with you,  
Child of sorrow and of woe,  
It will joy and comfort give you;  
Take it then, where'er you go.*

*Take the Name of Jesus ever,  
As a shield from every snare;  
If temptations round you gather,  
Breathe that holy Name in prayer.  
Precious Name, O how sweet!  
Hope of earth and joy of Heav'n.  
Precious Name, O how sweet!  
Hope of earth and joy of Heav'n.*

We have seen so far three elements of this section of 2 Corinthians.

1. *The Rebuke or Reprimand of Paul* [12:11-12](#)
2. *The Remissness or Failure of Paul* [12:13](#)
3. *The Readiness and Resolve of Paul* [12:14-15](#)
4. *Next, the Reason for Restraint* [12:16-19](#)

#### IV. THE REASON FOR RESTRAINT—[2 Corinthians 12:16-19](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 12:16-19 \(NASB\)](#)

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

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

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

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

Paul reaffirms his reason for restraint in taking financial support from the Corinthian church. He did not want to burden them in any way. He then makes a very interesting and captivating statement, “**crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.**” What in the world is he saying here? What does he mean by this statement? Paul is being sarcastic again with the church. He is repeating what the false prophets were saying about him. He was echoing their false accusations.

The word “**crafty**” is used only here in the New Testament. It is from the word *panourgos* {*pan-oor'-gos*} which means “**fit or ready to do anything, wise or skillful; in a bad sense it means deceitful, treacherous, or crafty.**” The word “**deceit**” is from the Greek word *dolos* {*dol'-os*} which literally means “**the bait that is used to catch fish.**”

False teachers were accusing Paul of doing anything to lure and catch the Corinthians by deceitful schemes. Yet, Paul had taken nothing from these people. He had taken every step to avoid these accusations by bringing in others to collect the gift for the Jerusalem church.

How did the false teachers respond or explain Paul’s trickery when he had taken nothing? Their answer was he had not sprung his trap yet. He would keep the offering for Jerusalem for himself.

Let me stress again that Paul was being sarcastic when he spoke of being crafty and using deceit. He was not saying that it was permissible to use deceit in order to serve a religious purpose. Such teaching is *unscriptural* and *atrocious* yet, religious scam artists try to justify their schemes by using this verse. Paul was not a “**scam**” artist, unlike some of the shysters that fleece gullible people out of their finances today to pay for their jets, boats, and castles.

Paul defends his upright behavior and the integrity of Titus and his companion. He makes it very clear that everything he has done as a servant of Christ was for the purpose of strengthening these believers and helping them to mature in Christ. God was his witness. He concealed or disguised nothing at all. Everything was done out in the open.

Beloved, when you truly comprehend the concept that God is your witness, it will help you to spend your life for Him. Knowing that He is listening and watching us is a source of comfort, yet also concern. May our lives be presented to Him, holy, and acceptable.

**2 Chronicles 16:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."**

**1 Peter 3:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."**

**Romans 12:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.***

Knowing that God is our witness also gives us *confidence* and courage to face our *trials* and *obstacles* when they come our way. It helps us to get up and go forward when we are **knocked down by difficulty, defeat, danger, or death.**

**William Carey, the "Father of Modern Missions,"** wanted to translate the Bible into as many Indian languages as possible. He established a large print shop at his mission headquarters in **Serampore, India** where translation work was continually being done.

Carey spent hours each day translating the Scriptures. He was away from Serampore on **March 11, 1832**, when disaster struck. His associate, **William Ward**, was working late. Suddenly Ward's throat tightened and he smelled smoke. He leaped up to discover clouds belching from the printing room. He screamed for help, and workers passed water from the nearby river until 2 A.M., but everything was destroyed.

The next day, fellow missionary **Joshua Marshman** traveled to Calcutta and entered the classroom where William was teaching. "I can think of no easy way to break the news," he said. "The print shop burned to the ground last night."

Carey was stunned. Gone were his massive polyglot dictionary, two grammar books, and whole versions of the Bible. Gone were sets of type for fourteen eastern languages, twelve hundred reams of paper, fifty-five thousand printed sheets, and thirty pages of his Bengal dictionary. Gone was his complete library. William painfully whispered, “The work of years—gone in a moment.”

He took little time to mourn. He wrote, “The loss is heavy, but as traveling a road the second time is usually done with greater ease and certainty than the first time, so I trust the work will lose nothing of real value. We are not discouraged, indeed the work is already begun again in every language. We are cast down but not in despair.”

When news of the fire reached England, it catapulted Carey to instant fame. Thousands of English pounds were raised for the work, and volunteers offered to come help. The enterprise was rebuilt and enlarged.

By the end of 1832, complete Bibles, New Testaments, or separate books of Scripture had issued from the printing press in forty-four languages and dialects. The secret of Carey’s success is found in his resiliency. William wrote, “There are grave difficulties on every hand, and more are looming ahead. Therefore, we must go forward.”

**How do you spend your life? Go forward for Jesus Christ.**

## Chapter 28. Restless About an Arrival

### **2 Corinthians 12:20-21 (NASB)**

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

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

Have you ever gone on a trip where you were going to meet someone? Perhaps you were going to meet someone for the first time or maybe you were going to meet someone for an important meeting.

Paul was in the same type of situation as he prepared to return to Corinth for the third time. He was restless about the spiritual condition of the people, the unity of the church, and his arrival. He expresses his concerns in the last two verses of chapter twelve.

### **I. THE CONSTERNATION OR FEAR OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 12:20A](#)**

#### **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

This word “**afraid**” is from the word *phobeo* {*fob-eh'-o*}. It not only means “**to fear,**” but “**to be seized with alarm, to scare someone away, an intense, deep-seated anxiety.**”

He is concerned about what is going on in this church. He feared that when he arrived, he would not like the spiritual condition in the church and they would not like his response to that condition. Paul did not want to have to go and reprimand these people again for sin in the church. He has already been through this once.

He wanted his arrival to be a pleasant one, but he was not one to shirk from problems. If there was sin in the church, he would use his apostolic authority to deal with it again firmly. That would definitely be an unpleasant, but necessary response for the Corinthians. In a way, the apostle is giving them a gentle warning, of what he expects when he arrives and what they can expect from him. Nevertheless, he was restless about his arrival.

Paul's supreme concern was the opinion of God and not men. This should be our concern too. On one occasion **Abraham Lincoln** and his counselors had made an important decision. **One of the counselors said, "Well, Mr. President, I hope that God is on our side." Lincoln answered, "What I am worried about is, not if God is on our side, but if we are on His."**

This was Paul's attitude. His passion was to live his life, right with God, no matter what men thought or said. If there were problems in the church, he would deal with them just as a pastor should today.

The role of the pastor today is to help the Christians in his church family to grow and mature in Christ. This involves encouragement and also warning against sin and its consequences.

**Ephesians 4:11-13 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,**  
<sup>12</sup> **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**  
<sup>13</sup> **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**

The responsibility of the pastor is not to make his people comfortable in a world where they are *pilgrims* and *strangers*, but to prepare them to be effective servants for Christ and to prepare them for their life in Heaven. Keeping one eye on eternity helps believers to have a proper focus about life and the Lord down here on earth. The repeated challenge of Scripture is to prepare for Heaven, because that is where our final home will be.

**Psalms 73:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> **Whom have I in heaven *but You*? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.**

**Matthew 6:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;**

**2 Corinthians 4:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

**2 Corinthians 5:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> **We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

**Philippians 3:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**

### **1 Peter 1:3-4 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

Are you ready for eternity? Are you saved? Are you right with God or are you restless about your arrival in Heaven?

## **II. CONCERNS ABOUT FEUDING—2 Corinthians 12:20B**

### **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

Paul begins to express his reasons for *anxiety* and *restlessness*. He is concerned about certain problems that might have existed in the church that revolved around the area of conflicts with people. The list Paul provided are serious problems that destroy a good spirit in the church and divide the people.

These problems were typical of the *divisive, selfish, pagan* behavior of Corinthian society and were inflamed by the destructive influence of the false apostles. That such sins existed in the Corinthian church is evident from the fact that all of them were also addressed in the book of First Corinthians. Let's look at each one.

### **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

#### **A. Strife**

The word “**strife**” is from the word *eris* {*er'-is*} which means “**contention, strife, or wrangling.**” This is the word of **battles** and **conflicts** and the way we treat people. It denotes *rivalry, competition, and discord* about *place, position, and prestige*. This kind of activity in a church is devastating. It kills the unity of the church when people grope for power and undermine the authority of the pastor and the spiritual leaders of the church. It is Satanic and of the devil as far as I am concerned.

*Eris* is the characteristic of the man who has forgotten that only he who humbles himself can be truly exalted. Many try to exalt themselves to gain power or popularity, only to find *emptiness, frustration, and disappointment* when people do not respond to their efforts for power. Someone said, "He who is full of himself is likely to be quite empty."

Do you find yourself grasping for power or trying to exalt yourself to get your own way? This attitude is not to characterize the life of the Christian. It is a bad trait. **Max Lucado** put it this way, "The snake pulled back the curtain to the throne room and invited Eve to take a seat. Put on the crown. Pick up the scepter. Put on the cape. See how it feels to have power. See how it feels to have a name. See how it feels to be in control! Eve swallowed the hook. The temptation to be like God eclipsed her view of God." It will do the same to us, too.

