

## 2 CORINTHIANS

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## II CORINTHIANS 1:1-24

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**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:**—Paul begins his letter stressing his apostleship in his greeting. **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ**— "Apostle" means that he has been called to be a messenger, an ambassador, a witness, a teacher, a missionary, a messenger of God. Some of the Corinthian believers were questioning and denying Paul's call by God when he said. **...by the will of God,**— He had been chosen by God to work for God. His life work is not due to men; it's not even due to his own choice. It's due to God and God alone. God is to be the source of the believer's call. Paul calls Timothy "our brother" which means brother in Christ. Timothy was a young man who had been led to the Lord at a very early age. Paul had sensed God's call upon Timothy's life, so Paul encouraged him to give his life to the ministry. God is the source of brotherhood among believers. Timothy is with Paul in the district of Macedonia (probably the city of Philippi) while Paul is writing this letter to the Corinthians. **...unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:**— God is the source of the church and the source of all saints. Paul is not only writing to the church at Corinth, but to all the other churches in Achaia. He knew that writing would help all the churches, so he wanted the letter to be circulated among all of them

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from...**— For Paul, grace usually precedes peace. God is the source of grace and peace. Until one has received the grace of God he can know nothing of His peace. Grace is the infinite love of God that enables Him to pour out infinite favor on the object loved without receiving anything in return. **...God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul links the Father and the Son thus affirming the deity of Christ. The reference is to the eternal Father and the Incarnate Son.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;**— Continuing in his greeting or introduction of second letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes it plain that God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Paul can say that because of Jesus Christ! *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."* A father could show no greater mercy than to give the life of His Son to save others. This is exactly what God did. He gave Christ to die for His enemies; for those who were in rebellion against Him. God had mercy upon us, and He continues to have mercy upon us. His nature is that of a Father. The word "mercies" means compassion; pity; it means looking upon people in need and having concern and kindness upon them. The word "comfort" means to be by the side of another; to relieve and support; give solace, consolation, and encouragement. There is also the idea of strength, an enablement, a confidence. It consoles and relieves a person, but it also strengthens him at the same time. It charges a person to go out and face the world saying blessed is God and thanks be to God!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.** The word "tribulation" means to be weighed down exceedingly; to be pressed and crushed. Even in tribulation they have a God who  
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comforts them and then they are able to comfort another in trouble. How? - By the comfort of God. We have to remember that God comforts us as well.

- God comforts the sufferer so that he might be a testimony to other sufferers.
- God carries us through trials so that we can carry others through trials.
- God strengthens us so that we can strengthen others.
- God encourages us so that we can encourage others.

Because you were comforted by God, you are able to comfort others during their times of tribulations.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:5** For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. God matches the comfort to equal the sufferings. Christ bore every kind of suffering imaginable, even the suffering of death.

- being born to an unwed mother (Mt.1:18-19) • being born in a stable, the worst of conditions (Lk.2:7).
- being born to poor parents (Lk.2:24). • having his life threatened as a baby (Mt.2:13). • being the cause of unimaginable sorrow (Mt.2:16). • having to be moved and shifted as a baby (Mt.2:13).
- being reared in a despicable place, Nazareth (Lk.2:39). • having His father die during His youth (Mt.13:53-58).
- having no home, not even a place to lay His head (Mt.8:20; Lk.9:58). • being hated and opposed by religionists (Mk.14:1-2). • being charged with insanity (Mk.3:21). • being charged with demon possession (Mk.3:22). • being opposed by His own family (Mk.3:31-32). • being rejected, hated, and opposed by listeners (Mt.13:53-58; Lk.4:28-29). • being left alone, and forsaken by all of His friends (Mk.14:50). • being tried before the high court of the land on the charge of treason (Jh.18:33).
- being executed by crucifixion, the worst possible death (Jh.19:16).

What He went through enables us to know that we can go through. Christ stooped to the lowest point of human experience in every condition. It is about His sufferings. He can now identify with and feel for any person's circumstance. When we suffer in the Will of God, we are sharing the sufferings of the Savior. This does not refer to the sufferings on the cross, for only Jesus could die as a sinless substitute for us. So, as the sufferings increase, so does the supply of God's grace. James 4:6a says, *"But He giveth more grace..."* It's like a river overflowing and overflowing with God's grace! God has ample grace for our every need, but He will not give it in advance. And we know that Paul went through many struggles: No matter how terrible it may be, God showers us with the comfort of His Son. He does not just give us some strength and comfort to bear the suffering; He gives us all the strength and comfort necessary to handle all the suffering.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:6** And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. Whatever hardships Paul endured was for the sake of eternal salvation of his converts. It made for the encouragement of their salvation. One thing we have to remember is that we cannot save ourselves. It is by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus, but they needed encouragement, consolation (comfort) which was capable enough for them to endure the same sufferings Paul and others had suffered. The bottom line is: whether they are afflicted or whether they are comforted, it is for their good. He does not place suffering upon you, but He uses or He allows suffering. What glory would God get? For you see all suffering was placed upon Jesus at the cross. To 'share the pains of Christ' does not mean that His pains were not enough. It means that we suffer because we follow him. It would be null and void for what Jesus has already done if we had to be afflicted for what Christ went through! Both the affliction and the comfort are for the same purposes. God uses both suffering and comfort in a believer to...

1. God uses suffering to stir consolation or comfort in others who suffer.
2. God uses suffering to stir salvation. A person cannot trust God today and not trust Him tomorrow. A person cannot bless God when things are going well and curse God when things go bad. A person who truly believes in God trusts Him no matter the circumstance. He continues with God in the way of

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salvation no matter how great the suffering he has to bear.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:7** And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. Our hope is that we try to spare the younger ones to avoid such sufferings, but we cannot, they need to experience the suffering so they can experience the comfort! Paul's hope was steadfast and enduring for them. We are all partakers of suffering and also partakers of comfort.

3. God uses suffering to stir endurance.

4. God uses suffering to stir sharing among believers. You have nothing to share unless you go through something. *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind"* Phil.2:1-2.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:8** For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:— Paul is talking about the afflictions that had come upon he and those with him. He does not want them to be ignorant of the trouble which came to them in Asia. They were oppressed (weighed down) exceedingly. They were crushed far beyond what they could stand, insomuch that they despaired even of life. They gave up; lost hope; didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Paul really broke it down to them. God allowed Paul, probably the greatest missionary of all times to experience much suffering time and time again. Why does God allow His dear servant to go through such sufferings?

5. God uses suffering to teach trust. And note the intensity of the trouble.

- Paul's life was threatened by a huge angry mob led by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-40).
- Paul knew the trouble that awaited him in Asia (Acts 20:18-27)
- Paul says Priscilla and Aquilla... risked their lives for him (Rom.16:3-4)
- Paul says Andronicus and Junia...were his fellow prisoners (Rom.16:7)
- Paul expresses the great victory experienced through terrifying trials (1 Cor.4:9-13)
- Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor.15:32)
- Paul says he was crushed by some fearful burdens which made him despair of life itself (2 Cor.1:8-10)
- Paul expresses an extremely anxious mood while the memory of his days at Ephesus was still vivid (2 Cor.4:8-12).
- Paul lists his terrifying trials. Clement of Rome says....seven times in bonds (2 Cor.11:23-27)
- Paul at some point while a prisoner in Rome experienced some sorrow so great that it threatened to crush him into a frightening despair (Phil.2:27).

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:9** But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:— Paul lets them know that his circumstances were due to external pressures and physical limitations reaching the point where the only way out, visible to them was death. Death was staring them in the face. They really couldn't trust in themselves to get out of these circumstances, but it had to be in the God who is able to raise the dead. It had to be in the God they put their trust in.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:10** Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;—They had to put their trust in the God who delivers from so great a death! Hallelujah, have you ever been there?

6. God allows suffering to teach a daily trust for deliverance.

Paul says: (1) Who delivered (past) (2) doth deliver (present) and (3) yet delivers (future). That's shouting news! God rescued them out of a terrible death! God preserved them from such a deadly peril! How? Because their hope was not in themselves, but in the God who raises the dead; who delivered; now delivers, and will deliver from death! I am excited! To trust God in such "*backed-up*" to the wall circumstances is to have astounding

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faith. Ask God, He is able to give it to you. The challenges we go through may be small next to others challenges, but they will all need faith to believe in the God who is able to raise the dead! God continued to deliver them through the trials of life and they continued to trust God to deliver them.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:11** **Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.** Paul lets them know that together they help when they pray for him and others. He needed their prayers then, and in the future. Why? - Because the gift bestowed; the favor of blessings that God gives Paul would be receive in being delivered from death—when people pray. It is God’s underserved favor or divine answer to prayer. Many were able to give thanks on Paul’s behalf because of their prayers.

## 7. God uses suffering to teach prayer and thanksgiving.

Pray for pastors, teachers, missionaries, and others who are on the front lines of spreading the gospel. Anyone making a real difference for God will be challenged by Satan. When Satan sets a trap for God’s people, he is really setting the trap for himself because God is going to get the glory out of any circumstance the devil sets. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* Rom.8:28.

## SUMMARY:

<sup>1</sup>Paul teaches why it is necessary for the Christian to pass through fiery trials and how Christ is always merciful to us (1:3-4). There are some sufferings that we endure simply because we are human and subject to pain; but there are other sufferings that come because we are God’s children and are serving Him (1:5-6). The Corinthians were exposed to testings, not because they were especially wicked, but because tribulation is the portion of all believers and he knew they would be comforted by the Lord (1:7). Paul goes on to state that their sufferings were so horrible and so unbearable that death seemed certain, but it made them trust more in God as He saved them from death (1:8-10). He asks the Corinthians to pray for him (1:11). God has to work in us before He can work through us. In times of suffering, most of us are prone to think only of ourselves and to forget others. However, suffering can help us minister to others. Paul experienced trouble, not as punishment for something he had done but as preparation for something he was yet going to do in ministering to other’s need (**1:1-11**).

## APPLICATION:

This lesson spoke directly to me. *"The effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man/woman avail much!"* Those that care will pray over the sufferings of others and give comfort, and they will also receive the same comfort because of the favor of God that gives Him glory.

## SYNOPSIS:

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:12-14** Paul defends his integrity. Apparently the Corinthians (many new believers) accused Paul of lying when he did not visit them as promised, but he had to change his plans. But he was really sincere and honest in his dealings, for he depended upon the Lord for help, not in his fleshly wisdom. He tells them that he is forth-coming and there’s nothing written in between the lines. As they have partly understood the truth, Paul says one day they will understand in the Day of the Lord Jesus. Then they will be able to boast in and rejoice in him as he is rejoicing in them.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/comfort-in-suffering/>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:15-22** <sup>2</sup>Paul explained that he had intended to visit them twice. The first visit would have been on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia. The second visit would have been on his return journey. He did not keep. He was not fickle or indecisive in his plans as some might have thought. To clarify things, he says, God is true; He's faithful; He can be relied on, therefore, the Good News they bring and deliver to them is not yes and no; it is true! As the truth of God stands, so does the word of the apostle. His change of plans is always in accord with the Will of God. Jesus is the Person about whom Timothy, Paul and Silas had preached. God says that Jesus is the 'yes' to all His promises. Jesus proves that all God's promises are true. So when we pray by Jesus Christ we can say 'Amen'. This is a Hebrew word that means 'firm, steady, trustworthy'. We use it at the end of prayers. It shows that we agree with them. In this way, we give glory to God. 'Standing firm' in business meant that they would keep their promises. The mark of possession was a 'seal.' This was a piece of wax that they put on an official piece of paper. It showed who owned it. A 'guarantee' (*certain promise*) was a payment of part of a sum of money. This was a sign that the full amount would be paid in the future. God gives us the Holy Spirit to show that we belong to Him. The sealing of the Holy Spirit has a threefold significance in the New Testament: 1) to indicate ownership, 2) to indicate genuineness, and 3) to preserve and keep safe. The Holy Spirit Himself is the down-payment, or pledge, or redemption. The indwelling Spirit is the surety and the security of all that is to follow in the final salvation of the believer.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:23** **Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.** What should a minister do when he is under attack by some persons in the church? Paul faced the problem, accusing him of every conceivable weakness and fault, and it almost broke his heart. Some of the church had also become corrupt (morally and doctrinally)—living in sin— teaching contrary to the Word of God. Paul was the center of controversy, being heavily criticized and he felt it was best not to come. He stood no chance to minister to the people. Therefore, he delayed his trip to Corinth. Just as Jesus Christ came first to save His people rather than to judge the world, so too, Paul's desire was not to cause any more sorrow among them, but come with joy instead of anguish. At this time it was best for the minister to spare the rod of discipline. He had the spiritual authority over their welfare, and would be forced to deal with their sin and shame. He wanted them to have time to repent and correct their sinful behavior. He waited instead for a report from Titus before taking further actions, hoping he would not have to come again, as he had earlier, to face their rebellion. He called God as his witness, for his soul shall answer to it.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1:24** **Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.** Paul does not want to pull rank. He doesn't wish to dictate to them in an authoritative way as he goes on to express that he or others does not have dominion over their faith; he does not control their spiritual lives; he is not a dictator to take authority over their behavior. What he means is that when he comes to them, he wants to be able to minister to them; to be a helper of their joy; work along with them; join them in their efforts to grow; to help them in fulfilling their joy in Christ. The Corinthians were not to stand firm because of Paul but stand firm in their faith in Christ. They had to make the effort. They were engulfed in controversy over Paul and in sin before God. Paul and the others wanted only to be helpers of their joy, as they stood in faith in Christ!