This word *eris* was also used by Paul to describe a person who did not know the Lord. He also strongly warned the Roman Christians to avoid *debate, strife* or *contention* at all cost. In Philippi, the people that preached Christ out of selfish motives were characterized by this word.

**Romans 1:28-29 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

<sup>29</sup> being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, **strife**, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,

**Romans 13:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in **strife** and jealousy.

**Philippians 1:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and **strife**, but some also from good will;

**2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

## **B. Jealousy**

Paul was concerned about the problem of **jealousy** at Corinth and it made him restless about his arrival. **Envy** or **jealousy** speaks about our attitude toward others and what we think we deserve. This word is derived from the Greek word *zelos* {*dzay'-los*} which means "pursuing a thing or a person, jealousy, rivalry, the fierceness of indignation."



*Jealousy* is the *grasping, protective, self-centeredness* that causes people to be suspicious of others as potential rivals. It turns us into Incredible Hulks of *divisiveness* and *destruction* as we become “**green**” with envy like the Hulk.

Originally it described a great emotion, that of the man who sees a fine life or a fine action and is moved to imitate that action. **Imitation** or **emulation**, however, can easily become envy, which is the desire to have what is not ours to have, or the spirit which grudges others the possession of anything denied to us.

Do you struggle with this? As a brother or sister, do you find yourself getting jealous of the possessions, position, or attention of your siblings? As a pastor, do you get jealous of the ministries of other pastors? As a church member, do you envy the material possessions of other Christians in your church?

Brethren, realize that anything we accomplish is done by God’s help and blessing. **Spurgeon** put it this way, “Success exposes a man to the pressure of people and thus tempts him to hold on to his gains by means of fleshly methods and practices, and to let himself be ruled wholly by the dictatorial demands of incessant expansion. Success can go to my head, and will unless I remember that it is God who accomplishes the work, that He can continue to do so without my help, and that He will be able to make out with other means whenever He cuts me down to size.”

#### **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

### **C. Angry Tempers**

This word “**angry tempers**” is from the Greek word *thutnos* {*thoo-mos*} which means “**rage or fierce, heated, violent anger.**” It denotes sudden explosions of passionate anger. The ancients said themselves that such outbursts were more characteristic of animals than men. An animal cannot control itself, but a man ought to be able to do so, especially when he is a Christian.

When passion runs away with a person, he becomes *unreasonable* and *unthinking* rather than a *reasonable, self-controlled* man. *Wrath* or *temper tantrums* made Paul restless about his arrival at Corinth.

Temper tantrums deeply scar people, especially women. The spirit of a wife is closed by the tantrums of her husband. She becomes withdrawn and distant because of the pain that has been inflicted by harsh, angry words.

What causes the explosion of anger? Many times the anger *brews* and *smoulders* in a bitter heart. It takes just one **wrong word** or one **wrong look** at the **wrong time** and the anger is ignited. It is for this reason we should be on guard against bitterness in our own lives. **Bitterness leads to a boom!**

Have you ever been in an apartment where you had to deal with cockroaches? They are disgusting for sure and they make you mad, especially at the apartment owner who should be spraying for these critters.

**The Arizona Republic (4/25/95)** reported that when Steve Tran of Westminster, California, closed the door of his apartment on his activated bug bombs or bug foggers, he thought he had seen the last of the disgusting cockroaches that shared his apartment.

When the spray of the foggers, however, reached the pilot light of the stove, it ignited, blasting his screen door across the street, breaking all his windows, and setting his furniture on fire. Steve said, “I really wanted to kill all of them. I thought if I used a lot more, it would last longer.” What did Steve mean by “a lot more?”

According to the label, just two canisters of the fumigant would have solved Steve’s roach problem. Steve, however, used 25 canisters in his apartment! The blast caused over \$10,000 damage to his apartment building. What about the cockroaches? Steve reported, “By Sunday, I saw them walking around again.”

Like the bug bombs, our anger has a way of blasting the people around us and doing a lot of damage, but never solving our problems. Instead, we create new problems and new damage to other people.

#### **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

### **D. Disputes**

This word “**disputes**” is a political word and speaks about the way we look at ourselves. It is derived from the word *eritheia* {*er-ith-i'-ah*} which means “**electioneering or running for office, a desire to exalt yourself, divisiveness, selfishness, ambitious rivalry.**”

Originally this word simply described work which was done for pay, the work of the day laborer. It went on to describe the work which is done for no other motives than for pay. It describes that utterly selfish and self-centered ambition which has no idea of service, but instead is concerned about what you can get for yourself.

This attitude made Paul restless about his arrival at Corinth. Paul had to deal with strife in the city of Philippi. In Philippi, there were folks who preached about Christ with strife or selfish ambitions and contention.

**Philippians 1:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.**

It is ironic that when you are selfish, you are not helping yourself at all. In fact you rob from yourself, happiness and blessing. You lose what you could have had if you were only generous with others instead of stuck on yourself.

When you are selfish, you put yourself in a “**defense mode**” as you fight for what you demand and prepare for resistance from others. It’s the resistance, as well as the guilt, that create stress and a loss of peace, even when you don’t face opposition, because you are still on edge preparing for it. You can’t relax.

When you are selfish, you do not conjure up in others *feelings of kindness, generosity, love, admiration, and honor*. People don’t say, “He was such a blessing to me because he was so selfish,” or “Let’s honor him for being selfish.” No, you stir up resentment with people when you are stuck on yourself. You hurt yourself the most, when you are selfish.

An ambitious farmer, unhappy about the yield of his crops, heard of a highly recommended new seed corn. He bought some and produced a crop that was so abundant his astonished neighbors asked him to sell them a portion of the new seed. But the farmer, afraid that he would lose a profitable competitive advantage, refused.

The second year the new seed did not produce as good a crop, and when the third-year crop was still worse it dawned upon the farmer that his prize corn was being pollinated by the inferior grade of corn from his neighbors’ fields. If he had only sold to his neighbors, he would not have lost the full benefit of the new seed.

Beloved, we lose when we are selfish, especially when we are selfish with the Lord. You are not going to be fulfilled and content if you have the attitude, “It’s my life. I will do my will my way.”

## 2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)

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

### E. Slanders

The word “**slanders**” is derived from the Greek word *katalalia* {*kat-al-al-ee'-ah*} which means “**defamation or evil speaking.**” Today, we usually think of a **backbiter** or **slanderer** as one who speaks against or tears down a person behind their back and not to their face. This is not the meaning of this word.

*Backbiting* or *slandering* was open, loud-mouthed attacks and insults that were flung out in public against a person. It was the public vilification of an individual, a frontal assault against their *character* and *reputation*. Paul was restless about his arrival because he was concerned about *backbiting* and *slandering*.

Such talk was used by a person who was a reviler, who does not care whom he hurts with his tongue. This word “**revile**” comes from the Greek word *oneidizo* {*on-i-did'-zo*} which carries the idea of *reviling, upbraiding, or seriously insulting* someone, and literally means “**to cast in one’s teeth.**”

It is that *reproach, upbraiding, and reviling* that is done in our very presence. To cast insults is to throw abusive words in the face of an opponent or to mock them viciously. Multitudes of Christians throughout history have been the brunt of the revilement or backbiting of men and continue to be *verbally attacked, harassed, and heckled* to this day. Many times the pattern of abuse begins with verbal lashings that are followed by physical persecution when it is popular to do so.

In resentment against the Gospel, the Romans invented charges against Christians, such as accusing them of being cannibals, because in the Lord’s Supper they spoke of eating Jesus’ body and drinking His blood.

They accused them of having sexual orgies at their love feasts and even of setting fire to Rome. They branded believers as revolutionaries because they called Jesus Lord and King and spoke of God’s destruction of the earth by fire.

Let’s stop here for a second. **Let me ask, “Are you a slanderer, backbiter or reviler?”** Unfortunately, many Christians are guilty of this sin. The person who is a *slanderer, backbiter, a reviler or railer* has a goal to expose the person he has already judged.

He doesn’t go privately first to the person to deal with *difficulties or conflicts* when they arise. His mission is to destroy the person’s reputation and happiness. Those who verbally persecute people, like to embarrass those they persecute.

They often wait until their object of hatred is in public, then they assail them with all sorts of verbal abuse. This is to shame the persecuted one in front of all the people. While verbal persecution is not limited to public shaming, it is a favorite and frequent practice of those who use a vile tongue to attack God's people.

The *slanderer, backbiter, railer, or reviler* could care less about the person he has already judged and condemned in his mind. He does not claim any further concern or responsibility for that person. People backbite or revile others today when they go to a person and tell them off without giving them an opportunity to get all the facts on the table or tell their side of a predicament.

Some folks will go to an authority such as a boss, parent, or pastor, tell them off, and then quit or run away. A boss, parent, or pastor can also be guilty if they discipline or fire someone without hearing out the whole matter.

The *slanderer, backbiter, reviler, or railer recognizes no rules, restrictions, or limitations* on his intentions *to vilify, defame, destroy, or punish the person*. He could care less about the individual, and, as we have already noted, this word says the persecutor continually pursues the attack. The persecutor is aggressive as well as abusive.

Persecutors have no regard for the truth. They hate the righteous, they hate those who follow Jesus Christ, and they do not need truth to accuse. They will *fabricate* and *falsify* the worst of lies. If Christians are not careful, they can be guilty of backbiting or reviling others, and unfortunately, many times they do.

The false teachers in the Corinth church were *slanderers, backbiters or revilers*, publicly attacking the **character** and **reputation** of the Apostle Paul. This sin is so serious that Christians are to avoid fellowship with one who is a **slanderer, reviler** or **railer**. Such a person will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 5:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, **or a reviler**, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

**1 Corinthians 6:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> Nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, **nor revilers**, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

## 2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)

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

## F. Gossip

What does Paul mean by this word “**gossip**?” Is it wrong to “**gossip**” or is he talking about something else? The word “**gossip**” is from the Greek word *psithurismos* {*psith-oo-ris-mos*} which means “secret slandering, gossip.”

This is a much nastier word than the word “**slanders**.” It describes the whispering campaign of *malicious gossip*, the slanderous story murmured in someone’s ear, the discreditable tale passed on as a spicy secret.

With the slander of “**backbiting**,” a man can at least deal with it because it is a frontal attack. With *whispering or gossip*, he is often helpless to deal with the problem, because it is an underground movement which will not face him, and an insidious poisoning of the atmosphere whose source he cannot attack because he does not know it.

If you are not careful, whispering or gossip will come back to bite you. **Winston Churchill** exemplified integrity and respect in the face of opposition. During his last year in office, he attended an official ceremony. Several rows behind him two gentlemen began whispering. “That’s Winston Churchill. They say he is getting senile. They say he should step aside and leave the running of the nation to more dynamic and capable men.” When the ceremony was over, Churchill turned to the men and said, “Gentlemen, they also say he is deaf!”

The Bible offers warning about the effects of whispering or gossip.

### 1. Gossip hinders your happiness.

#### Psalms 34:12-13 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup> Who is the man who desires life And loves *length of days* that he may see good?

<sup>13</sup> Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit.

Hurting people with your tongue will not give you joy or make you feel better. Satan loves to make you think you will feel better. Your happiness is hindered when complications arise from your tongue. You may wish you could take back your words but it’s too late. Once the milk is spilt, the damage has been done.

## 2. Gossip has a way of Eventually Reaching the Victim

### **Ecclesiastes 10:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.**

When the victim of your gossip gets wind of what you have said, your problems are only beginning. You should have kept your big mouth shut.

## 3. If You Sow Gossip.... You Will Reap Gossip

### **Galatians 6:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.**

If you whisper or gossip about others, you too, will become a victim of gossip. People who gossip usually get caught in their own mouth traps. Many years ago the **Moody Church News** carried a humorous story about a woman in a small town who was known for being a gossip.

One day on vacation she visited the offices of *The Chicago Daily News*. She was wearing a white dress and inadvertently leaned against a wall where a freshly printed copy of the front page was hanging. It was a hot, humid day, and some of the print came off on the back of her white dress.

Later, as she walked down the street to meet her husband, she noticed that people walking behind her were snickering. When she reached the place where her husband was waiting, she asked him if there was anything on her back that shouldn't be there.

As she turned around, he read the large black reversed letters: **sweN yliaD**. Realizing the appropriateness of the words, he said, "No, dear, nothing's on your back that doesn't belong there."

## 4. You Will Give An Accounting to the Lord For Your Words

### **Matthew 12:36-37 (NASB)**

<sup>36</sup> **"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.**

<sup>37</sup> **"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."**

We all had better be careful what we say.

## **2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)**

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

## **G. Arrogance**

Between two farms near **Valleyview, Alberta, Canada**, you can find two parallel fences, only two feet apart, running for a half mile. Why are there two fences when one would do? Two farmers, Paul and Oscar, had a disagreement that erupted into a feud. Paul wanted to build a fence between their land and split the cost, but Oscar was unwilling to contribute. Since he wanted to keep cattle on his land, Paul went ahead and built the fence anyway.

After the fence was completed, Oscar said to Paul. "I see we have a fence." "What do you mean 'we'?" Paul replied. "I got the property line surveyed and built the fence two feet into my land. That means some of my land is outside the fence, and if any of your cows set their feet on my land, I'll shoot them. Oscar knew Paul wasn't joking, so when he eventually decided to use the land adjoining Paul's for pasture, he was forced to build another fence two feet away. Oscar and Paul are both gone now, **but their double fence stands as a monument to the high price we pay for our pride and stubbornness.** This story amply illustrates the problem with "**arrogance.**"

What is **arrogance**? This word is derived from the Greek word *phusiosis* {foo-see'-o-sis} which means "**pride, loftiness, or puffing up of the soul.**" Proud people tend to create problems and division because they are *selfish, unteachable, and unapproachable*. They tend to magnify themselves and the Bible teaches that this is *wrong, worldly, and destructive*. Paul was restless about this attitude being in Corinth.

## **1 John 2:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

## **Proverbs 16:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.**

The Christian is to be glorifying the Lord with his life, not himself.

## **Matthew 5:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**



## 2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB)

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

### H. Disturbances

What are **disturbances**? The word is from the Greek word *akatastasia* {*ak-at-as-tah-see'-ah*} which means “**instability, a state of disorder, anarchy, disturbance, confusion.**”

God is not the author of confusion, but Satan is and he will do what he can to use people in the church, saved or lost, to create *instability, disturbances, disorder, or confusion*.

This kind of atmosphere is created many times by people grasping for power, so they challenge the authority of the pastor by trying to destroy his credibility or ability to lead the church. *Rumors, slander, and lies* are used to hurt those in leadership and create *confusion* and *rebellion*, when there should be no *confusion* or *rebellion* at all.

When there are things like *anarchy, confusion, and fussing* in the church, it is difficult to reach the lost for Christ. People tend to not invite their friends to church when it is a war zone. Not only that, Christians don't want to come to church either. They have enough stress in their lives at home, work, or school and don't feel like dealing with it at church.

Since I have been in the ministry, I have personally spoken to good men who were verbally attacked by people in the church that claimed to be Christians. These folks created disturbances in the church because they were upset with the pastor for preaching against their sin.

**Beloved, this is what he is supposed to do.** Satan is good at stirring up trouble. Be on guard in your own life so that he won't use you.

### III. CONCERN ABOUT FORNICATION—[2 Corinthians 12:21](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 12:21 \(NASB\)](#)

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

Paul was concerned that when he returned to Corinth, he would be *humiliated* and *grieved* by their lack of repentance over **past sins** and **living in sin**. This made him restless about his arrival. The perfect tense participle of the Greek word *proamartano* {*pro-am-ar-tan'-o*} (which have sinned already) refers to those whose sin began in the past and continues in the present. **In other words, it describes those who were continuing in sin and refusing to repent.**

This would be humiliating for Paul since he started the church. It would be a source of *grief* and *deep-seated mourning* and *sorrow* for him, too. It is *distressing, depressing, and a source of grief* to any pastor when any of his people become entrenched in **wickedness** or **immorality**.

Sexual sin was a problem in the past for the Corinth church. Paul was restless about the fact that they might still be involved in *uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness*. These sins will destroy the purity of the church. All three refer to sexual immorality, which was rife in the idolatrous pagan culture of Corinth—so much so that in Greek the verb “**to Corinthianize**” meant, “**to go to bed with a prostitute.**” What do these things mean?

#### [2 Corinthians 12:21 \(NASB\)](#)

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

#### A. Impurity:

This is from the word *akatharsia* {*ak-ath-ar-see'-ah*}. It means “**uncleanness in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful living, impure motives.**” The word means everything which would hinder a man to enter into God’s presence. It describes the life muddied with wallowing in the world’s ways. It is the opposite of purity and considered one of the deeds of the flesh ([Galatians 5:19](#)).

#### [Galatians 5:19 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, **impurity**, sensuality,

**1 Thessalonians 4:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for the purpose of **impurity**, but in sanctification.

**2 Corinthians 12:21 (NASB)**

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

## **B. Immorality:**

The word “**immorality**” is from the word *porneia* {*por-ni'-ah*} which means “**illicit sexual sins.**” This type of behavior is very destructive. It defies the purpose for which we were created.

**1 Corinthians 6:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. **Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.**

**1 Corinthians 6:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

**2 Corinthians 12:21 (NASB)**

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

## **C. Sensuality:**

What is this? It is from the word *aselgeia* {*as-elt'-i-a*} which means “**unbridled lust and sensuality, unrestrained and flagrant sexual sin, licentiousness, wantonness, shamelessness.**”

As Basil defined it, “**It is that attitude of the soul which has never borne and never will bear the pain of discipline.**” It is the insolence that knows no restraint, that has no sense of the decencies of things, that will dare anything that wanton impulsiveness demands, that is careless of public opinion and its own good name so long as it gets what it wants. It is the insolently selfish spirit, which is lost to honor, and which will take what it wants, where it wants, in shameless disregard of God and man.