## SUMMARY:

<sup>3</sup>The reason for Paul's delayed visit to Corinth was to spare them, calling God a witness to his soul that he was telling the truth. He did not want to suggest an attitude of domination nor "pull rank" on them, for he views himself as one working for their joy. He acknowledges that they stand on the basis of their faith (**1:23-24**). [TOP](#)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/2corinthians-lbw.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/2co/2co\\_01.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/2co/2co_01.htm)

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II CORINTHIANS 2:1-11NEXT 3:1-18

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.** Paul said he determined; made a decision; resolved in his own mind that it was best for the minister to delay his trip at that time, so he would not cause pain; heaviness. He loved and cared for the people of Corinth and their church, but he just didn't want to be the cause of more pain and hurt; therefore, staying away was the risk he took.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?**— So, Paul didn't want to put them in a painful and embarrassing position. How would they then be free to bring pleasure and gladness to him if they are sorrowful? What point would it be for him to depress the very people who could give him joy? His coming would only cause gloom and heaviness to settle over the congregation because of the rumors and controversy about him. A minister's presence should bring joy and cheer to a congregation, not conflict and stress. Jesus' Words—John 16:33: *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* There could be no gladness or joy until the rumors of Paul, and the sin stopped. It was best for the minister not to fight with those whom he loved.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.** Paul had written a letter urging the church to put the Lord first and to quit the controversy. It was best for the minister not to be attacked and hurt time and again. His desire was that they would take care of these measures themselves, so that when he came, he would be able to rejoice in a congregation that acted obediently, and he would see that it had prompted repentant hearts and the restoration of those who had been disciplined. He longed to minister; not to have controversy and sin swirling around him, and certainly not in the church.

A leader has to be accountable and the people have to be accountable. Accountability is the standard or order in making right choices. An important part of being accountable is being truthful and making amends for your choices. When all, come together, accountability will bring joy.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.** Affliction, anguish, and many tears, all characterized Paul's emotional condition as he penned this letter to the Corinthians. It was best for the minister to write a strong appeal. Many say it was lost. He does not want them to be grieved, but to know the love he has for them. Sometimes others make choices that we know are wrong. If we ignore their behavior and let them continue, we aren't showing love to them. We aren't causing them to be accountable. Love mends and restores.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.** When a person within the church is causing trouble, what should the church do? Church discipline is the message. There was an offender; his name is not mentioned; but he is a person who is causing grief and pain for the whole church. Paul is just acknowledging the grief and its continued affects, not so much him, in part (*to such a degree*), but on the whole congregation.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.** Paul writes that it comes down <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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to this: the man causing the mess has been punished enough by their united disapproval and discipline, and he does not want to be any harder on this man than what has already been done. Many churches will not deal with discipline; they overlook it; sweep it under the rug; don't correct. True discipline is an evidence of love. But always make sure you go in love, and not in harshness. One has to be restored back to God in order to continue in God's plan for their life.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.** Any believer who attacks God's minister and disturbs the church must be corrected. It doesn't stop there, after disciplinary actions, now it's time to forgive (*meaning to show it*), and comfort them, lest one becomes so bitter and discouraged that they won't be able to recover from this. This is all a part of the restoration process of a person.

1. The offending brother must be corrected not only for the sake of the church and the minister, but for his own sake.
2. The offending believer must be restored to the point that he loves God, the people of God; including the minister of God.

Note: the man here must have repented of his sin; he was gripped with sorrow for Paul to have said this. Therefore, the purpose of the discipline had been achieved and restoration was needed. There were four things involved in restoration: he had to repent (v. 7); they were to forgive (v.7); comfort (v.7), and they were to confirm their love (v.8). There is a point where discipline can go on too long and become destructive instead of corrective. Once the person has repented and demonstrated genuine sorrow, he is to be restored back into the fellowship of the church, thereby, causing accountability for all.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.** Showing assurance and demonstrating their love toward the man was necessary. That means they were to go out of their way to show the man that he was loved. The discipline and correction were only to straighten out the mess and get everyone back on track of loving one another to minister for the Lord.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.** Paul wanted to know the proof; the evidence of their obedience. As long as the church allowed the man to continue his disturbance, the church could not focus on its mission and ministry. Allowing the controversy and division to rule meant they would still be complaining and arguing. But Paul's aim in writing the letter was to see how they stood the test; whether they fully accepted his authority—being obedient in all things.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;**— Paul declares that forgiveness is the best way:

1. Paul had forgiven the man to help the church and himself. If a church refuses to forgive one who truly repents, the church is denying its very nature and purpose for existing (God's existence in them).
2. Paul had forgiven the man for the sake of Christ. "*In the person of Christ*" means in the presence or face of Christ, that is, before Christ. Christ is so displeased with an unforgiving spirit that He refuses to forgive the sins of any man who is unforgiving. Paul loved Christ, loved Him with all of his heart; therefore, Paul could not cut the heart of Christ with an unforgiving spirit.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.** Paul had to forgive the man for the sake of Christ which keeps Satan from getting an advantage!

1. Satan would have had an advantage over the man if the church had not forgiven him.

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- a. He would have remained out of the church; out in the world.
  - b. He would have been subject to falling into depression and despair; swallowed up with sorrow.
2. Satan would have had an advantage over Paul and his ministry. It would have become ineffective, for God could no longer bless a man who did not do what he was preaching: forgiving the sins of men.
  3. Satan would have had an advantage over the church for the same reasons; for it was denying its very purpose for existing. Instead of opening its doors to the repentant sinner, it would be closing its doors to meeting the needs of people—people who are ever so precious to God.

We should not be ignorant to Satan's devices. Satan has great influence upon men and their affairs. His devices come to tempt and destroy people!

## SUMMARY:

<sup>4</sup>The reason for Paul's delayed visit to Corinth was to spare them, calling God a witness to his soul that he was telling the truth. He did not want to suggest an attitude of domination nor "pull rank" on them, for he views himself as one working for their joy. He acknowledges that they stand on the basis of their faith. In his letter, he didn't want to cause pain and heaviness when he came to them, for he needed their joy. He wanted to bring accountability with joy, not with grief. He also wanted to receive their refreshment when he came (**2:1-3**).

Paul had shed many tears in writing this letter, not to give pain, but rather to let them know of his love for them. There was one who had grieved Paul, not as much as what was done to grieve the church. However, there was sufficient punishment inflicted upon this man by the majority of the church. Now it was time to restore him by forgiving and comforting him, so he would not be overcome with sorrow or bitterness (**2:4-7**).

True discipline is an evidence of love, but there had to be a continuance of love toward the offender. They would in turn show their obedience in all things by restoring relationships. Paul had forgiven the man for the sake of Christ and the church had to do the same. It would help the church and it would please Christ, to not be ignorant of Satan's devices, thereby, keeping Satan from getting an advantage over them (**2:8-11**).

## APPLICATION:

God does not want us to be in offense with anyone! Are there people you need to forgive? Do it!

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<sup>4</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/2co/2co\\_01.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/2co/2co_01.htm)  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>



II CORINTHIANS 3:1-18NEXT 4:1-15**INTRODUCTION:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:1** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?— Paul had just declared in 1Cor.2:17 that he did not corrupt the Word of God as many do, and that his ministry was based upon a true call of God. He knew that those who opposed him were going to jump on his claim and again accuse him of exalting himself; accuse him of acting like he was the messenger of God who had a corner on the truth. Therefore, Paul begins to head off and prevent the accusation. He asks "Do we begin again to commend ourselves?" Now, what credentials does he have that should cause people to listen to him and his claims? There is one basic truth: The minister's credentials are not always letters of commendation or letters of recommendation, for some of them were not always accurate or truthful at that time. Some in the Corinthian church had written letters and used these letters of reference to recommend themselves to the church. Therefore, a person is not really known until he has proven himself on some field of ministry or in some position. Now days, we call it probation. Paul goes straight to the jugular. His credentials were far more excellent than letters.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:2** Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:— Paul gives the first credential of the minister: that the Corinthian believers were written upon his heart. Anyone who knew him could see that he deeply cared for the Corinthian church. He always prayed for them, expressed love and concern for them, cherished them. They were dear to him, so dear that he could actually say that they were written in his heart. That's a deep caring. That's just how Jesus felt about us! The lives of the believers whom Paul and his companions had converted were enough of a recommendation. A minister's greatest commendation is the changed lives of people. Their testimony of how they were reached; how they have grown was his letter of commendation, and their testimony before the world was far more important than a letter of commendation.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:3** Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. The second credential of the minister: that the lives are written by Christ through the minister. This means the minister is not the one who converts and changes the lives of people.

1. It is Christ and Christ alone who converts and grows the people.
  - a. The lives of the believers are said to be the epistle (letter) of Christ. Christ is the author of the believer's life, the author of his conversion and his righteousness. He is the author and finisher of our faith.
  - b. The lives of believers are not written with ink which men use, but with the Spirit of the living God. Christ used the Spirit of God when He wishes to communicate a message to men.
    - i. He does not write the message upon tables of stone as He did when He gave the commandments to Moses.
    - ii. He writes upon the fleshy tables of the heart. He puts His message upon the hearts of men which causes men to live changed lives.
2. It is the minister who ministers to the lives of believers. Paul is saying that Christ creates the letter, the lives of believers, and the minister looks after and cares for it.

The greatest commendation that a minister can have is not letters of recommendation, but...

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# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

- Christ written in the lives of people
- The Spirit of the living God written in the conduct and behavior of people
- The law of God written upon the hearts of people.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:—** The third credential of the minister is the minister being qualified and made fit by God. The word "*God-ward*" means that the minister serves God and he serves before God or toward God. He is not only qualified and made fit by God; he is responsible to God for how he ministers.

1. Paul's trust and confidence is toward God through Christ. Paul's boasting was not in himself. The credit for all Paul's accomplishments goes to Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;—** Paul was not sufficient for the ministry, not in and of himself. He was made fit for the ministry through Christ.

2. Paul's only sufficiency was of God. He had no power to change the heart of a person—to give life to a person—to give the assurance and security of God's presence and care to a person—to give the Spirit of God to a person—to write the law of God in the heart of a person. The gift of life and the power to give life is of God and God alone. My God! Chew on that!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.** The word "*testament*" is better translated covenant. It means an agreement made between two or more people; a special relationship set up and established between persons.

- In the Old Testament, God had set up an Old Covenant between Himself and man which is here called the "*Covenant of the Letter*." The Old Testament Law was written on tablets of stone. The old agreement required the people to obey God's laws. People were not strong enough to do this. The letter of the law (written law) causes death (condemns the soul), but the Spirit gives life.
- Since Christ, God has set up a New Covenant with man. The New Testament Law is written in our hearts. Paul had already told them in verse 2 that the epistle is written in their hearts. And it's known and read by all men. <sup>5</sup>Paul was now God's servant of the new agreement. Jesus made this new agreement between God and the people when he died for us. So, we are not just able to follow on our own of what the law says, but we depend upon the Spirit. The Spirit helps people to obey God's laws.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:—** The ministry which brought glory came with death. How can the law which kills and ministers death be said to be glorious?

- The law was glorious in that it was given to Moses by God Himself—face to face. And being in the presence of God caused Moses' face to shine with the glory of God. The glory upon Moses' face was so bright, the people could not continually look upon him (Exo.34:30).
- The law was glorious in that it reveals the nature of God Himself, that He is holy and righteous and must be approached in holiness and righteousness.
- The law was glorious in that it pointed men to their desperate need for salvation. It showed men that they were sinners and short of God's glory and desperately needed a Savior.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/2corinthians-lbw.htm>  
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And then it says ... **for the glory of his countenance which glory was to be done away:**— What Paul is saying is that the glory of God which was upon Moses' face was a symbol of God upon the Old Covenant. However, the glory of God upon the Old Covenant was passing away, for it was meant to be only a temporary arrangement between God and man, for God would establish His New Covenant through His Son Jesus Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:8** **How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?**— The above verse stated that the ministration of death...was glorious, then the thought provoking question is asked: "*How shall the ministration of the spirit be more glorious.*" It's like receiving an upgrade that you didn't think you needed.

- The Old Covenant ministration was written on stone (outward), now the ministration of the Spirit is written in the heart (inward).
- The Old Covenant ministration was temporary (what's seen), the ministration of the Spirit is eternal (the unseen).
- The Old Covenant ministration leaned toward death, the ministration of the Spirit leans toward life.