The wild party lifestyle characterized by *drugs, drunkenness, nudity, and hopping from one bed to another* with any girl or guy that comes your way amply describes lasciviousness. It may seem fun for a little while, but in time it will leave you feeling *dirty, regretful, empty, and ashamed*. If you are a Christian, you are not to be living this way at all! You are an ambassador of Christ, not Satan. Living in sexual sin will leave you restless about the arrival of Jesus Christ when He returns again.

**1 John 2:28 (NASB)**

**<sup>28</sup> Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.**

Are you restless about His arrival?

**On Saturday night, June 28, 2008, they were televising the US Olympic tryouts for China in the Track and Field events.** They were showing the final event of the Ladies Heptathlon which happened to be the 800 meter run. **The Heptathlon** consists of six events which include sprinting, long-distance running, throwing, and jumping.

The athlete receives a certain amount of points for her time in running, her height in jumping, and feet in throwing. The better your time, height, and distances, the more points you will receive. The one with the most totaled points is the winner. The goal is to be consistently good in all the events, even if you do not win all the events.

In this event, the top three women would be going to China to compete in the 2008 Olympics. The two women who were competing for the third spot, Virginia Johnson and Diana Pickler, were very close in points. The outcome of the 800-meter run would determine who would go to China. As the race was coming to the finish, Virginia Johnson was in the lead. It was obvious to her and everyone else she was going to win.

In the final yards of the race, Virginia made a huge mistake that is a “**No No**” in running. She raised her hands in the air and began to celebrate before she crossed the finish line. By doing this she stopped doing her best. Even though she won the race, her celebration caused her to slow down, hurting her time.

She had to beat **Diana Pickler by 1.5 seconds** to get enough points to go to the Olympics. Instead, she won only by **.7 seconds**. Diana beat Virginia by ten points in her total score, 6257 to 6247 and won the third spot for the 2008 Olympics. This story amply illustrates the same mistakes that Christians are making today. They quit doing their best before they finish their race for Christ. They stop living for the Lord.

**Beloved, may we not let up, shut up, back up, or give up** until the day we are **snatched up** by the Lord at His coming or **push up** daisies when we go home to be with the Lord in death. May we finish our course for Christ and be able to say the same words as Paul at the close of our life, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith”** ([2 Timothy 4:7](#)).

## Chapter 29.

### High Noon at Corinth

#### 2 Corinthians 13:1-9 (NASB)

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup> But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

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

<sup>8</sup> For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth.

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

In 1952, a classic Western film entitled *High Noon*, starring Gary Cooper, was made about Marshall Will Kane of the town of Hadleyville. The marshal was about to retire from office and go on his honeymoon with his new bride Amy.

His happiness was short-lived, however, when he was informed that outlaws, known as the Miller Gang, were coming on the 12:00 train to free their leader from jail who had been arrested by the Marshal. Amy wanted her husband to leave town and forget about the Miller Gang, but her husband was not the running kind.

He asked for deputies to fend off the Miller Gang, but nobody would stand with the Marshal because of their fear. So at high noon, all alone, Marshal Kane chose to confront these evil men that were arriving on the train. **There would be a “show down” at high noon.**

Such is the case in the [last chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians](#). It is “High Noon” and Paul was going to confront the Corinthian church for the third time. There were rebellious false teachers in the Corinth church that were undermining his authority as an apostle. Their rebellion toward Paul was in essence, rebellion toward the Lord who called him to be His apostle.

Paul warned them they needed to either repent or they would face discipline. It was his desire that his arrival would be a pleasant one and so he gives them all ample warning to get their lives straightened out. High noon was near.

In this message we will address some very critical issues that are essential for Christian growth which include:

- 1) **The importance of spiritual self-examination.**
- 2) **The signs of an authentic Christian**
- 3) **How do you change your attitude for the better?**
- 4) **How do you confront difficult people?**

Let's dig in. Notice verses one and two.

## **I. WITNESSES AND A WARNING—[2 Corinthians 13:1-2](#)**

### **2 Corinthians 13:1-2 (NASB)**

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

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

**Song writer Fanny Crosby wrote over 8000 songs in her life time.** This is quite an accomplishment, considering she was blind. Some of her well-known hymns are *Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Tenderly Calling You Home, Praise Him Praise Him, and To God be the Glory*. Fanny shared an important incident that took place in her life that is relevant to this section of Scripture. It is about a friend who saw a problem developing in her in her late teen years, and he confronted her about it.

Here is what she shared: Before 1840, my friends had nearly spoiled me with their praises. At least I began to feel my own importance as a poet a little too much. So the superintendent, Mr. Jones, thought something ought to be done to curb such rising vanity in my life. One morning after breakfast, I was summoned to the office. It was an impressive occasion, and I remember what Mr. Jones said almost word for word.

“Fanny, I am sorry you have allowed yourself to be carried away by what others have said about your verses of poetry. True, you have written a number of poems of real merit, but how far do they fall short of the standard that you might attain. Shun a flatterer, Fanny, as you would a viper, for no true friend would deceive you with words of flattery. Remember that whatever talent you possess belongs wholly to God. You ought to give Him the credit for all that you do.”

Then the dear man said to me, “Fanny, have I wounded your feelings?” Something within me bore witness that Mr. Jones spoke the truth. So I answered, “No, sir. On the contrary, you have talked to me like a father, and I thank you very much for it.” In years afterward, I gradually came to realize that his advice was worth more than the price of rubies. It was not easy for this man to confront Fanny Crosby, **but it was necessary and vital for her spiritual growth and effectiveness.**

We find Paul in the same type of predicament in this chapter as he is about to confront some people in the Corinth church. Paul writes to the church to inform them of his third arrival. The first time was his extended stay when he planted the church as recorded in [Acts 18](#). The second was the painful visit during which he was so taken back by brutal personal attacks that he thought it better to stay away for a while ([2 Corinthians 2:14](#)).

It was in response to the rejection and abuse of the second visit that Paul issued dire warnings to his offenders if they did not repent. Those who were teaching false doctrine, criticizing, and making false accusations against Paul would be confronted. It was high noon. He is coming again to Corinth and this time there will be no more loose talk and reckless statements. Whatever is said will be witnessed and proved once and for all.

For over a year he has been putting up with the garbage of **rumors, divisiveness, and false accusations from these rebels.** Many had already repented, but there remained some who were entrenched in *bitterness, jealousy, and rebellion*. It was time to confront these people and put this mess to an end. The rebellion could not be allowed to fester and continue anymore, because it would ruin the **spirit, growth, and effectiveness** of the church.

#### [2 Corinthians 13:2 \(NASB\)](#)

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

He warned that these folks must repent or be disciplined, which in this particular situation, they would be removed from the fellowship of the church. The unrepentant folks would not be “spared.” This word “spare” is from the Greek word *phaidomai* {*fi'-dom-ahay*}. It is a strong word which was used in the classical Greek language to describe the sparing of someone’s life on the field of battle. This word conveyed the idea of showing mercy upon someone who was an enemy.

**High noon was coming.** Those who would not repent would be confronted and they would get exactly what their sin demanded. The time for mercy would be over. There would be no more warnings, only firm confrontation of those who were sinful. This is so ironic. Paul’s critics accused him of being *weak, scared, and a sissy* because of his **gentleness and humility**. They have put him in a position where he must act with **authority, strength, and power**. They end up getting more than they bargained for. High noon was at hand for them.



The reference to the witnesses I believe is a reference to the people in the church who would give testimony of the *actions of the rebels* and *false teachers* and take the steps to remove them from the church family. The procedures for “**High Noon**” situations of *confrontation* and *discipline* are laid out in the book of Matthew.

**Matthew 18:15-17 NASB** "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. (17) "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

“**High Noon**” experiences are not fun at all, but they are necessary. You may face times in your life where you have no choice but to take the bull by the horns and confront problem people whether they are *in your family, at work, at school, or in the church*. With some people, ignoring the problem does not make it go away, it only gets worse. You have no choice but to meet the train at high noon and deal with the issue at hand.

We don't like “**High Noon**” experiences, those times of confrontation, because they are *distressful, difficult, discouraging, and depressing*. Yet, ignoring the problem leaves us with those same feelings. **We have no choice but to go head-to-head, face-to-face with problem people**. So how do we do it? How do you face people at “**High Noon**?” Here are some thoughts.

**1. Pray:** Pray for a controlled tongue and temper. Keep your cool.

**2. Preparation:** Prepare questions that you want to ask the person about the problems or conflicts.

- 1) **Did you do this?**
- 2) **Did you say this?**
- 3) **Is this true?**
- 4) **Why did you do this?**
- 5) **What is wrong?**
- 6) **What is the problem?**

Asking good, probing questions can help to clear up misunderstandings and resolve most problems. Be also prepared for anger that is vented toward you so you are not taken off guard. Don't be distracted or intimidated. Stick to the issue at hand. Remember that the purpose of the meeting is for restoration. This is what you want to accomplish.

**Galatians 6:1 NASB** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.



**3. Place:** Make an appointment so you can speak to the person or persons privately first. If they consent, sitting down at a table is good. Remember, the purpose of the meeting is to bring about reconciliation of the problem or conflict. This should always be our goal.