If the Old Covenant that Moses received and the glory was shown upon his face (outward appearance), how much shall the ministration of the Spirit (the New Covenant) be made glorious in the inward man? The answer is obvious—the ministry of the Spirit is to give life to men and the power to live life. In fact, life is eternally more glorious than death.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:9** **For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteous-ness exceed in glory.** Romans 8:1-2 comes to mind: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The New Covenant, the Spirit of God imparted righteousness. Christ took our unrighteousness and gave us His righteousness, the very nature of God. The Old could not do that. It could save. It kept them in bondage while ministering death, but the New exceeds gloriously through Christ bringing life.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:10** **For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.** Therefore the glory of the New Covenant exceeds the Old Covenant so much that by comparison the Old Covenant has no glory at all. The New Covenant far excels the Old Covenant because God sent His only begotten Son! His very own glorious presence came down to save us through Christ which hides any glory that the Old Covenant once had!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:11** **For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.** The Old Covenant or law faded away, the New Covenant remains and is permanent. That's why there is no need for another upgrade. Its glory and function will never be superceded! No need for anymore changes. There will be no new relationship set up between man and God, no new way for man to become related to God. The final covenant between God and man has been set and established forever. If a man is ever to have a relationship with God, he must allow God's Spirit to enter his heart and life. There is no other way to live with God. If a man wishes to live forever with God, he must invite God's Spirit into his life and it will be glorious.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:12** **Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:**— Our hope is knowing what Christ has done on the cross for us; It's His finished work, and the Spirit of God in us that we have the ministration of the Spirit and the ministration of Righteousness within us operating which is permanent. With such hope we can't help but speak with great plainness about our Lord and Savior Jesus  
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Christ. The Old Covenant spoke with veiled meaning; the New Covenant speaks with plain (outspoken, clear, and bold) meaning. The reason we can proclaim it so clearly and boldly is because the New Covenant is given by the Spirit in a clear and unveiled message.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:13** **And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:—** The veiled meaning is illustrated by Moses. When the people saw the glory of God shining in the face of Moses, He had to put a veil upon his face. Why? – Because the people withdrew from the brightness of the glory of God. Sin could not stand in God’s presence. They also were not to see the glory fade away from Moses’ face. Man looks at the law and sees that he is to obey it if he wishes to please God. Therefore, man works and works to keep the law believing all the time that he is earning the favor and acceptance of God. This is simply not God’s way. But, the Law had to fade away to give way to the fulfillment of the Law. Christ is the fulfillment of that Law. So, even as Moses veiled the brightness of the glory, it also concealed the old order which was passing away.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:14** **But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.** This shows that until God allows you to see a thing, your mind will be blinded from seeing it. The glory and meaning of the law are veiled from Man’s sight; he is unable...

- To see the real meaning of the law.
- To see that the law was given to reveal the nature of God’s glory and perfection.
- To see that man comes short of the glory and perfection of God.
- To see that man cannot keep the law, not perfectly.
- To see that the law was given to show man his desperate need for a Savior.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:15** **But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.** Even today when Moses is read the Old Testament, those who still follow the law are blinded to the truth. The veil still remains over their hearts, covering the true glory of God, and that lets us know that there is a need for a Savior—The New Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. It is Christ and Christ alone who has removed and can still remove the veil. To God be the glory! Those in your household; those in the nations; those incarcerated.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:16** **Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.** The veil of the Old Covenant is removed only when a person turns to the Lord. When a person truly turns to Jesus Christ, he is shown how Jesus Christ is the glory of God and the end, the purpose, and fulfillment of the law. The veil is removed from the law, and he understands the marvelous glory of God. Galatians 3:24-25 says "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:17** **Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.** The New Covenant brings liberty through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is identified as the Spirit; one with God. The Lord Himself was actually the One who secured salvation and liberty for man, but it is the Spirit who is actively involved in revealing the truth of salvation and liberty to man. "...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

- Christ frees the believer from the dominion of sin.
- Christ frees the believer from the law.
- Christ frees the believer from the bondage of fear.
- Christ frees the believer from the power of Satan, which is the fear of death.
- Christ frees the believer from the bondage or corruption.

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)3:18** But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. "We all" refers to believers; those who have turned from sin to Christ—those who had the veil removed from their face—those who stand face to face with the glory of the Lord with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. As Moses' face reflected God's glory at Mt. Sinai, the face of every believer radiates the glory of Christ for that which was reserved for only the highest under the Old Covenant is made available to all in the New.

- The open face means that the believer is given the privilege of standing face to face with Christ. This is the privilege of knowing Christ personally and learning all about Him. There is no veil over the face or eyes of the believer, nothing to keep him from knowing the Lord.
- The believer is to behold the glory of the Lord. We behold Christ who is the image of God. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. This means to behold the Godhead and deity of the Lord, the splendor, brilliance, and excellence of His person and Being. The "glory" describe the splendor, holiness, and majesty of God; the manifestation of God's presence. Jesus Christ, the Son of God became Man. Glory came to the earth and paid the supreme and ultimate price for the salvation of man.
- The believer beholds as in a glass the glory of the Lord. No man who is only finite and flesh could ever understand the Lord who is infinite Spirit. The believer only sees and understands the glory of all the Lord as in a glass or a mirror. That is, he only sees a reflection of the Lord, not the full image. Presently, the believer is able to see the Lord only through the Word and the Holy Spirit; in the future, he shall stand face to face with the Lord throughout all eternity. Then he will know the Lord even as the Lord now knows him.
- The believer's image will be changed. For Moses the glory eventually faded away, but under the New Covenant the believer is changed into the same image from glory to glory. 1 Corinthians 15:49 says "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Ultimately "...we shall be like Him (Christ): for we shall see Him as He is" 1 John.3:2c.
  - The believer is changed / transformed into the image of Christ from glory to glory:
    - When the believer beholds (grasps, understands, studies, and lays hold of) the glory of the Lord, the same glory is created in him.
    - When the believer beholds (grasps, understands, studies, and lays hold of) the glory of the Lord, the believer progresses and grows from one stage of glory to a higher stage.

## SUMMARY:

Some false teachers had began to carry forged letters of recommendation, so Paul asks the Corinthians 1 "*Do we begin again to commend ourselves?*" He's really saying that it's no needed for he or Timothy to bring letters of recommendation to prove his authority of apostleship. Paul tells them that the only letter he needs is them.

The lives of the believers whom Paul and his companions had converted were enough of a recommendation. 2He lets them know that our epistle is written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Everyone is able to see the good work that he and his companions have done within them. 3Paul and the others ministered Christ to them, but it is Christ alone who converts and grows the people declaring them to be the epistle of Christ.

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The lives of believers are not written with ink which men use, but with the Spirit of the living God. He does not write the message upon tables of stone as He did when He gave the commandments to Moses. He writes upon the fleshy tables of the heart. He puts His message upon the hearts of men which causes men to live changed lives. It is the minister who ministers to the lives of believers, while the Spirit of God communicates the message in the heart to men. 4Paul's trust and confidence is toward God through Christ. Paul's boasting was not in himself. The credit for all Paul's accomplishments goes to Christ. 5Paul nor the others were sufficient in themselves. They were made fit through Christ. Their sufficiency was of God, 6 who also had made them able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life **(3:1-6)**.

7 Moses wrote the words of the old agreement on pieces of stone. It showed how great and powerful God was. Moses' face shone brightly after God spoke to him. It did not stay bright, but the Israelite people still could not look at Moses' face. The old agreement that brought death was powerful. 8 So the new agreement, which comes from God's Spirit, will show the power of God even more. 9 The old agreement showed people that they were guilty. God's new agreement makes people right with him. So surely the new agreement shows God's power even more than the old one did! 10 The old agreement was great and powerful at one time. But now God's new agreement has come in its place. The great power of the new agreement shows that the old agreement is no longer powerful. 11 The old agreement was powerful, but it came to an end. God's new agreement will continue always. So it surely shows the power of God even more! **(3:7-11)** EEV.

12 So, because we know all this, we speak God's message bravely. 13 We are not like Moses. His face did not continue to be bright with the light from God. So he covered his face with a cloth. He did not want the Israelite people to see that the light was coming to an end. 14 But those Israelite people could not think properly. Even today, they still do not understand the message of God's old agreement. When they read it, they are like people who have a cloth that covers their minds. It continues like that unless they believe in Christ. Then Christ removes the cloth so that they understand. 15 Even today, when the Israelite people read Moses' books, a cloth still covers their minds. 16 But when a person turns to trust the Lord, then God takes the cloth away. 17 The Lord is the same as the Spirit. And when the Lord's Spirit is with anyone, that person is free. 18 We show the power of the Lord to other people. It is like God has removed a cloth from over our faces. He is changing us so that we become more and more like him. We show how great God is more and more clearly. It is the Lord who does all this, by the work of His Spirit **(3:12-18)** EEV.

[TOP](#)

II CORINTHIANS 4:1-15NEXT 5:5-21

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;**— This ministry refers to the great task God had given him. The task of proclaiming the *New Covenant*, the message that man can now have a glorious relationship with God through the Spirit of God; the ministry of the glorious gospel; the Good News about Jesus Christ—that men can now be saved and forgiven of their sins and be redeemed to live forever in the glory of God. Because of this great task, Paul did not faint; he did not quit no matter the demands or circumstances. The minister does not quit because he has received mercy. Paul had personally received the mercy of God.

- God's mercy had forgiven his sins and given him life forever with Christ.
- God's mercy had given him his great task: to be a minister and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Neither weariness nor opposition is to drive the minister to quit. He must not shrink from the ministry for any reason. His task is too great and God's mercy has done too much for him and will continue to sustain him. Faint not, regardless of circumstances.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.** Continuing from the first verse, Paul lets us know what a minister is to do:

1. **He has to renounce** (relinquish, forsake) **the hidden things of dishonesty** (things that cause disgrace, shame, scandal; greed, covetousness). The minister is to live an open and above-board life; a life of honesty and integrity.
2. **He has to not walk in craftiness** (trickery, cunning, cleverness, shrewdness, evil design; a man who will do anything to get what he wants). He is not to walk that way. The minister of God is to walk as Jesus walked.
3. **He is to not handle the Word of God deceitfully** (falsify, corrupt, deceive, ensnare, pollute). The Word of God comes from God; He is the Authority, not man. The minister is only the spokesman for God. He is not to add the ideas of traditions, philosophies, or speculations of men to the Word of God. Neither is he to take away portions of Scripture: denying that they are the Word of God. Nor neglect, ignore, keep silent about some part of God's Word, and he is not to distort the Word of God in any form or fashion.
4. **But the minister is to proclaim the truth honestly, openly, and purely.** He is to be both humble and receptive before God in his study and prayer life. He is not to be wise in his own conceits. And when he goes before people, he is to proclaim and teach the truth as God reveals it.

There were some in the church accusing Paul of four things:

1. Being sometimes faint-hearted.
2. Doing some shameful, disgraceful, and scandalous things.
3. Walking about deceiving people.
4. Mishandling the Word of God.

Rather, Paul and the others kept everything they did or said out in the open; the whole truth on display for all to see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:**— The ministry demands openness, never hiding. Paul openly proclaimed the gospel in all its purity. Paul says that the gospel was and is hid to men for two

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terrible reasons:

1. **The gospel is hid to men because they are lost** (perishing; have turned away from God and are traveling in the opposite direction along the road that leads to perdition). *"The road that leads to perdition"* means that one is traveling away from God; deliberately separated himself from God and severed all ties with God. Therefore, he cannot see God, or the things of God. His face and eyes are not turned toward the gospel, but toward the world that perishes.

It simply means that the gospel was preached to men who would not believe. The false teachers accused Paul of preaching an antiquated message. So, Paul showed that the problem was not with the message or the messenger, but with the hearers headed for hell. The preacher cannot persuade people to believe; only God can do that.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:4 **In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, –**

2. **The gospel is hid to men because the "god of this world"** has blinded the minds of those who do not believe.
  - a. The *"god of this world"* is Satan. It means his evil nature and ways rule throughout the world – selfishness and pride, lust and greed, anger and murder, lies and deception.
  - b. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers, lest they should believe the gospel. That's his purpose. He blinds them by appealing to their flesh, enticing them with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. If Satan can get a person to focus his life upon himself and the world, the person will become enslaved to his flesh (sensual appetites) and the things of the world.
    - i. Possessing more and more
    - ii. drinking more and more
    - iii. eating more and more
    - iv. smoking more and more
    - v. lusting more and more
    - vi. cursing more and more
    - vii. seeking more and more
    - viii. indulging more and more

Well, the more he becomes hooked, the blinder and harder he becomes to the gospel.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:4 b **...lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**

They are stone blind to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Jesus Christ is the image of God. When Jesus Christ came to earth, men were able to see God; to see exactly what God is like:

- Loving, compassionate, caring, healing, restoring, saving, correcting, disciplining, holy, righteous, just.