**Galatians 6:1 NASB** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

**4. Prayer:** If issues have been cleared up, pray together and take steps to rebuild the relationship. If issues have not been resolved, continue to pray.

**5. Another Person who can act as a Mediator:** If problems cannot be resolved, then try to bring a qualified and wise counselor who can try to help resolve the conflicts between the two parties. This person should know how to ask probing questions and also give good counsel to each person, pointing out strengths and weaknesses.

**6. Punishment:** If conflicts cannot be resolved, then discipline may have to be administered by a parent, a pastor, a principle, a teacher, or a boss, depending on the situation of the unrepentant person.

If discipline is required in a church situation, **Bill Gothard** has wisely suggested that the following statement be read in the Sunday morning service prior to a meeting relating to a matter of church discipline: *It has come to the attention of the board that a member of the church must be dealt with by church discipline. The church board has carefully and thoroughly investigated the facts and has confirmed that discipline is necessary. The parents and the board have appealed to the one who has sinned. All attempts have so far been rejected. Scripture now instructs us to inform the church so that the united prayer and obedience of the members to the scriptural steps of discipline may be used of God to bring this person to repentance and to a life of victory over sin. Before naming this person we are asking each member to set aside a time of personal self-examination, confession of sin, and commitment to God's instructions of church discipline and restoration. We are doing this so that Satan will be given no opportunity to bring confusion or division in this matter and that God may be free, because of our obedience, to accomplish His purposes in the life of the one who has sinned.*

## II. THE WEAKNESS ISSUE IS ADDRESSED—[2 Corinthians 13:3-4](#)

### [2 Corinthians 13:3-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

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

Some of the Corinthians were seeking proof that the Lord spoke through Paul. He assured them, first of all, that the Lord truly lived within these believers and was not weak, but powerful. **The Corinthians' understanding of Christ's power was confused and wrong.** True power to them was evidenced by *health, wealth, and demonstrations of miraculous power*. Their views of power were Corinthian, not Christian.

God's power was at their disposal, giving them the ability to live for Christ. Jesus' crucifixion may have given the impression that He was weak, when in reality, it demonstrated His power to do His Father's will and the genuine power of His love for us.

The crucifixion prepared the way to demonstrate His power over death in His resurrection. Only an all-powerful God could be strong enough to live out the weakness and suffering of the cross. In His power, He willingly died for us, taking our sins upon Himself, when He never did anything wrong at all. The Father rewarded His Son by sustaining Him with supernatural power in raising Him from the dead.

Similarly, Paul in submitting to God's will had appeared weak to some in Corinth just as Jesus appeared weak. Paul acknowledged his weakness, yet, assured them that God's power was in his own life just as it was in the Lord's life. When he came to them again, the Lord would be alive in Him and would also empower him to do His will. The power of God would be evident in his life when he arrived and dealt with false teachers, critics, slanderers, and unrepentant sinners in the church.

Let me say right here that **every Christian has weaknesses and has made mistakes**. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, however, that enables us to conquer *our flesh, our faults, our failures, and bad habits* if we will rely on that power. Yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit who indwells us is vital in getting victory over our weakness.

**[Romans 6:13 NASB](#) and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

**[Ephesians 3:16 NASB](#) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,**

**Ephesians 3:20 NASB** Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,  
**2 Peter 1:3 NASB** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.  
**Acts 1:8 NASB** but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

God has empowered the Christian to overcome sinful habits and to boldly serve Him. He has given to us the power to make the right choices in life. The problem is not our lack of power, but the choices we make.

If you are making disobedient choices, you need to have a “**High Noon**” experience in your life, confront your own sinfulness, and get some matters right with God. Stop fighting Him and start surrendering to His will and Word.

Beloved, when we are yielded to Him, He will direct our lives no matter what trials we may face. He will empower us to stand for Christ, to live a godly life, and share the Gospel with others.

For example, the keynote speaker at the **Advanced Evangelism Explosion Seminar in Bogota, Columbia, was Rev. Rodolfo Loyola, a pastor from Madrid, Spain.** His testimony was shared by **Rev. R. Craig Strickland of Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, TN.** In 1976, Rev. Loyola was a pastor and professor in Cuba.

The Cuban government instructed him to either abandon his faith in Jesus Christ or quit teaching school. They gave him 15 days to make his decision. Rev. Loyola said, “I don’t need 15 days. I don’t need 15 minutes. I won’t be back to teach tomorrow.” He refused to turn his back on the Lord.

Several days later, in the middle of the night, he was abducted and imprisoned in a Cuban concentration camp for over two years. In part, because of his dedication to sharing the Gospel with those around him, he was transferred 13 times to new concentration camps.

Finally, he was told by Castro’s government that he had 30 days to find two thousand dollars to take his family out of Cuba. Over the weekend, he and his wife prayed for guidance, writing to family and friends in other countries. Thirty days later, he accumulated two thousand and ten dollars.

So with ten dollars in his pocket, Rev. Loyola and his family were sent to Spain where he now joyfully exclaims that he is a missionary to Spain sent by Castro! God’s power ***emboldened him, protected him, directed him, and provided for his needs.*** When he was weak and helpless, the Lord demonstrated His power to him. He can do the same for you too.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB (9)** And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. **(10)** Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

### III. WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE OF OUR SALVATION— 2 Corinthians 13:5

**2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)**

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

Let me share with you the following story from Pastor John McCloud: “When I was in Bible College, we had regular inspections of our dormitory rooms that were called ‘White Glove Inspections.’ The Vice President of the college, Dr. Max Helton, would literally inspect our rooms with a white glove looking for dirt and checking for neatness. He checked everywhere. If dirt or dust was found, then we received demerits. It was a very thorough inspection.”

This is what Paul calls for in this verse. He is calling for a spiritual “white glove” inspection in the lives of the Corinthian believers.

As noted in the third verse, Paul indicated that some of the Corinthians were seeking evidence that the Lord was speaking through Paul. He reluctantly defended himself, not for his own sake, but for the Lord’s, and so the Corinthians would not be cut off from the truth he preached to them.

He now turns the tables on these folks and challenges them to test and examine their own lives for evidence that they have been truly saved. The Greek translation is very emphatic about self examination and reads, “**Yourselves test to see if you are in the faith; yourselves examine.**”

The idea of the examination of our heart or life is seen all throughout the Bible.

**Job 13:23 NASB** "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

**Psalms 17:3 NASB** You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

**Psalms 26:2 NASB** Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.

**Lamentations 3:40 NASB** Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the LORD.

**Haggai 1:5 NASB** Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts,  
"Consider your ways!"

**Haggai 1:7 NASB** Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your  
ways!"

**Psalms 139:23-24 NASB** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try  
me and know my anxious thoughts; (24) And see if there be any  
hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

Paul says here, "Examine yourselves.... prove yourselves." What does this mean? Let's look at the first word, "examine." The word "examine" is from the Greek word *peirazo* {*pi-rad'-zo*} which originally meant "to pierce, search, scrutinize, attempt."

Then it came to mean "to try or test intentionally, with the purpose of discovering what good or evil, what power or weakness, was in a person or thing." The fact that men so often break down under this kind of test, gave the word *peirazo* a predominant sense of putting to the test with the intention and the hope that the one being tried might break down under the testing. Thus, the word is used constantly of the solicitations and suggestions of Satan.

This word was used in [Revelation 2:2](#).

**Revelation 2:2 NASB** 'I know your deeds and your toil and  
perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to  
the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you  
found them to be false;

The church at Ephesus *tried, proved, or examined* those who came to them claiming to be apostles. They were suspicious of these strangers. The church had no reason to believe that they would find in these men that upon which they could put their approval.

The Church put these men to the test, that is, they examined them to see what good or evil was in them, intending to accept them if good, but to reject them if evil. They found them to be liars. They did not know the Lord.

Paul says we are to **examine** and **scrutinize** ourselves to see what is really going on in us. Do we know the Lord Jesus or do we not? Are we saved or are we lost in sin?

**2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)**

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

The apostle continues as stated that we are to "examine" ourselves. This word comes from the word *dokimazo* {*dok-im-ad'-zo*}. This word is also translated "examine, prove, or test," but has a slightly different meaning. *It meant to test or examine someone or something for the purpose of approving it.*

In classical Greek it was used to describe doctors that passed their examinations in order to get their degree in Doctor of Medicine. It was used to describe a person who was examined *to see if they were fit, qualified, or worthy for public office*.

This word also described money that was examined to make sure it was genuine, qualified and of the proper weight to be used in economic circulation. The main idea is a positive one of **“examining to approve.”**

This is why this Greek word is used generally of God, but never of Satan, because Satan never puts a person to the test in order that he may approve them. The first word, *peirazo*, is used at times of God, but only in the sense of testing, in order to discover what evil or good may be in a person.

At the **Judgment Seat of Christ**, the believer’s service will be tested, not for the purpose of finding out what good or evil there was in it, but to put God’s approval upon that part of it which was the work of the Spirit of God. A **“Well done thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,”** and a reward in addition to those blessed words, are awaiting every believer in the Lord Jesus, for God will put His approval upon the Spirit-wrought works of the saints and reward them. Paul spoke of this time of examination of the Christian.

**1 Corinthians 3:13 NASB (13) Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.**

The word for **“revealed”** in **1 Corinthians 3:13** is not the word *peirazo*, but the word *dokimazo*. The labor and works of the Christian are not up for judgment with a penalty attached for those works not done in the power of the Holy Spirit. These wasted works will be burned up and lost, and the believer will lose the reward he would have received had they been done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The **Judgment Seat of Christ** is not for the judgment of the believer himself, and certainly not for his retention or loss of salvation. Your salvation was secured when you put your faith in Christ.

The **examination or testing** at the **Judgment Seat of Christ** is not *peirazo*, to discover what evil or good there may be, because our sins are under the blood of Christ. The Judgment Seat examination is *dokimazo*, to examine in order to approve.

The Lord is going to look for that on which He can place His approval. If there is nothing He can approve, what a waste, yet, we still have eternal life, but no rewards from Him. The apostle John warned us that wasting our lives would lead to shame and a loss of rewards from the Lord.

**1 John 2:28 NASB Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.**

**2 John 1:8 NASB** Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

Let me ask, “Does the Lord approve of the way you are living? Will you receive a full reward? Have you truly been saved? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation?”

If you have not done this, you will fail the test of salvation because you do not know the Lord. **Salvation does not come by** being religious, doing good deeds, joining churches, or being baptized, it is received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It’s high noon and you need to deal with the issue of your soul’s destiny. Don’t put it off, for one day it may be too late. Put your faith in Christ today.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**2 Corinthians 6:2 NASB** for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--

If your faith is in Christ, are you surrendered and living your life for Him? If not, you need to have a “**High Noon**” experience in your life. You need to confront *your self, your rebellion, your stubbornness, your disobedience*, and get your life straightened out with God and with others. Paul placed great importance on doing this.

**Acts 24:16 NASB** "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

Some may ask, “How do you know if you are a Christian? If I examine my life, what do I look for? What are the traits of a person who has truly been born again and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Common answers to this question would include praying a prayer, walking an aisle, having an emotional experience, being baptized, attending church, leading an outwardly moral life, feeling conviction for sin, or knowing the facts about Jesus.

Most of these are great things, but they are not marks of authenticity that a person has put their faith in Christ. The Bible states that even the demons of Hell believe in God, but their belief does not save them.

**James 2:19 NASB** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.



Demons are completely convinced of the truth of what they know. They are terrified of God's judgment. Yet, they are still without salvation.

**Matthew 8:29 NASB** And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Demons acknowledge the superiority of Jesus Christ and His divinity, yet, they are still eternally lost forever.

**Mark 1:24 NASB** saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!"

People can do all sorts of good and religious deeds, still die, and spend eternity in Hell.

**Matthew 7:21-23 NASB** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

A true spiritual inventory *does not focus on external behavior* or religious activities, *but on the internal attitudes of the heart*. Jesus' words to the church at Sardis were, "...I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." ([Revelation 3:1](#)).

They claimed to be alive, but inwardly they were dead as a door nail. No amount of resolve or outward religious involvement can transform the heart. So what are the signs of authentic salvation?

**1. Faith marked by repentance.** True faith causes conviction over sin, confession of that sin to the Lord, and forsaking the sin.

**Psalms 32:5 NASB** I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

**2. A desire for righteousness.** True believers want to do that which is right. They hunger to do right.

**Matthew 5:6 NASB** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.



**3. Submission and Obedience to God's authority.** This is a key factor in recognizing genuine faith.

**Luke 6:46 NASB** "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

**John 8:31 NASB** So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

**John 14:15 NASB** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

**John 14:23-24 NASB** Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. (24) "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

**4. A love for God and others.**

**James 2:5 NASB** Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

**1 John 5:2 NASB** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

**John 13:35 NASB** "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

**2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)**

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

Paul states that if Christ is not in us, we are reprobates. The word “reprobate” or “unless indeed you fail the test” comes from the word *adokimos {ad-ok’-ee-mos}* which means “disqualified, failing to stand the test; proven to be fake or false; not approved.” Without Christ, you are disqualified to go to Heaven and any profession you might make is fake if you do not know the Lord.

#### IV. THE WISH OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 13:6-7](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 13:6-7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

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

Paul made it clear that he had genuine faith in Christ and was a true apostle. He did not fail the test of salvation or faith in the Lord. It was the *apostle's wish, his desire, and his prayer* that these folks would not make the mistake of refusing his correction and his authority, even though Paul may have failed to demonstrate his authority.

It was his desire they do that which was right because he wanted God's blessings on their lives. If they would obey Paul, he would never need to exert his authority. That would be a great blessing for both parties.

The apostle never wanted to show his authority for the sake of showing it. That was not Paul's nature at all. He was not *cocky, mean, or a braggadocious bully*. Everything he did was to build up people and not to destroy them, even when he had to discipline them.

The goal of any discipline must always be aimed to lift a person up and not to knock him down. These folks may not have loved him, but he loved them and wanted only the best for them. He did not want to discipline any of these people. He wanted those who were rebellious or sinful, to repent before he arrived and focus on going forward for the Lord, pursuing growth like a hummingbird, instead of death and destruction like a vulture.

**When we look at the hummingbird and the vulture**, we find that they teach important lessons to us that pertain to our walk with God. All that a vulture sees is rotting meat, because that is what this bird looks for daily. Vultures thrive on this kind of diet, but hummingbirds ignore the smelly flesh of dead animals.

Instead, they look for the colorful blossoms of desert plants. The vultures live on what was. They live on the past. They fill themselves with what is dead and gone, but hummingbirds live on what is. They seek new life. They fill themselves with freshness and life. Each bird finds what it is looking for. We all do.

This brings us to some good questions. Do you have a **“vulture” mentality** that focuses on that which is in the past and stinks, or do you have a **“hummingbird” mentality** that looks for what is beautiful, alive, wonderful, and going on now?

How do you change your attitude for the better if you suffer from a vulture attitude? What can a Christian do to fan the flames of a Christ-like attitude that does what is right, seeks God's blessings, and the beauty of the Lord? This is what Paul wanted for these folks and it's what the Lord wants for us. The Bible gives us several principles.

## How Do You Change Your Attitude for the Better?

### A. Pay attention to the Lord

Listen to what the Lord has to say in His Word and turn your attention to Him. Listening is vital in growing spiritually. Isn't it interesting that the ears are the first to develop in the womb?

**Psalms 85:8 NASB** I will hear what God the LORD will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly.

**Jeremiah 23:22 NASB** "But if they had stood in My council, Then they would have announced My words to My people, And would have turned them back from their evil way And from the evil of their deeds.

### B. Probe your Heart

We are to examine our lives for anything that will hurt our walk with God. This is what Paul talked about in verse five of [2 Corinthians 13](#).

**Lamentations 3:40 NASB** Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the LORD.

### C. Penitence

Humbling yourself before God and others will get you on the right path. If you need to make matters right with others who have been offended, humility will be needed.

**2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

### D. Positiveness or faith in the Lord

We are to trust the Lord always with our life. We are to be yielded to His care.

**Psalms 40:4 NASB** How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB** Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

## **E. The Proud are not to be admired.**

Don't run around with people who are proud, bitter, and have a rotten attitude. They will poison your mind.

**Psalms 40:4 NASB** How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

**Psalms 1:1 NASB** How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

## **F. Perverse People and Paths should be avoided**

Wicked people will influence your attitude if you spend a lot of time with them. It would be better to find new friends.

**Proverbs 4:14 NASB** Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men.

**1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB (33)** Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

## **G. The Provision of strength or help from the Lord will help change your attitude.**

When you are struggling in doing what is right, ask the Lord for His strength and help.

**Psalms 46:1 NASB** God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

## **H. Persistence in repentance is vital.**

If you mess up or have a bad day, seek God's forgiveness and start over. Don't let disobedience linger in your life. If you do, it will harden your heart.

**Jeremiah 31:19 NASB** 'For after I turned back, I repented; And after I was instructed, I smote on my thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

**2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

## I. Praying or Pleading with the Lord

Prayer will keep your heart tender. If your attitude is rotten because you are angry, it will calm you down. Praying will help you to focus your attention on that which is important and to ignore or be patient with the distractions in your life.

**2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves **and pray** and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

## J. Pursuing or seeking to know the Lord

If you want to have an attitude that pleases the Lord, then you must pursue it. It should be something you want to have and take steps to acquire. This involves getting close to the Lord.

**2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray **and seek My face** and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**John 5:39 NASB** "**You search the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;  
**Isaiah 55:6 NASB** **Seek the LORD** while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

The great desire of Paul's life was to know the Lord intimately.

**Philippians 3:10 NASB** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

## K. A Positive response to God's reproof

Preaching and discipline will do one of two things to you. It will either harden you and make you more rebellious or it will soften your heart and make you teachable. When we have a teachable spirit, God can work in our life and help us to become more like Him. When God speaks to your heart through His Word, whether it is in preaching or personal Bible study, respond to His truth with a compliant spirit.

**Proverbs 1:23 NASB** Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

## **L. Plenary or total surrender to the Lord**

If you are going to be what the Lord wants you to be, and have the right attitude, you will need to be totally surrendered to the Lord. This is what He expects of us.