The light of the glorious gospel of Christ could not shine in their hearts. The image of God could not shine unto them. This is similar to a camera lens being covered so that the light cannot shine into the camera to bring the image. It is also like a blind man or a man with his eyes veiled, into whom the light of the sun is unable to shine.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:5 **For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.**

Two things to look at:

1. **The minister must preach Christ, not self.**
  - a. He does not preach to build himself up in the eyes of people.
  - b. He does not preach his own ideas, notions, thoughts, opinions, or philosophy.
  - c. He does not preach to impress people with his charisma, ability, influence, speech, or leadership. The message is to be about Christ alone.
2. **The minister must serve men, not self.** *"Servant"* means bond-slave; to be devoted to people as a slave is to his master. It is all for Jesus' sake. Jesus became our servant or slave. He sacrificed Himself every day and He did it for us. He suffered to overcome the world and the flesh for our sake; to conquer sin and lust for us; to gain freedom from the enslaving bondages and habits of life for us. Jesus Christ suffered daily and then sacrificed Himself in the *"ultimate"* sense by dying and bearing our punishment for us. He gave Himself for our sakes, became a slave to us in order to save us. Therefore, ministers are to become



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servants to men, sacrifice themselves in serving men for the sake of Jesus Christ—because Jesus Christ did it for the minister. No higher service can be done than to serve others for the sake of Christ.

Paul and the others only preached Christ and served the people as servants or slaves for the sake of Christ. First, dethrone self (preach not self); second, enthrone Christ (place Christ as Lord); and third, serve others (for the sake of Christ).

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** The reason Paul preached Christ is that God had shined in his heart, that is, God had actually entered his heart and converted him. The same God, the Creator of the universe had commanded physical light into existence is the same God who creates supernatural light in the soul and ushers believers from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light (Col.1:13). The light is expressed as "*the knowledge of the glory of God.*" That means, to know that Christ is God Incarnate. And one must understand that the glory of God was shone in Jesus Christ. Now, His light shines out of darkness into our hearts, bringing us to know God's glory.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.** A priceless treasure is contained in worthless vessels. God's shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God. The believer is simply the fragile clay jar. It is the treasure within the vessel that gives the vessel its value. When God called Paul, an earthen vessel, He knew his humanity in its weakness. Acts 9:15-16: "*But the Lord said unto him (Ananias), Go thy way: for he (Saul at that time) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" The important thing about a vessel is that it has to be clean, empty, set-apart, and available for God's service. The treasure, the indwelling Christ, in earthen vessels, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life. It is by the excellent power of this treasure that the apostles as ministers of the New Covenant were capable of living a crucified life; that the resurrection life of Christ that they ministered might be manifested. Thus, they manifested the truth for the shining of the gospel.

The supremely valuable message of salvation in Jesus Christ is part of that treasure that has been entrusted by God to frail and fallible human beings (earthen vessels or jars of clay). The gospel is not a product of human genius or clever intellect. Yet it resides in men of clay. Why? - "*...that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" God does so much for us, and it is all wrought by Him. Therefore, God and God alone get all the credit, and He is thereby praised; "*that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" No man can dispute His morality, for no man can convert and transform himself into an eternal being. His power converts and transforms us into new creatures; new men; having His divine nature in us; give us life both abundantly and eternally. Only the presence of God, this glorious treasure can enter our lives and change us into eternal beings; God and God alone! The presence of God sustains the minister. In the wilderness under the Old Covenant God dwelt in a tent; today He dwells in the believer's heart.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**— The diligent minister faces trial after trial. He experiences fatigue and weariness, strain and pressure, trouble and doubt, criticism and opposition, conflict and persecution, and the list goes on.

- "**Troubled**" means to be pressed, squeezed, oppressed, hedged in; pressured.
- "**Distressed**" means to be kept in a narrow, cramped place; to be crushed.
- "**On every side**" means in every imaginable way and place and occasion.
- "**Perplexed**" means to be at a loss, to be doubting, not knowing, questioning, wondering which way to go, what to do, what to say; unable to find an answer.

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- **"Despair"** means to be hopeless, to have no confidence or assurance; to be without any sense of security.

Although these things occurred, Paul lets us know he was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; he was perplexed, but not in despair. The power of God sustains the minister; steps in and saves him. God gives him hope and stirs his confidence and shows him the way out. God never allows him to be overcome by trouble or be perplexed in any way if he is truly connected and relies faithfully and wholly on God! With each difficulty, God is there to help.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;**— Ministers are sometimes opposed and sometimes the opposition is hot and severe. The persecution may be behind his back or to his face. It may take the form of:

• ridicule • criticism • slander • mockery • imprisonment • confrontation • threats • jokes • martyrdom etc. However, God never forsakes, abandons, or deserts his dear servant. Wait on Him, God never fails. God never leaves him alone. His presence and power is always with you.

- **"Cast down"** means to be smitten down, struck down, or knocked down.
- **"Destroyed"** means to perish, to die, to strike out.

*"The supreme characteristic of the Christian is not that he does not fall, but that every time he falls he rises again. It is not that he is never beaten, but he is never ultimately defeated. He may lose a battle, but he knows that in the end he can never lose the campaign" (crusade or promotion). (The Letters to the Corinthians, p.223).*

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.** "Always bearing" indicates that the suffering Paul experienced was endless. Those that hated Jesus took out their vengeance on those who represented Him. This does not refer to sufferings and troubles that are common to all human beings, such as, illness or calamity, or correction, discipline suffered because of sin, mistakes, or failure to fulfill one's responsibility. This *"bearing about in the body is the dying of the Lord Jesus."* It happened continuously, where Paul was expected to lay down his life like Christ in all points; having his body exposed to being put to death in the cause of Jesus; or an image of the suffering Saviour in his own person. Carrying the death of Jesus consumes our natural man, our outward man, our flesh, thereby we enter into the process of dying of the Lord Jesus, so that our inward man may have the opportunity to develop and be renewed; that self may die to manifest the life of Jesus in his bodies. "Dying" means the sense in which Jesus was dying every day. Jesus had to come against sin every day; deny His own desires and live for God; come against daily temptations which men faced and He had to conquer them all. The minister is to die to self so that Christ might be seen in his body. Paul died to self. He used this analogy: Gal.2:20 says *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* When Paul disciplined his body and kept it under control—when he put his urges and desires to death; when he denied his will and did God's will—he demonstrated that Jesus Christ lived within his body.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.** Although we live, we live in a state to die. Continuously, while in human flesh, we are *"delivered"* meaning surrendered unto the hands of death for Jesus' sake. Paul was daily given over to death for the sake of Christ. *"In our body"* (v.10) and *"in our mortal flesh"* (v.11) are interchangeable and both are done now, not when we get to heaven; not in our immortal body, but now in our human body.

- We take up the cross of Christ (willing to die to follow Christ; absolute surrender).
- We die to self, that is, our own desires and wishes.
- We deny ourselves in order to live for Christ.

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We do all of this for one purpose: that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest now in our human bodies.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.** Paul lets the Corinthians know that because he and others die daily; because they daily lay down their lives as Christ; because of having their bodies exposed daily to death, the Corinthian believers receive life in them; they reap the benefits; they gain life in them. <sup>6</sup>When Paul and others preached the Gospel, they were reproached, persecuted, had sorrow, trouble, affliction and death itself. This Gospel preached at such an expense is the savior of life in the lives of others, and is the means of maintaining spiritual life in souls, and nourishment unto eternal life. The continual *"perishing of our outward man"* works *"spiritual life in our inward man"* so that others *"reap the fruit of the sufferer."*

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;**— Faith will sustain you! In the minister, faith will not allow you to become discouraged to such a point that you would leave the ministry and fall into the depths of despair. Having the same spirit of faith; the same attitude or outlook of faith binds you to others of the same attitude—both believing on the same thing. What are you believing? — We believe in the truths of the gospel; we believe in God, in the Savior, in the atonement, in the resurrection, etc., as it is written. What Paul believed, he preached and by them believing they also spoke. Therefore, no one should tempt to preach the gospel unless he has a firm spirit of faith; belief of the truth, and in having such a conviction, preach it.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.** Knowing what? This refers to the literal bodily Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has conquered death, the last enemy. Therefore, the One who raised Christ from the dead, we in that glorious redemption day will raise us up from the dead also by Jesus. Until a person is prepared to die, he is not prepared to live. The minister suffers and bears all; continues to preach and teach to serve and meet the needs of people—all because he knows that the day of resurrection is coming. The hope of being resurrected sustains the minister.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.** If we die to self, it is so that the life of Christ might be revealed in us for others' sake. It we go through trials, it is so that Christ might be glorified. The need of others and the glory of God sustains the minister. The minister refuses to be defeated, because people need the grace of God and because God needs to be glorified. And the only way people will glorify God is for them to experience the grace and blessings of God.

## SUMMARY:

God showed mercy in the great task/ministry He had given Paul and the others, and so they never gave up **(4:1)**. Paul had renounced the hidden things of shame **(4:2a)**. He does not walk in craftiness. He does not handle the Word of God deceitfully, but with open presentation of the truth he commends himself before all and before God **(4:2b)**. If the gospel seems veiled, it is only the perishing who think it so **(4:3)**. For their unbelieving minds have been blinded by the *"god of this age"***(4:4a)**, so that the light of gospel of the glorious Christ does not shine on them **(4:4b)**. They preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and themselves as their servants for Jesus' sake **(4:5)**. It is God who has shone in their hearts so that they might spread the light of

the knowledge of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ **(4:6)** **(4:1-6)**.

<sup>6</sup> [http://biblehub.com/2\\_corinthians/4-12.htm](http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/4-12.htm)  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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The treasure of the gospel is in "*earthen vessels*", but this is so the excellence of God's power might be demonstrated in them (4:7). Examples of overcoming suffering (4:8-9)

- Hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed
- Perplexed, but not in despair
- Persecuted, but not forsaken
- Struck down, but not destroyed

In this way, "*dying for Jesus*" gives them the opportunity to demonstrate the "*life of Jesus*", which in turn blesses others (4:10-12). Confident of the resurrection and ultimate glorification, Paul knows that all things can be to their benefit, resulting in thanksgiving and glory to God (4:13-15). Their suffering was permitted to demonstrate the life of Jesus (4:7-15).

## APPLICATION:

Knowing who lives within us, the God who sustains will cause us to not be destroyed!

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II CORINTHIANS 5:5-21NEXT 6:1-13

**2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS 5:5-10** 5God Himself is the One who had shaped and prepared; fitted and fashioned us to undergo an immortal change, for He has given us the Holy Spirit as the guarantee. 6Therefore, Paul says we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7(For we walk by faith, not by sight:). 8Paul assures the Corinth that they were not afraid, but willing to be absent from the body and be present with the Lord. This was not a temporary feeling, but a permanent state of mind in Paul. 9All who believe in Christ want to please God in this life and in the next in all that they've labored in, that they may be accepted of God. 10For all believers must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it was good or bad.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:11** **Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.** The word "*terror*" means fear, reverence, standing in awe of the Lord. This passage discusses the compelling motives of the ministry or the ministry. It is the fear of the Lord; the reverence of Him, the awe of Him that compels the minister to persuade men and make God known to them:

Of the truth of the gospel—Acts 28:23 *And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses, and out of prophets, from morning till evening.*

Of the judgment of God—2Cor.5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Of the death of Christ for all men—2Cor.5:14-15 *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

Of the desperate need for reconciliation to God—2Cor.5:20 *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Of his own sincerity and integrity in the ministry—2Cor.5:12 *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.*

Every minister should fear the judgment of Christ—fear it to such a degree that he is stirred to walk faithfully before God: persuading men and living a life of integrity and commitment to the ministry. Paul hopes that the Corinthians are convinced of his faithfulness and have no question about it. Others may oppose, question, criticize, and defame him; but he trusted that they knew his sincerity and commitment to Christ and the ministry.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:12** **For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.** The testimony of a genuine heart compels the minister to persuade men and make God known to them. Paul was under heavy attack; a barrage of charges were being launched against him by some in the church. Just as every minister, Paul had given his credentials, but it was not his purpose to glory in his credentials nor to prove his character to the Corinthians, but to simply authenticate his personal integrity. He was not applauding or praising himself, but this would give them an occasion to give others on his behalf an answer to those who opposed Paul. He needed

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his followers to at least have an answer to them that gloried in their appearance and not in the heart, for some presented themselves in that way. They took pride in appearing like they glorified Christ, but their hearts glorified self.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:13** For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. The glory of God and the needs of people compel the minister to persuade men and make God known to them. Paul was beside himself for it was to God that he was doing it. Another way to say it: "if we seem mad, it is because we serve God. If we seem sensible, it is for your spiritual benefit." He really described being "*besides ourselves*" as dogmatically (fixed and assertively) devoted to truth. And "*sober*" as having a sound mind which means being in complete control. He defended their integrity and communicated truth to them!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:14** For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:— The love of Christ compels the minister to persuade men and make God known to them. The word "*constrain*" means to press, to hold together, to hold fast. It is God's love that compels them. "*Because we thus judge*" means we concluded, we are convinced, this is our conviction that if one died for all, then all have died! (Those redeemed by faith in the death of Christ).

- God takes the person's faith.
- Identifies the person with the death of Christ.
- Accepts the death of Christ as the death of the person

This love of Christ presses; pressure that causes action, compels, and stirs Paul and others to hold fast to the ministry.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:15** And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Christ's substitutionary death was for all of us, and for those who live, is not to live for himself, but live unto Christ who died for them and rose again for them. Christ died to bring us near to God. Christ died that we might live unto righteousness. Christ died to purify us so that we would be zealous to do good works. Those who have died for Christ have died to the old life to live a new life. This is what living for Christ looks like.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:16** Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Christ died so that all men could be made into new creatures and into new men (spiritual beings who are to exist forever). This means our knowledge of men can no longer be based on their outward lives. Christ once lived in this world and was known to be in the flesh, but He is no longer known to be upon the earth. He has risen from the dead and is with the Father, and He shall be with Him eternally. That's where we shall also be eternally.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:17** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. Change had to take place in man because man was dead to God, man had no relationship with God, man was not sure about God, man never fellowshiped and communed with God like Adam, man was living in sin and immorality, man had to face death, and man was doomed to judgment and eternal separation from God. Therefore...

1. This is a message of regeneration: man can become a new creature, a new man (v.17). "*Regeneration*" means "*Born again*", "*a new creation*." Spiritually speaking this term reflects what happens when a person becomes a Christian. How? When a person truly believes in Christ, God places and positions him in Christ, because your faith identifies you with Christ. The penalty and condemnation of your sins are already paid for in the death of Christ. Christ lived and died and arose, so to be in Christ means the believer lives, dies, and arises in Christ. This is daily, for
  - a. it means that we walk not after the flesh, but we walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1b).
  - b. It means that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we would live soberly, righteously, and godly

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in this present world (Tit.2:12).

- c. It means that we bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23).
- d. It means that we abide in Christ; that we become as connected and attached to Christ,
  - i. As a member of the body is connected and attached to each other (1Cor.12:12-27).
  - ii. As the branch is connected and attached to the vine (Jh.15:4-7).

This means old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new because they are in Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:18** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;—

2. This is a message of reconciliation: a world of men brought back to God (vv.18-19). *"Reconciliation"* means restored relationship. Christ's death provided for the removal of the barrier of sin to bring people back into a right relationship with God and renewed friendship. When we change our attitude and accept God's provision, we change from hostility towards God to fellowship and love for Him.

All comes from God; God has done it all. He is the first person involved in reconciliation. When we were His enemies, through Christ He made us His friends. Jesus Christ is the second person involved in reconciliation. And He gave us the work or ministry of reconciliation, that is making friends of enemies. Ministers are the third persons involved in reconciliation.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:19** To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. First, God came to earth in Christ, that is, in the person of Christ and restored the world unto Himself. God Himself loved man so much that He came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. Second, God does not impute the sin (credit, reckon, count, put the charge to a person's account). If God does not impute or charge sin against men, that means He forgives their sins. When God was in Christ dying for the sins of men, God was making it possible for men to be freed from the guilt and condemnation of their sins. Third, God has committed the Word of reconciliation to ministers. God calls and equips ministers to proclaim the Word that reconciles men.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:20** Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

3. This is a message committed to ambassadors: a world of men made co-workers with God (v.20). *"Ambassador"* means representative, messenger, agent, interpreter sent forth for Christ to announce the message.
  - a. The ambassador belongs to the One who sent him out.
  - b. The ambassador is commissioned to be sent and exists only for the purpose for which he was sent.
  - c. The ambassador possesses all the authority and power of the One who sent him out.

The greatest message is *"Be reconciled to God"* and the message is so critical that the ministers have to beg, entreat, cry, and plead with men to be reconciled to God. It's for Christ's sake that we are to plead with men. Christ has paid the ultimate price to make reconciliation available to men. He has taken the sins of men upon Himself, and borne the condemnation for them. And it's for Christ's sake, a man should give himself to God!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)5:21** For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

4. This is a message of redemption by a substitution for sin (v.21). *"Redemption"* means the contract on the sinner's life is paid in full by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. We are bought back from the power of sin and death. Believers receive this redemption through the blood Jesus shed, which redeems us from the curse and is no longer under any curse because the price was paid in full.
  - a. Christ knew no sin. One of the reasons Jesus Christ came to earth was because He had a sinless

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and perfect life. Therefore, He stood before God as the Perfect and Ideal Man.

- b. God made Christ to be sin for us. The condemnation and judgment against sin had to be taken care of. God placed all our sin upon Christ and let Him bear it all Himself.
- c. God's purpose was that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, really believes, God takes that man's faith and counts it as righteousness. The man is not righteous, but God considers and credits the man's faith as righteousness. Why?
  - i. God is willing to justify man because He loves man that much.
  - ii. God is willing to justify man because of what His Son Jesus Christ has done for man.

## SUMMARY:

(2nd) **5:11-16** — The scriptures (5:11-17) show the devoted nature of Paul's ministry. He is motivated by the fear of the Lord (**5:11-13**) and he is motivated by the love of Christ. By fear— Paul knows the terror of the Lord, he therefore, persuades men (not of salvation, but of his own personal integrity). By love— whether Paul appeared to be out of control or under control. Christ's love for Paul held him in such a grip, that it constituted the compelling force in everything he did. In other words, Paul is constrained (controlled) by the love of Christ who died for all, which makes him now live for Christ and not for self (**5:14-15**). He ceases to make superficial judgments based upon appearance (outward fashion), even as he had once done with Christ (thought of Christ as merely a man) (**5:16**).

(2nd) **5:17-21** For, whosoever is "*in Christ*", he is a new creation, and all things have become new. How? – It is "*in Christ*"! When a person truly believes in Christ, God places and positions him "*in Christ*." He is then identified with Christ, that is, he is counted and considered to be "*in Christ*"; reckoned and credited as "*in Christ*." The believer's faith actually causes God to identify the believer with Christ. He then walks and lives "*in Christ*" day by day, bearing the fruit of the Spirit. For all is clearly seen in a new creature; becoming a new man. His old life has passed away and a new life has begun (**5:17**).

The scriptures (**5:18-21**) show the reconciling nature of Paul's ministry. He himself has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (**5:18a**). Therefore, God has given him the "*ministry of reconciliation*" (**5:18b-**

**19**). There are three persons involved in reconciliation:

1. God Himself is the first person. Note the words: "*All things are of God.*"
2. Jesus Christ is the second person. Note the words: "*...through Jesus Christ.*"
3. We (ministers and the body of Christ) are the third persons. Note the words: "*...has given us.*"

The reconciliation of the world is actually God's work in Christ (**5:19a**). God worked it out in Christ. How? First, God came to earth in Christ, that is, in the person of Christ.

- When Jesus Christ came to earth, God Himself came to earth.
- When Jesus Christ bore sin for man, God Himself was dying for man.



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- When Jesus Christ died for man, God Himself was dying for man.

**First:** God Himself was in the person of Jesus Christ reaching out to man. God loved man so much that He came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. **Second,** God does not impute sin to men (**5:19b**). The word "*impute*" means to reckon, count, and credit. If God does not impute or charge sin against men, then it means that He forgives their sins. There on the cross God "in Christ" died for the sins of men, making it possible for men to be freed from the guilt and condemnation of their sins. The "word of reconciliation" has been committed to Paul (**5:19c**). **Third,** God has committed the word of reconciliation to us. God takes the initiative by equipping us to proclaim and preach the message of reconciliation—a world can be brought back to God.

*"Reconciliation" means to change thoroughly, to change from enmity to friendship, to bring together, to restore. Two persons who had allowed something to come between them are restored and reunited.*

The thing that broke the relationship between God and man was sin! Paul pleads with them to be reconciled to God (**5:20-21**). Paul lets the Corinthian believers know that they are ambassadors for Christ, pleading for God and on Christ's behalf (**5:20**) "*For Christ became sin for us, who knew no sin.*" How? God did it by laying all the sins of man upon Christ—all the guilt and condemnation of sin. He was the ideal, Perfect Man and He could die the Ideal death—the death that would satisfy the justice of God's eternal court and holy nature. Why? - "*That we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ.*" God counts, credits, considers man's faith as already righteous in Christ; already having died in Christ; already having been resurrected in Christ. All because of His love for man (5:21).

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II CORINTHIANS 6:1-13NEXT 7:1-16

(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:1 **We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.** We are co-workers with God. **What do we do?** We urge, beg, and plead as the Scripture says, with men to receive the wonderful grace of God. **What is that grace?** It is the glorious truth that God has provided salvation through Christ and proclaimed that salvation through Christ. This message of redemption (God's grace) is not to be received in vain. A person must not hear the message with empty deaf ears. God has made it possible for him to receive.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:2 **(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)**— This verse is from Isaiah 49:8. The Messiah is represented as proclaiming for the grace of God to be given to sinners. God give His favorable answer in a time of grace when salvation's day comes to the world. His appointed time in the future, the Lord will, by His Servant, accomplish the final deliverance of Israel. Paul applied Isaiah's words to his ministry of proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to all people. The decision to be saved is to be made now. There may not be a tomorrow, in fact, there may not even be one hour left for any of us, and sometimes we put off a decision for Christ. If **now** is the day, then, there will be a day when it will no longer be present. Yes, the time is now!

(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:3 **Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:**— Paul always considered what his actions communicated about Jesus Christ. He wanted his life and ministry to be so consistent, and that he would never give any reason for anyone to reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "*offense*" means to stumble, to strike against. He never wanted to put an obstacle; or a stumbling in anyone's way. He did not want to be a poor reflection upon the ministry; lest the ministry should be discredited.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:4 **But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,**— Paul was consistent and enduring in physical and mental suffering and stress where he and others proved to be servants and ministers of God. Six particular things are mentioned:

**"Endurance"** means *patience*; **"Patience"** means *steadfast perseverance*. *When trials, fatigue, temptation, or opposition confront the minister of God, he must do all he can to endure.*

1. Paul endured "**afflictions**" (*pressure, strain, tension*), that comes within and without. Sometimes the pressure is so heavy and tight that a man feels like he is going to explode or be crushed.
2. Paul endured "**necessities**" (*inescapable hardship, difficulties, privation, and pain of life*). Only one thing that will carry the minister through the necessities and experiences of life: endurance (*patience*).
3. Paul endured "**distresses**" (*straits, calamities, tight places, inescapable situations*). When the minister is cornered by temptation or trial; when there seems to be no escape, his only resource is endurance. He must steadfastly endure lest he offend the gospel and become a stumbling block to others.

**The point is:** prove yourself as the minister of God, by enduring suffering, hardship, and trouble. **Why?** - Because others are observing you; you are not working on your own, but with God; you have received God's grace; and today is the day of salvation—the day someone makes the decision to be saved. **How do you do it?** By believing God controls all situations; and that it's already done through Christ Jesus to bring you out and grow you up.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:5 **In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;**— We serve an Awesome God! And the greatest need of the ministry is consistency and endurance. Paul endured in physical sufferings and mental stress.

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4. Paul endured "**stripes**" (*scourgings, beatings, lashings, whippings*). This was a savage, excruciating punishment. The whip was made of leather straps with two small balls attached to the end of each strap. The balls were made of rough lead or sharp bones or spikes, so that they would cut deeply into the flesh. Paul's hands were tied to a post above his head and he was scourged (*near death by the presiding centurion*). Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes. Paul was scourged at least eight times (*5 times by the Jews and 3 times by the Gentiles*).
5. Paul endured "**imprisonments**." Paul was arrested and imprisoned several times (*some say seven times*).
6. Paul endured "**tumults**." He often faced angry mobs and could not be heard. He had to stay consistent in his testimony no matter the temptation to go along with the crowd.

There were moments of being overworked, sleeplessness, and hunger. Paul covers three areas:

1. Paul endured "**labours**" (*toils, laborious work to the point of exhaustion*). He was not lazy, lethargic, slothful, or complacent. He got up in the mornings and put his hand to the plow: praying, studying, ministering, and witnessing, just as God had called him to.
2. Paul endured "**watchings**" (sleepless nights). He never stopped preaching, teaching, or ministering until he had to have rest. He spent nights in prayer with the weight of the churches on his mind, at times hard to sleep.
3. Paul endured "**fastings**" (deliberate fasting). Being so involved in his work that he forgot to eat or else chose to keep working instead of eating.

**The point is:** how many ministers endure overwork—laborious work to the point of exhaustion? sleepless nights for the sake of prayer and figuring out how to better help and reach people for Christ?; missed meals in order to get more done for Christ? Paul was faithful and endured many hardships for the sake of Christ and the church.