**Joshua 22:5 NASB** "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

**Mark 12:30 NASB** "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

## **M. Praising and worshiping the Lord will help maintain a great attitude.**

**Isaiah 12:1 NASB** Then you will say on that day, "I will give thanks to You, O LORD; For although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, And You comfort me.

**Hebrews 13:15 NASB** Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

## **N. Patiently wait upon God**

It is our impatience that gives us a bad attitude. We start making demands of God or others. God wants us to slow down and wait on His direction and provision.

**Hosea 12:6 NASB** Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

**Psalms 27:14 NASB** Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.

We tend to get ahead of the Lord in our life and make all sorts of mistakes. Waiting for God's leading will help you in your walk with God.

## **O. Persevere in suffering**

Make up your mind to not give up or quit on the Lord. Determine in your heart you are going to follow Him, and do His will, no matter how difficult it may be.

**1 Corinthians 15:58 NASB (58)** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

## P. Perform what is right in the sight of God

Obeys the Lord and His Word. This will keep you out of trouble that is caused by sin or a rotten attitude.

**2 Kings 22:2 NASB** He did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.

**Psalms 119:11 NASB** Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

We have studied four sections of chapter thirteen so far.

- 1) *Witnesses and a Warning*
- 2) *The Weakness Issue is Addressed*
- 3) *Weighing the Evidence of Our Salvation*
- 4) *The Wish of Paul*
- 5) *Next, Wisdom and Maturity Are Desired*

## V. WISDOM AND MATURITY ARE DESIRED—[2 Corinthians 13:8-9](#)

**2 Corinthians 13:8-9 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth.

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

**Truth is truth, whether it is rejected or accepted.** Paul could not oppose the truth of the gospel. He felt that he must always stand for the gospel of Christ, even when it made him appear weak. If Paul's humility, appearance, speaking abilities, and compassion gave the impression he was weak, yet, were used by the Lord to strengthen the Corinthians, he was glad. The priority of his life was the salvation and spiritual growth of others, not his status as a big shot. He was not trying to impress anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's wish was that these believers would grow spiritually and mature in Christ. This is the idea behind the word "**complete.**" This word is derived from the Greek word *katartisis* {*kat-ar'-tis-is*} which means "**maturity, training, wisdom, instruction.**" This word *katartisis* {*kat-ar'-tis-is*} is kin to the verb *katartizo* {*kat-ar-tid'-zo*} which means "**to mend what has been broken; to repair; to strengthen, complete, or make a person what he ought to be.**"

The word was used to describe the mending of nets or setting of broken bones. What the Corinthian church needed was to become strong and perfected, that is, repaired and restored, to have its fellowship cleansed of critics and false teachers. It was Paul's desire that the problems in the Corinth church would be healed and what was broken would be mended. He desired that these believers be what God wanted them to be.

**Matthew 5:48 (NASB)**

**<sup>48</sup> Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Let me ask some questions here. Are you what the Lord wants you to be? What are you doing with your life? Did you do something yesterday that made a difference or had an impact for Christ? Did you do anything that will have eternal consequences? Did you let the love of Christ shine through you and touch the life of someone else? What will you do today that will make a difference or have an impact on eternity?

If you will begin to ponder these questions, it will motivate you to mature and make you conscious of the fact that time is a gift from God to serve and glorify Him. Don't waste your life! If you are wasting your life away, oblivious to the Lord and His leading, you need to have a **“High Noon”** experience and *confront your past, your present attitudes and actions, so that your future will be productive, purposeful, peaceful, and powerful as you endeavor to live for Christ.*

**Mike Holmgren** is another athlete who learned that disappointments are God's appointments. He was raised in a churchgoing, Swedish-American family, in a second-floor flat above his grandfather's bakery, a stone's throw from the San Francisco 49ers football stadium.

At an early age he caught football fever. In high school, Mike was chosen all-American quarterback. In college, he played for UCLA, dreaming of a career in the NFL. His excitement was unbounded in 1970, when he was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals, but he was cut during the preseason. Then the New York Jets considered him as Joe Namath's backup, but later they went with another player.

When this happened Mike said, “I was crushed. All that had mattered to me was playing pro football, and now that would never happen. The flight home from New York was the longest five hours of my life. I felt like a failure.”

Returning home, Mike retreated to his bedroom in depression, but there found his old, dust-covered Bible. He had become a Christian at age 11, but in his intense pursuit of football, he had forgotten the Lord. Now as he thumbed through the Bible, he found a verse he had once memorized in Sunday school:

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.**

**<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.**

Mike recommitted his life to Jesus Christ. Shortly afterward, he fell in love with a girl who had just returned from a missionary stint in Zaire. They were married, and Mike began coaching at his high school alma mater.



He has been coaching ever since, becoming one of the most successful NFL coaches in America as head coach of the Green Bay Packers. Concerning his focus and purpose in life, Mike said, “Win or lose, I now realize what really matters. It’s not the Super Bowl rings, it’s the crown of eternal life that Jesus Christ has won for us through His victory on the cross.” Does this matter to you?

## Chapter 30.

### Principles for Turning Your Life Around

#### **2 Corinthians 13:10-13 (NASB)**

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

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

<sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.

<sup>13</sup> All the saints greet you.

The curtain is about to close on this wonderful letter to the Corinthians. Like the final tender words of a love letter, Paul offers words of *comfort, challenge, and compassion* to these people in his concluding remarks.

The principles that he shares in these closing thoughts are *informative* and *important* to believers today because the apostle gives principles on how turn your church or your own personal life around and get it on the right track. A Bible-believing church family or individual Christian that will implement the commands given here will find their church or personal life much stronger and more effective for Jesus Christ. We begin this last section with the concern that Paul had for these folks.

#### **I. THE CAUSE OF THE LETTER AND CONCERN OF PAUL—** **2 Corinthians 13:10**

#### **2 Corinthians 13:10 (NASB)**

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

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to encourage those folks in the church that needed to get their lives right with God, to do so. It was Paul's desire that when he arrived, he would not have to use his authority to be *sharp or severe* with them by disciplining those who were unrepentant. The word "severity" is from the Greek adverb *apptomō {ap-ot-om'-oce}*. This word is derived from the verb which means "to cut off." Here, it implies that Paul is ready to deal severely with the people to the point of breaking relationships with them.

Expecting a favorable response to his letter, Paul hopes to avoid the kind of painful clash that was his experience during his second visit. He wanted his third arrival to encourage and build them up, not tear them down. It was his desire that his visit be a pleasant one.

Do you have that kind of attitude with others? Do you want to be an encourager to your friends and family? Is it your desire to build people up and not tear them down? This is a great goal to have in your life each day.

**Isaiah 35:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.**

**Hebrews 3:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

If you will focus your priorities on trying to be an encouragement to people, it will give you a brand new outlook on life and will turn your life around. Your attention will be directed toward the needs of others and not your problems. You will be amazed at the power and effectiveness of your encouragement.

In the **February, 1994 issue of Reader's Digest, Marion Gilbert** illustrated the power of a little encouragement. Here is what she said: One morning I opened the door to get the newspaper and was surprised to see a strange little dog with our paper in his mouth. Delighted with this unexpected "delivery service," I fed him some treats.

The following morning I was horrified to see the same dog sitting in front of our door, wagging his tail, surrounded by eight newspapers. I spent the rest of that morning returning the papers to their owners. Beloved, encouragement has a way of bringing out the best effort and enthusiasm of others.

## **II. THE COMMANDS—[2 Corinthians 13:11-13](#)**

**2 Corinthians 13:11-13 (NASB)**

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

<sup>12</sup> **Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

<sup>13</sup> **All the saints greet you.**

Paul gives some closing, rapid-fire, commands that will help any church to be what God wants it to be and to have unity. When these qualities listed here are not present in the church family, there are problems that must be dealt with. **These traits do not come to a church by glossing over problems, conflicts, and difficulties.**

**They are not produced by neglect, denial, withdrawal, or bitterness.** They are the by-products of the extremely hard work of solving problems. Just as Paul and the Corinthians had to hammer out difficulties to bring peace, so we must apply the principles of God's Word and not just hear them.

Paul states that if we will obey these commands, the God of love and peace will be with us. There will be a closeness with the Lord. Now what are the commands we are to obey?

Notice verse eleven.

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)**

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

### A. Be Cheerful: “rejoice”—v. 11

Paul says, “**Finally, brethren, rejoice.**” He wishes these believers all manner of happiness and goodwill. The word “rejoice” is from the Greek word *chairō* {*khah'-ee-ro*} which means “to rejoice exceedingly, to be well or thrive.” He is urging them to rejoice. The present tense of this Greek verb indicates that the characteristic of joy must continue to be part of a Christian's life.

It is interesting this is listed first. There was a great need for joy in this church because it had been plagued by so much division. Paul commands them to rejoice and thrive in the Lord. He knew they would rejoice if those who were in error would get matters right with God and the church.