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 6:6 **By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,**—  
Nine areas of Paul being consistent and enduring in spiritual growth and behavior are displayed:

1. Paul endured in "**purety**" (*innocence, cleanliness; free from the dirt, filth and pollution of the world; free from immoral and unjust behavior and motive*). This involves both heart and acts; both motive and behavior. It means to be spotless and stainless, holy and righteous, godly and just. The minister of God is to live a pure; chaste life.
2. Paul endured in "**knowledge**" (*the study and understanding of God's revelation and Word*). Paul did not neglect the meditation and study of God's Word and revealed Will. He learned all he could about how God wanted men to live, and he applied himself to living and teaching that way.
3. Paul endured in "**longsuffering**" (*patience, bearing, and suffering a long time with people, especially when they were wrong, unjust, abusive, slanderous, and injurious*). The minister of God must always suffer and bear a long time with people, even when they are ever so wrong.
4. Paul endured in "**kindness**" (*goodness and benevolence of heart and behavior*). It is being kind and good, gentle and sweet even when others are abusive and evil, severe and hurting, unappreciative and unthankful.
5. Paul endured in the "**Holy Spirit**" (*in the presence, power, and gifts of the Spirit*). The great proof that Paul was a true minister of God was the fact that the Spirit of God worked in and through him. Paul was able to live for Christ and to build the ministry because he walked in the presence and power of the Spirit of God.
6. Paul endured in "**unfeigned love**" (*love that is not counterfeit or fake; love that is sincere, genuine, and pure; love that is unlimited, selfless, and sacrificial*). No matter what a person does, unfeigned love forgets self and sacrifices whatever is necessary to reach out and help that person. The minister of God must always be consistent, and endure in sincere and genuine love.

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# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,**— All for the spiritual growth and behavior of the minister.

7. Paul endured in the **"Word of Truth"** (*the preaching and teaching of the truth, that is, of the gospel; the Word of God*). Only the Word of Truth will endure. The minister must preach the truth of God's Word, not the thinking, philosophies, and ideas of men. God has placed a calling on the minister to proclaim His Word in truth!
8. Paul endured in the **"power of God."** Only God has the power to deliver men from sin; create men anew, and give them eternal life. Therefore, Paul had to have the power of God upon his life and ministry if his labor was to be effective and bear genuine fruit.
9. Paul endured in **"the armor of righteousness"** (*being spiritually equipped; weapons of righteousness— weapons of defense and weapons of attack*). No matter what the attacks were or against Paul, he resorted to righteousness. He did not fight Satan's kingdom with human resources, but with the spiritual weapons of righteousness (Ephesians 6:10-18), which are both offensive (such as the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—on the right, and the defensive weapon (such as the shield of Faith—on the left). He was equipped!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;**— Paul was consistent and enduring in disregarding the world's reaction. Three contrasts are displayed:

1. Paul was ***honored*** by some and ***dishonored*** by others." However, Paul stood and endured all dishonor done him.
2. Paul was ***talked about: some spread evil reports, and others good reports.*** Whatever the situation, Paul consistently endured and continued to minister for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
3. Paul was ***treated as a deceiver, yet he was as true as a person could be.*** The word "deceiver" means to be an imposter, a false teacher, a quack. However, Paul stood fast: no matter the charge, he endured and continued right on preaching the truth and doing all he could to help and reach people for Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;**— Paul was consistent and enduring in the face of social abuse and persecution.

1. Some treated Paul ***as an unknown***, yet others treated him ***as well known***. The word "unknown" means to dismiss, ignore, disregard. Some wanted nothing to do with the minister of God. But others loved Paul because of what he had done for them and was doing for people throughout the church. No matter the treatment, Paul endured for the sake of the gospel and the people.
2. Paul was treated Paul ***as dying, yet he lived***. Some looked upon Paul as reckless and unwise. They saw Paul as a "fool" who was doomed; who was rapidly walking the road to death. But others understood and knew the truth— he was a new creature in Christ, a man who had found eternal life, and he was compelled to share the glorious news with the world no matter the threat to his own safety. Therefore, he endured the cross, dying to the world, in order to share the glorious news of eternal life.
3. Paul was ***chastened***, yet he was ***never killed***. Being "chastened" means suffering. Paul was constantly suffering for the cause of Christ, and he was willing to be chastened in order to help reach people for Christ. No person and no thing could kill him until Christ was ready for him to depart for heaven. Until that time, he would endure any suffering, any chastening as long as he had breath to bear witness for Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.** Paul was consistent and enduring in being content—always. Three contrasts are again made.

1. Paul was looked upon ***as sorrowful***, yet he was ***always rejoicing***. The worldly and carnal saw him as seldom, if ever, having fun. He never joined the crowd in their worldly pleasures and activities, nor did

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he seek the comforts and possessions of the world. However, Paul was filled with joy, true joy—the joy that comes from knowing where he had come from; why he was here; and where he was going. He was gripped with the utmost security, confidence, and assurance of life.

2. Paul was considered ***as poor***, yet he ***made many rich***. He was a travelling missionary; a man who in the eyes of the world was homeless and without worldly possessions. Yet, he possessed the true wealth, the only wealth that can really make a man secure—the wealth of God's presence and love and care. And Paul shared his wealth with others—sharing how men could possess the eternal treasures of heaven.
3. Paul was looked upon ***as having nothing, yet he possessed all things***. He had no worldly goods, but he did have the promise of God: he was to possess all things very shortly, as soon as Jesus returned. He was an heir of God, even a joint-heir with Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.** Paul's heart is open and full of affection for he calls them by name; speaking directly to the church of Corinth as though face to face which shows strong feelings. ***"Our mouth is open unto you"*** meaning openly and honest; freely without hesitation or evasion able to speak frankly concerning the real situation they had been misled in. ***"Our heart is enlarged"*** meaning widen and open; able to embrace all believers regardless of their condition. This openness and enlargement meant that his mouth wasn't saying one thing and his heart feeling another way; not a divided heart and mouth, but it is what was needed to reconcile, to bring back the misled or distracted believers of God.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.** The word *"straitened"* means to be restricted, to lack room, to be pressed or distressed, to be in anguish or straits. Paul says there was no narrowness or stiffness in his heart for the church; no restrictions against them. He held nothing against them in spite of the problems and heartaches the church had caused him. His heart was wide open to receive them. ***"But they held restriction in their own affections."*** **Why were they withholding their love?** – Because they were childish (v.13) and had divided hearts. They were like a daughter engaged to be married, but being seduced by an unworthy suitor. They were constrained in the inward parts toward the apostle. All children are very narrow in their affection and easily offended by those who correct them.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)6:13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.** Paul calls them his children, therefore, speaking to them as a father to his children. He begs them to receive him and his instructions with affection. ***"Recompence"*** meaning *return to*. Paul appeals to them to return with the same enlarged and open heart that he has shown before. To be enlarged requires growth and maturity in life, which the Corinthian believers lacked.

## SUMMARY:

Paul makes a special plea for the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain, reminding them that they were workers with Christ and that now is the time for salvation. He focuses on the "approved" nature of his ministry. He determined not to give offense or reason for blame with their ministry, but be acknowledged as servants of God. This is seen in their physical and mental sufferings endured. And have God's grace to endure was not in vain (**6:1-4**). Even the conflicting reactions and reports by others, along with the various experiences described in a contrasting manner, helped to confirm that Paul's ministry is "approved" (**6:5-10**). At this point, he begs for them to open wide their hearts to him, as his heart is wide opened to them, for he speaks with great boldness that he has not done them any wrong (**6:11-13**).

**APPLICATION:** The time is now to get it straight with God and with others. God makes His appeal through this lesson, hoping He has touché someone. [TOP](#)

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## II CORINTHIANS 7:1-16

NEXT 8:1-15

(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:1 **Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** God expects us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Sins of the flesh would be such sins as immorality and drunkenness, and sins of the spirit would be such sins as hatred and jealousy. God expects us to perfect holiness in reverence unto Him. Perfecting is an aggressive word demanding aggressive action. Perfecting holiness means not only to practice but to finish and complete. The believer is to practice and pursue doing the things that will make him holy; set his mind and heart upon becoming holy, thereby, reverencing God.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:2 **Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.** All the hurt Paul had suffered from the Corinthians, and all the hours of prayers offered up on the Corinthian's behalf, he again exclaims receive us; open your hearts. **Why?** – Because Paul had not wronged any man; had not corrupted any man, and had not defrauded any man. It is an appeal to them to get rid of their narrowness of heart and renounce those false teachers.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:3 **I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.** Note how softly and tenderly Paul spoke to the church; to those who opposed him by saying that *"they were in their hearts to die and live with."* This could not be true if they were not believers. This also shows how far he would go to forgive them.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:4 **Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.** *"Boldness"* can be translated confidence. Paul was confident in his speech and God's ongoing work in their lives. He's filled with comfort and overflowing joy even in spite of all the tribulation they had gone through.

### SUMMARY:

Paul talks to them as if they were his children. He makes an appeal to them not to condemn them, but return, for it would greatly make him joyous in spite of the afflictions they had gone through (**7:1-4**).

### SYNOPSIS:

(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:5-7 When Paul and the others with him arrived in Macedonia, they could not find rest because there was outside trouble upon them, trouble within, and trouble around them, causing dread and fear which discouraged them. But God the Comforter refreshes them with the arrival of Titus; not only with his arrival, but also with his news of his time of being with the Corinthians. They had warmly received him. Paul was overjoyed by Titus' coming for Titus reported that the Corinthians had fully repented; turned back to serving God properly, and desired to be reconciled to Paul, for they had accepted his letter. He had been harsh in his letter toward them, but they realized it was because he loved them. Paul's rebuke resulted in their repentance. Then they were able to convey their earnest desires, their mourning, and their fervent mind toward Paul. Upon hearing this news, he rejoiced even more so. This brought him and the others so much joy.

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**(2<sup>nd</sup>)7:8-16** <sup>7</sup>One of the most difficult things to do in life is to rebuild a shattered relationship. Unfortunately, there are many broken relationships today in homes, churches and ministries, which can only be repaired when people face problems honestly and deal with them biblically and lovingly. This is what Paul is trying to do in 2 Corinthians and especially in Chapters 6 and 7. Paul had written a very severe letter of rebuke to the Corinthians and at times had regretted it (**7:8**), but is now not sorry he sent the letter. Now, Paul's heart rejoiced that they had accepted his message and had acted upon it (**7:9**). When God makes you feel sorry enough to turn to Him and be saved, you don't have anything to feel bad about (**7:10-11**). When he wrote, it wasn't to accuse the one who was wrong or to take up for the one who was hurt, but for God to show them how much they cared for Paul and his helpers (**7:12**). And this greatly encouraged Paul (**7:13**). In Paul's discussions with Titus, he was convinced that the opposition in Corinth came only from a small group of dissenters and the vast majority of the congregation wanted to do what was right. Now this conviction is confirmed by the report Titus gives to Paul (**7:14-16**).

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/godly-sorrow-produces-repentance/>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

II CORINTHIANS 8:1-15NEXT 9:1-15

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 8:1 **Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;**— Paul now turns to a different subject. He gives the Corinthian church *seven challenges*. 1. The **first challenge is to KNOW OF THE GRACE GOD BESTOWED UPON THE MACEDONIAN CHURCHES**—the spirit of the Macedonians. The Roman province of Macedonia included all of northern Greece. The known churches of the region were Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. At one time the Macedonian province had been known for its natural resources. But down through the centuries the area had been ravaged by war, and Rome had stripped it of its wealth. Because of this the churches of the area were somewhat poor in material wealth. But note a glorious fact: they were extremely wealthy in the grace of God.—so much grace that Paul is able to use them as a dynamic example of God's grace. "*Grace*" means the favor and blessings of God—all the good things of life which God gives—the greatest of which is salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 8:2 **How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.** The churches throughout Judea were suffering great poverty and needed help badly. However, in a great trial of affliction four dynamic facts were apparent.

1. *They gave help despite terrible trial and deep poverty to others and they gave liberally.* "*Liberality*" means singleness of mind, sincerely, with an open and free heart. And the churches of Macedonia decided to do just that. When they accepted Christ and took their stand for Him, they were heavily persecuted. However, knowing Christ filled these believers with abundance of joy. For out of the depths of their poverty, resulted in a flood of generosity.

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 8:3 **For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;**— Paul was able to bear witness, meaning he was able to testify of their power; according to their means, and beyond their means to give.

2. *They gave beyond their ability. They gave willingly*—no special appeal had to be made; no pressure had to be executed.

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 8:4 **Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.** They begged urgently to accept their gifts and share in the honor of supporting their brothers in Christ.

3. *They gave insistently begging for the privilege to share.* Apparently, they were giving so much that Paul felt it was just beyond their means. Why? Because they wanted to share in the fellowship of ministering to the saints.

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 8:5 **And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.** "*And this they did, not as we hoped*" literally meant not as had expected. Such giving was totally unexpected in light of their own needs. They made a complete dedication of themselves.

4. *They gave themselves to the Lord first.* They used this occasion, the occasion of an offering—the occasion when they were asked to help others—to rededicate their lives and possessions to Christ.

This involved:

- The dedication of their lives to Christ: all they were.



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- The dedication of their possessions to Christ: all they had.
- The dedication of themselves to the minister, Paul, in order to serve by his side and to allow them all to serve Christ together. Believers must be examples joining hand in hand as a giving church.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:6 **Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.** Paul says *two things* can apply to every church.

1. The grace of giving is to be completed in you—the act or evidence of love because of the favor of God.
2. The **second challenge is to EXCEL IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF GIVING AS THE MACEDONIANS.** Sometime earlier the Corinthian church had begun to take up an offering for the poor churches of Judea, but something happened that caused the church to stop the project. Titus, a faithful servant, was the acting evangelist at the time in Corinth when Paul's first epistle went out. So he is urged, the one who initiated the work, to receive from the people and complete it in the same grace, and that is the grace of giving.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:7 **Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.**

2. The other graces must abound in you. 3. The **third challenge is to ABOUND IN THIS GRACE ALSO.** Yes, they were gifted, and proud of those gifts, and Paul named the gifts the Corinthians abound and excelled in: faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love. But Paul wanted them to remember and not neglect that giving is also a grace-gift and abound in it also. It is not as spectacular as the miraculous gifts, but just as important.

(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:8 **I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.** 4. The **fourth challenge is to PROVE THE SINCERITY OF YOUR LOVE.** Paul does not command the Corinthians to give. If giving is forced or coerced, it benefits nothing; it does not please God. God is pleased with gifts that are willingly and cheerfully given. Giving must be based upon *two things*:

1. Giving must be based upon love for those who are lost and needy. And that love is based upon the love for the Lord Jesus who commanded us to go into all the world to reach and help the people of the world. We're all His creations.
2. Giving must be based upon the example of those who give sacrificially. In the case of the Corinthians, they had the dynamic example of the Macedonians. The Corinthians should have been stirred to follow the example of such sacrificial giving. In our case, we thereby prove the sincerity of our love by freely giving because He freely gave! Christ is our example!

(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:9 **For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.** 5. The **fifth challenge is to KNOW THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** By now we should know the grace of our Lord; we should be aware of His grace. His grace was given to us.

1. Though He was rich...
  - He dwelt in the glory and majesty, dominion and power of the Godhead (Jude 24-25).
  - He possessed every good and perfect thing that can be possessed (Jam.1:17).
  - He had all worship and adoration of heavenly beings (Rev.4:6; 5:11).
2. He became poor.
  - God became an humble man.
  - Our Lord took on flesh and blood.
  - Our Holy God took the place of the lowest.

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- The Beloved became the rejected.
- The Perfect One became the Sacrifice for sin.
- His Life became the Substitute for death.

### 3. That through His poverty we might be rich.

- We can receive the adoption of sons—become sons and daughters of God.
- We can live eternally with Him in the new heaven and earth.

His ownership brought poverty to Him—His Godhead became a man—His purpose was for our sakes—He gave to us what He possessed from the beginning—richness of eternal life, eternal joy—And His eternal love brought sons and daughters! Knowing His grace brought all of this causes me to rejoice!, for He gave it all away for us!

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.** Paul remembers their past situation and gives his advice, not a command, knowing that the Corinthians had undertaken a mission project of meeting the needs of the poor, yet they wasted a whole year of not committing themselves. Paul is saying that it is expedient; it's beneficial; it's to their advantage personally and for their ministry to complete the mission that had stirred within them a year ago—giving. We, the body of Christ are thereby stirred to go forward and God is stirred to bless the church. Whatever we commit to do that's in God's Will, He is well able to continue with us.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.** Paul is saying now go forth with it. He reminds them that there was a readiness of the Will to do; an eagerness to show forth and perform and complete the task out of whatever means they had to finish doing it.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. The sixth challenge is to GIVE READILY AND WILLINGLY.** Four points between verses 11 and 12 give clear directions on missions to any church that is willing to listen.

1. Give yourselves to missions. After a mission need has been met, there is always another need to meet—a need just as critical. Literally thousands die prematurely and without Christ every day—die because no one cared enough to help them. The call of missions is the constant call of Christ.
2. Finish the mission. The task begins when you reach out, but it also has to be completed.
3. Give readily and willingly—lay hold first with "a willing mind."
4. God is going to judge us for what we give—what we gave and what we kept back. If you have it (*according to what you do have*), give it. Will He approve? Will it be accepted? Yes, that that you do have and is able to give, not what you don't have. God is far more interested in the love in your heart than in the amount of your gift. *"...I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: But she of her penny hath cast in all the living that she had"*Lk.21:3-4.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:**— Paul is not implying that other men be relieved and the Corinthians carry the load and hardship. Or that the rich become poor and the poor become rich. It is certainly unbalanced and unequal.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:** – The seventh challenge is to MEET

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**THE NEEDS OF ONE ANOTHER EQUALLY.** It eliminates the principle of hoarding and keeping back of goods beyond our needs. Are we hoarding back clothes we can't wear? Are we hoarding back food we can share? Are we hoarding back money for a rainy day that right now someone is in need of? God wants the needs of the starving and lost masses met. The only way they can be met is by giving out of their abundance, they might supply others' lack, so there can be equality.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)8:15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.** Paul goes back to what was written in scripture (Exodus 16:18) when they gathered the manna, they were to gather as much as needed. So, those that gathered much, had nothing left over. And those who gathered less had no lack. Each home had just enough.

## SUMMARY:

Paul writing from Macedonia hoped that news of the generosity of these churches would encourage the Corinthian believers and motivate them to solve their problems and unite their fellowship. Paul uses the Macedonian churches as an example. They were in poverty and yet they gave. Despite affliction and deep poverty, they gave liberally; gave willingly; beyond their ability, insistently for the privilege to share, and they gave themselves first to the Lord and then unto Paul as God willed **(8:1-5)**.

Titus was sent to complete this grace in them. As the Corinthians abounded in many other things, Paul encourages them to abound in this grace. He did not command them to give, but by the example of others Paul seeks to test their love. We are to remember the example of Jesus, through whose poverty we became rich **(8:6-9)**.

It is to their advantage to complete what they started a year before, so that there is not only a desire to do it, but the completion of it as well. There must first be a willing mind; then according to what one has, not to what he does not have. Paul does not desire that they burden themselves to ease others. But that their abundance might supply others' lack, so there can be equality. Each is to have what is needed. Paul goes back to what was written in scripture (Exodus 16:18) when they gathered the manna. So, those that gathered much, had nothing left over. And those who gathered less had no lack. Each home had just enough **(8:10-15)**.

## APPLICATION:

Everyone needs help from time to time, therefore, within the body of Christ, God places needs before us to fulfill.

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**SYNOPSIS:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:1-5** deals the eagerness of the Corinthians wanting to give to help the poor. As Paul had boast on them to the Macedonians, he wanted them to be ready when he comes to receive it, so he's sending Titus and some others to complete the arrangements for the generous gift that they had promised. He wants them to be ready in their giving, thereby showing them why they give. "You give because you want to. You do not give because you have to." When they come to receive it, it won't be a forced giving. It reminds me of the old saying "Don't put off for tomorrow, what you can do today." If God has put it on your heart and in your hand to give, then release it and watch it come back to you. <sup>8</sup>Perhaps some Christians at Corinth were not very willing to share things or willing to give to other people.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)9:6** **But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.** Paul's attention is turned to some positive instructions and encouragement regarding giving. One's return is determined in his investment. If we look at a farmer who plants few seeds, he will have a small harvest, but if he plants alot, he will have a large harvest. In our day to day life if we give little with regret, we get little. However, Paul assures the Corinthians that if they give generously, they will reap generously. God is the provider and makes every provision. The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)9:7** **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.** Paul tells them to purposely decide in their hearts how much to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a person who gives cheerfully. Four things to consider:

1. **The giver must give as he purposes in his heart.** This does not mean that people are not to be encouraged to give nor that they cannot be stirred to give. It means that a person is...
  - to think about the need.
  - to think about what he should give sacrificially.
  - to make a deliberate decision about what he should sacrifice in order to give what he should.
  - to give exactly what he should give.
2. **The giver must not give grudgingly;** nor out of sorrow, not with reluctance or regret.
3. **The giver must not give out of necessity.** A person's gift is not acceptable to God when he...
  - is forced to give.
  - gives because he fears what others will think.
  - gives just to please others.
  - gives to keep others from pestering him.
  - gives out of a desire for personal honor and recognition.
4. **The giver must give cheerfully if he wishes God to accept his gift.** The giver is delighted to give just as Jesus Christ who willingly and cheerfully gave all He was and had, to meet the needs of the world.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)9:8** **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:—** God possesses an infinite amount of grace,

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/2corinthians-lbw.htm>  
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and He gives it lavishly without holding back. When the believer generously and wisely gives of his material resources, God graciously replenishes them so one would always have plenty, and will not be in need.

## SYNOPSIS:

The motives for giving generously and sacrificially are laid out:

1. Motive 1—to be enriched more and more by God (9:8-11).
2. Motive 2—to meet needs and bring praise to God (9:12).
3. Motive 3—to prove one's loyalty to Christ (9:13).
4. Motive 4—to enhance prayer, love, and fellowship (9:14)
5. Motive 5—to praise God for His unspeakable gift (9:15).

Paul gives thanks to God for his gift of Jesus Christ. This gift was much greater than any gift that we may give. In fact, it was so great that Paul could not describe it in words. Now Paul in chapter 10 steers the conversation to how some people see him, so he defends himself in ministry against his critics and false teachers who had crept into the church and its followers (9:8-15).

## SUMMARY:

Verse 6 deals with sowing: *Paul reminds them about a farmer who sows seeds. The more he sows, the greater his harvest will be.* Paul tells the Corinthians that those who give only a little will receive only a little in return, and those that generously give, will reap generously. Verse 7 deals with a cheerful purpose: *Someone who gives to God is like that farmer.* Paul tells them to purposely decide in their hearts how much to give, not grudgingly, or of necessity because God loves a cheerful giver. Verse 8 deals with God being the blesser: *God will reward the giver.* God possesses an infinite amount of grace to abound toward us so that we will have all sufficiency in all things, and abound in every good work (9:6-8).

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**INTRODUCTION:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:1** Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:— Paul himself appeals to the Corinthians. Some were saying that Paul was a coward among them, that he was bold in his instructions, that is he rebuked the church when he was writing to them, but he was a coward when it came to speaking face to face with them. He speaks with the meekness (humility; strength under control) and the gentleness (kindness) of Christ Himself in their presence. Jesus Christ was his example in dealing with people, that is the reason he was meek and gentle when preaching and confronting people face to face. Christ was meek and gentle when handling the insults, attacks, rumors, lies, wrong, and evil done to Him. Paul was saying that He was not base and lowly because he was a coward, but because Jesus Christ demonstrated how people are to be handled, even people who are evil and are in error. So, he was humble when face to face with them, yet so bold dealing with them at a distance.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:2** But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. Twice Paul beseeched them; begged them (vv.1-2). This is not the time to drive him to show his boldness; don't force him to deal boldly with them when he comes. He has the confidence, that is, the inner strength and boldness to confront them. Paul says that he will confront these critics when he arrives in Corinth for some were saying that Paul was carnal; that he walked after the flesh. This meant that...

- Paul was unregenerate, that is, not really saved. This meant that...
- Paul was preaching and ministering in the flesh; he was not really called of God. This meant that...
- Paul was living in the flesh; he was an ungodly and immoral man seeking only to please and live for himself. This meant that...
- Paul was only ministering in the flesh; he was only after a personal following—only seeking to sell his own ideas and position—only interested in lining his own pockets and in securing personal recognition and honor.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:3** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:— Paul says we are in these fleshly (weak) bodies, but are not to war and fight against or toward the flesh, nor in human strength. There are evil spiritual advances, not fleshly advances that come against God's vessels to kill, steal and destroy. Our fight is against the evil forces revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, and is to be fought with God's divine forces.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:4** (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)— Paul says our weapons of warfare are not carnal (fleshly), but divinely potent through God to the pulling down, demolishing strongholds because the believer is in a spiritual warfare.<sup>9</sup> In this context, **pulling down strongholds** refers to demolishing walls of resistance in people's minds, particularly how the rebellious Corinthians were thinking about Paul and the nature of his apostleship. The war

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/pulling-down-strongholds.html>  
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is not waged against flesh and blood, not against physical and material beings, but against spiritual forces. Ephesians 6:12 says "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darknesses of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Therefore, the believer fights the spiritual battles of this life with spiritual weapons, weapons that are of God and are made mighty and powerful by God—. The believer uses spiritual weapons to pull down strongholds.<sup>10</sup>The Bible names several weapons for pulling down strongholds and waging spiritual warfare. They include Prayer, the Word of God, Praise, Worship, Singing, and Faith, demonstrations of Love and Humility, the Whole Armor of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of the believers to start with the. But the most important key, as Paul demonstrated to the Corinthians, is relying on God's divine power and not our own.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 10:5** Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;— Paul acted on the assumption that any devices brought against him in the setup of men would fall before the power of God and the wisdom of God. The believer is to cast down thoughts and vain imaginations, and every high thing; every barrier of pride that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Speculations, untrues, and false teaching cannot go against the knowledge of God which is found in the Scripture, but every thought must be brought into captivity and surrendered to the obedience and authority of Christ.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 10:6** And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Paul says first we have to be obedient before we can challenge someone else's disobedience. It doesn't matter how ready we may be to punish someone else's disobedience, our obedience has to be in check. Matthew 7:5 says "Remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." The Corinthians who were willing to submit to the truth had to come forward first. This meant that the church has to step forward in obedience. Every means of repentance and correction has to be exhausted; disobedience has to have every conceivable chance to repent through appeal and action of the church.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 10:7** Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? if any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. This is where we make some of our biggest mistakes—judging outwardly. Paul here says, "Do you look at the outward appearance of things?" - Because this is what happen to Paul. Some could always look back and think about the old Paul (Saul): what he did, and leaving a devastating outlook. The troublemakers and critics of Paul felt that Paul ranked less than other ministers. They said that Paul did not measure up as a minister, that he was not as called or gifted as other ministers of God, therefore, he did not belong in the pulpit of Corinth, nor should his authority be accepted at Corinth. But Paul's claim was that all ministers are equal. So, Paul is forceful in his rebuke: "Why do you look upon and judge by outward appearance?" "If any man claims that he belongs to Christ and that Christ has called him, I too make the same claim. Think about it, and think it over again. One man's personal claim is as good as another man's." The trouble was that they looked at Paul and he seemed weak and powerless, but they didn't look beneath the surface. Yet if anyone could claim the power and authority of Christ, Paul certainly could.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 10:8** For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:— Paul goes on to say that even if he should boast of the authority God gives, he will not be ashamed, for Paul declares that Christ has

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/pulling-down-strongholds.html>  
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called him to build up (edify) people, not destroy them.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:9** **That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.** Paul says that he doesn't want them to think that he's trying to scare them in his letters.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:10** **For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.** Paul does not want to give any cause for them to point the finger again. He tells them that some (his critics) say that his letters are said to be weighty (demanding) and powerful (forceful), but his presence is weak, and his speech "contemptible", meaning of no account, unimpressive, a waste of time, and as a speaker he amounts to nothing.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:11** **Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.** This criticism was hurtful to Paul. We are to build up, not tear down. He said let them think this, that such as we are in word by letters (the words we write) while absent; we also will be in deed when we are present, meaning "What you see on paper is who I am in person."