**Philippians 4:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

**1 Thessalonians 5:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always;

The same command applies for us too. Cheer up and grow in the Lord. Happiness is a choice and when you choose to rejoice, it will turn your life around and your church. A happy church is a thriving church. Such happiness and joy come from obedience to the Lord. As God's people, we are to be characterized by joy in our life. Joy is a trait that is produced by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us when we are yielded to Him.

**Galatians 5:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

It was the desire of the Lord Jesus that our lives be filled with joy, no matter what circumstances we faced. Because of Christ, our joy cannot be taken away from us.

**John 15:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

**John 16:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.**

*In spite of disease, economic disaster, difficulties, disappointments, or divided relationships*, we can still have joy in our life because the joy of the Lord comes from within us. We can have great joy because of the confidence we have of the Lord's care for us and His control over the affairs of our life. He knows about our **trials** and **troubles**, and what is best for us.

We also have great joy because of God's blessings, His indwelling Spirit, the answers to our prayers, the fellowship we have with believers, and the hope of eternal life in Heaven. We really have no reason to be depressed or down in the dumps, unless our depression is caused by our rebellion or sinfulness. If this is the case, we need to get matters right with God and others. Do you have joy in your life?

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)**

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

**B. Be Corrected or Cured: “*be made complete*”—[v. 11](#)**

The word “**complete**” is from the Greek word *katartizo* {*kat-ar-tid'-zo*} which means “**to mend what has been broken or torn, to get into joint again, to repair or restore, to make one what he ought to be.**” So this word has the sense not of adding something that is lacking, but of putting things in order, of adjusting things that are out of adjustment. This word was used to describe fishermen mending their nets or a doctor setting a broken bone.

The apostle was challenging the Corinthian believers to get their house in order, restore unity among themselves and fix what was broken in the church. **Any division, criticism, rebellion, and immorality had to cease.**

**How does a church fix itself?** The answer is submission and compliance to the Word of God. This is why it is important that a church be a **Bible-believing, Bible-preaching** church that teaches the whole counsel of God. When a church fails to use the Bible as its blue print for living, it opens the door to unnecessary problems created by unscriptural choices and decisions. When Christians commit to obey the Word of God, it will help them to turn their life around.

The challenge of the Scriptures is for Christians to focus and pursue growing in God's grace. If we are to be people of character and Christ-likeness, then we must continually re-evaluate our goals and priorities, making sure they are in line with God's Word.

If there are errors in doctrine, they are to be corrected and in agreement with Scripture. If unscriptural traditions and fads are embraced over Scripture, the traditions are to be rejected. If there is sin in the church, it must be confronted and properly dealt with in a Christ-like, biblical manner.

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)**

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

**C. Be Compliant and Comforted: “be comforted”—v. 11**

Paul commands the church to be of good “**comfort**.” This word “**comfort**” is from the Greek word *parakaleo* {*par-ak-al-eh'-o*} which means “**to call to one’s side, to receive admonition, to be encouraged, strengthened, or comforted.**”

Paul wanted these believers to receive admonition so that they might be comforted by obedience to God's Word. They needed to be teachable if they were going to be available to the Lord and do His will. These believers had a great need for comfort because of the stress they had endured in the church for so many months.

Submission to authority and God’s Word was vital if the Corinthian church was going to turn around and get back on a spiritual track. Let me ask, “Are you spiritually on track? Are you teachable?” If you want to grow in your faith, it is crucial that you have a teachable spirit. If you have a teachable spirit when it comes to the Word of God, it will turn your life around.

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)**

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

**D. Be Concurrent or United: “be like-mind”—v. 11**

During World War II, Hitler commanded all religious groups to unite so that he could control them. Among the Brethren assemblies, **half complied** and **half refused**. Those who went along with the order had a much easier time. Those who did not faced harsh persecution. In almost every family of those who resisted, someone died in a concentration camp.

When the war was over, feelings of bitterness ran deep between the groups and there was much tension. Finally they decided that the situation had to be healed. Leaders from each group met at a quiet retreat. For several days, each person spent time in prayer, examining his own heart in the light of Christ's commands. Then they came together.

**Francis Schaeffer**, who told of the incident, asked a friend who was there, “What did you do then?” “We were just one,” he replied. As they confessed their hostility and bitterness to God and yielded to His control, the Holy Spirit created a spirit of unity among them. Love filled their hearts and dissolved their hatred. This kind of reconciliation is what Paul desired for the Corinthian church.

Paul commanded these believers to be united. To be of one mind meant they were to **“think the same thing or to have the same beliefs.”** They had a great need to agree with one another. This command was for harmony in the truth that Paul had taught them. They would not agree on everything, but they were to agree with one another on the main things *like faith, belief, their purpose, mission, and ministry*. If they were to be of the same mind, God’s Word had to be *the standard, the source, and the authority* for their unity. Unity is a constant challenge of Scripture.

**Romans 12:18 (NASB)**

**<sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

**Ephesians 4:3 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup> Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

**Philippians 1:27 (NASB)**

**<sup>27</sup> Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.**

When we look at the Reformers of the sixteenth century, we find that they allowed for freedom in interpreting Scripture, yet they noted that the church should never waver on the cardinal doctrines of God's Word like the Virgin Birth, salvation by grace through faith in Christ, the blood atonement and deity of Jesus Christ, etc. The careful study and accurate interpretation and understanding of the truth of Scripture unites believers into one mind.

**Romans 15:4-6 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

**<sup>5</sup> Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,**

**<sup>6</sup> so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Unity is vital if a church is going to be effective for Christ. It is difficult to reach people for Christ when the church is divided and the people are not going in the same direction. This is why the direction needs to be spelled out clearly so that people who attend the church know where you are going and where you are coming from.

The purpose of our church is to win the lost to Christ, to disciple believers and help them mature in Christ, to send forth missionaries across the globe, to equip pastors and laymen with study material that will enable them to learn the Word of God and help them in their preaching and teaching of the Bible. Each church has different goals and ministries and that is great. If you are a pastor, seek God’s direction for your life and for the church and do what the Lord leads you to do.

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)**

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

**E. Be Calm and Content: “live in peace”—[v. 11](#)**

Paul commands them to live in peace because they needed peace in their church. When believers understand the Word of God and submit to it, one of the results is peace. In fact, the challenge of Scripture is to pursue peace in our lives.

**Romans 14:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

The phrase “we pursue” in [Romans 14:19](#) is very strong in the Greek. It is from the word *dioko* {dee-o'-ko} which means “to run after something or to run swiftly to reach a goal, to pursue.” We are to pursue peace in our lives like a tiger pursuing a deer. This pursuit requires thought, work, and determination, especially when you are angry or irritated. Restoration is *work, comfort is work, agreement is work, and peace is work*. We are to guard our heart against *snobbishness, pride, divisiveness, and a critical spirit*. This not only applies to our relationships in the church, but also our relationships with our family and friends.

Let me ask, “Do you have peace in your life or is it characterized by *anger, bitterness, constant arguing and bickering?*” If you struggle with bitterness, forgive those folks who are the focus of your anger. Let your anger go. Ask the Lord to remove it from your heart. Doing this will help you to turn your life around.

**Ephesians 4:31 (NASB)**

<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

**2 Corinthians 13:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.

**F. Be Caring and Compassionate: “Greet one another with a holy kiss”—[v. 12](#)**



A holy kiss was a common form of greeting in the ancient Near East. It typically was a cheek-to-cheek embrace between members of the same sex. It was nothing that was sensual or erotic. This would contradict the teaching of Scripture. In the early church, it was not a mere formality, like a handshake in Western culture today. The holy kiss took on a special significance as a physical expression of brotherly love and mutual affection between church members. It was a sign of mutual fellowship among persons of mixed social background, nationality, race, and gender who were joined together as a new family in Christ.

It was often done at the Lord's Table, where repentant sinners would be visibly restored to fellowship with a physical embrace. Paul wanted the Corinthians who had been rocked by *conflict, division, and sin*, to display their affection openly, because he knew it would help break down the barriers between them.

Beloved, when you demonstrate love and kindness to others, you demonstrate the love of Christ. Your compassion and care can melt a hard heart and encourage a discouraged soul. It is by our love that we send the loudest message that Christ lives within us.

**John 13:35 (NASB)**

<sup>35</sup> **"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

When the purpose of your life is to care for and love others, it will turn your life around for sure. Do you know someone today that could use some encouragement and kindness? Give them a call or a visit.

### III. CLOSING THOUGHTS—[2 Corinthians 13:13](#)

**2 Corinthians 13:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **All the saints greet you.**

How is a Christian able to personally implement these commands and turn his life around? The answer is here. All three persons of the Trinity work together to help us cope with life, live for Christ, and conquer our trials. It is by the Son of God's grace, God the Father's love, and the communion of the Holy Spirit we are able to get on track and stay on track.

What does Paul mean by "communion of the Holy Spirit?" The answer is a great truth. This word "**communion**" is from the Greek word *koinonia* {*koy-nohn-ee'-ah*} which means "**partnership and participation.**" The Spirit of God is not only our partner in life, He participates with us, giving us *direction* and *comfort*, helping us to carry the burdens we face. The hope of personal growth in Christ for the Corinthians and all other believers is the *love, grace, and power of God* working in our lives. If you want to turn your life around, then yield and receive His power and grace.