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:12** **For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.** Paul does not measure or compare his credentials as his enemies do. He says that this sort of approach is not wise. Those that are comparing and measuring themselves are doing it by their own standards, not God's standards. We may feel proud because we think we're better, but when we measure ourselves against God's standards, it becomes obvious that we're not nearly good enough. God's standard is the only standard that counts.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:13** **But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.** Paul does not boast about things done outside their area of authority. But he's only proud about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given him and his companions, which includes their working with Corinth. He conforms himself to Jesus Christ. That should be our goal—measuring up to God's plan He has given us.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:14** **For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:—** Paul says that he didn't go beyond his reach, for Corinth was the one God had deemed him and his companions to go give the gospel of Christ to. Paul's critics were not responsible for finding the church at Corinth, he was the first to go to Corinth. Credit is due where credit is due and to whom it is due.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:15** **Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,—** Paul was not trying to claim credit for the work someone else has done, he was not riding upon another's coattails. but having hope that as the Corinthian's faith grows, increases, then the ministry can expand into new areas.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:16** **To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.** Paul desires to preach the gospel in regions beyond Corinth, and not boast in himself for the work another man had already prepared and accomplished.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>)10:17** **But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.** But let the man that boasts, boast in the Lord.

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**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 10:18** For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. A man is not approved because he commends (praises and applauds) himself, but It is the Lord who approves the man. We can approve a person when the Lord thinks well about him. We cannot approve someone who thinks well about himself.

## SUMMARY:

1 Paul makes an appeal to you by the gentleness and kindness of Christ. When he's with them, they suppose him to be weak. When he's away, they suppose him to be severe. 2 He begs them that when he comes, don't force him to be severe. He can be severe towards some people. They think that he and his companions live by the standards of the world. 3 It is true that he and his companions live in the world. But they do not fight in the same way as the world does. 4 The weapons that they fight with are not the weapons of the world. In fact, their weapons have God's power to destroy things that offer security. 5 They destroy wrong arguments. They destroy every proud idea that is against the knowledge of God. They control the thoughts, like prisoners. They make each thought obey Christ. 6 They are ready to punish every act of disobedience after they have completely obeyed **(10:1-6)** EEV.

7 Paul says they were only looking on the outside of things. Some people were sure that they belong to Christ. They should think again. Paul is saying the same thing: *"We belong to Christ quite as much as they do."* 8 Perhaps he had been proud about the authority that Christ has given him. This was to encourage them, not to upset them. He was not ashamed. 9 He does not want to frighten them with his letters. 10 Some say this: *'His letters are severe and strong. When he is with them, he is weak. His words achieve nothing.'* 11 Such people should realize that there is no difference. He writes things in their letters when they are away. And when they are present, they shall do the same things. 12 He does not want to compare themselves with those who recommend themselves. And they do not want to join them. They are fools. They measure themselves by themselves. And they compare themselves with themselves. 17 The Bible says, *'Whoever wants to be proud must be proud about the Lord.'* 18 We can approve a person when the Lord thinks well about him. We cannot approve someone who thinks well about himself **(10:7-18)** EEV.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

**Chapter 11:23-33** describe Paul's suffering for the church. The pain and persecution of what Paul endured is almost inconceivable.

1. He was imprisoned often 11:23a
2. He was whipped times without number 11:23b
  - a. He received 39 lashes from the Jews on five occasions 11:24
  - b. He was beaten with rods on three occasions 11:25a
3. He faced death time and again 11:23c
  - a. He faced danger from flooded rivers 11:26b
  - b. He faaced danger from robbers 11:26c
  - c. He faced danger from both Jewish and Gentile mobs 11:26d
4. He was stoned once 11:25b
5. He was shipwrecked three times 11:25c
6. He spent a terror filled night and day on the open sea 11:25d
7. He traveled many weary miles 11:26a
8. He spent sleepless nights 11:27a
9. He knew constant hunger and thirst 11:27b
10. He was often cold and naked 11:27c
11. He experienced harrowing escapes being lowered out of a window into a basket down the wall 11:32-33
12. He bore daily the burden for the many churches he had started 11:28-31

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:1** **It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.** Paul had just spoken about his suffering and persecutions, what might earlier seem like boasting, but it's not. It's not necessary, practical, or self-serving; it's really unprofitable for him no doubt to glory.

It just looks like Paul is a little fed-up of all the naysayers of his calling. The false teachers and the critics of Paul were saying that he lacked in spiritual experiences, that his salvation and ministry were suspect because he had not had the kind of experiences they were privileged to have. They thought to themselves and questioned others: *'How could Paul be called of God if he has not had spiritual visions and revelations from the Lord? We have had them.'* *'If he has really been called of God, why has he not had them?'*

So, Paul had to defend himself against his critics. We're gonna always have critics that are placed in our lives that will cause us to fight or be in flight. This circumstance was not just about Paul, it's about the church he started, it's about how the church saw him as a leader, and for the church to be delivered from false teachers. Pray for the head pastor, the head of every department, the head of every auxiliary etc. This is the reason he shares this spiritual experience of visions and revelations of the Lord. This is his way of fighting back; his proof.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:2** **I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.** Paul is really talking about an experience he had. He is referring to himself as the man. So, he spoke *"I knew a man in Christ..."* He himself is the man, nobody special, but he's in Christ when the vision experience came to him.

1. This vision experience happened 14yrs ago.
2. This vision experience was so real that he could not tell (knew not) whether he was in the body or whether out of the body. He just couldn't tell. But God knows of such.

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3. This vision experience is where he was caught up into the third heaven. We know of Paul's experience and change on the Damascus Road. His salvation and call from God was real. But Paul describes something entirely different—being caught up into the third heaven, the dwelling place of God, where the presence and the glory of the Lord are fully manifested and experienced. He called it paradise (v.4). The clouds; the sky is the first heaven. The sun, moon, stars, and planets; outer space is the second heaven. Jesus told the man on the cross, *"Today shall thou be with me in paradise"* (Lk.23:43)—the third heaven where God lives.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:3** **And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)**— Paul says it again that he could not tell (knew not) whether such a man (himself) was in the body or whether out of the body. He just couldn't tell. But God knows.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:4** **How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.** God knows how he was caught up into paradise (the third heaven), and how he heard unspeakable words which were unlawful for him to utter. This meant that it was for Paul's hearing and Paul alone. God did forbid him to reveal or share what was said. That means people are not ready to receive these things.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:5** **Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.** A man with such spiritual experiences has a right to boast, but Paul just didn't want the people to get all caught up in the visions and revelations. He couldn't even talk about what happened in the visions or revelations. He didn't want to be put on a pedestal, so the only thing that he will boast in will be his infirmities; his weaknesses. God does not place infirmities upon us, but He is able to use them for good. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* Romans 8:28. Also, *"...that Christ's power may rest upon us"* 1 Cor.12:9d. Paul realizes that it is God's power that he can rest in. He realizes how God's power gets him through situations he cannot get through on his own.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:6** **For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.** Paul could have proclaimed the truth of his experiences, but he would not, lest people begin to think too highly of him. Exalting the person who has had some unusual experience is always dangerous because you might begin to see him as more than who he is. Therefore, Paul kept those intimate experiences to himself. He only wanted people to know the testimony that he was called of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and that he is a witness for the Lord.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:7** **And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.** Paul lets us know that because of the abundance of revelations he had received from God, he was given a thorn in the flesh (something that irritates, frustrates, and nags him)—the messenger of Satan who came to buffet (cause pain; strike) him, lest he should be exalted (in the eyes of the people) above measure. When we look at it, we know that people have been coming against Paul, we know that they were not led by God, but the enemy of God, the messenger of Satan to cause pain, to strike at Paul's last nerve. Paul was forever defending himself to the people: People thought he was not sent by God; people opposed him; people were always divisive in the church. This *"type of thorn in the flesh"* comes through people Satan uses, but God will use it to humble you.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:8** **For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.** Paul called it *"this*

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*thing*", meaning this problem. He wanted deliverance and relief from this situation. He wanted God to remove the thorn. Why? - Because it pricked and bothered him. It distracted him from his labor. It made him appear personally weak and sickly. Paul prayed and sought the Lord 3 times about it, that this thing would depart from him. Do we realize that God will not remove everything we ask Him to do, for He has purpose for it.

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. The thorn was working for good, for it kept Paul from being puffed up, and secondly, God revealed His power in Paul. God says "My grace is sufficient for you. That means God's divine unmerited favor was sufficient for Paul. Even God's strength was made perfect in (Paul's) weakness." God allowed it to keep Paul humble. In Paul's weakness, God was protecting him, for then Paul could be covered in God's strength and not his own. God's power was strongest when Paul was weak. Therefore, "Paul could gladly acknowledge that he would rather glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him."

**(2<sup>nd</sup>) 12:10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. Since Paul knows that the thorn wasn't removed and that God's grace was sufficient, he was glad to glory in his infirmities, now he says he takes pleasure...

- in infirmities, a general term meaning all kinds of sufferings and weaknesses whether moral or physical. The power of Christ can overcome any weakness or temptation for the believer.
- in reproaches, whether ridicule insult, slander, rumor, or whatever.
- in necessities, hardships, needs, deprivations, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter, or clothing, or any other necessity.
- in persecutions, verbal or physical attack, abuse, or injury.
- in distress tight situations, perplexities, disturbances, anxious moments, inescapable problems and difficulties.

He no longer kick against the prick. It's all for Christ's sake. God shows him that when he is weak, then he is strongest because of Christ. God is showing up in his weakness. He shifts his focus while he waits on the change. When we acknowledge our weakness before the Lord, then the Lord pours His strength into our mind and heart. He empowers believers to overcome and conquer all infirmities and weaknesses. This keeps us close; keeps us humble before God, for we will constantly need the fellowship of God.

## SUMMARY:

1 Paul says that it is not expedient, meaning necessary, self-serving or profitable for him to boast. Some thought to themselves and questioned others about Paul's authority; him not having spiritual visions and revelations from the Lord. So now he shares that he did have a spiritual experience of visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 Paul is referring to himself as the man. He himself is just a man, nobody special, but he's in Christ when the vision experience came to him.

1. This vision experience happened 14 yrs ago.
2. This vision experience was so real that he could not tell (knew not) whether he was in the body or whether out of the body. He just couldn't tell.
3. This vision experience is where he was caught up into the third heaven, the dwelling place of God where the presence and the glory of the Lord are fully manifested and experienced. He called it paradise (v.4).

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3Paul says it again that he could not tell (knew not) whether he was in the body or whether out of the body. He just couldn't tell. But God knows. 4God knows how he was caught up into paradise (the third heaven) and how he heard unspeakable words which were unlawful for him to utter. This meant that it was for Paul's hearing and Paul alone (**12:1-4**).

5A man with such spiritual experiences has a right to boast, but Paul says that he will boast only in his infirmities; his weaknesses. 6Paul could have proclaimed the truth of his experiences, but he would not, lest people begin to think too highly of him. Therefore, Paul kept those intimate experiences to himself. He only wanted people to know the testimony that he was called of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and that he is a witness for the Lord. 7Paul lets us know that lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, he was given a thorn in the flesh (something that irritates, frustrates, and nags him) —the messenger of Satan who came to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure (**12:5-7**).

8Paul wanted deliverance and relief. He wanted God to remove the thorn. Why? - Because it pricked and bothered him. It distracted him from his labor. It made him appear personally weak and sickly. Paul prayed and sought the Lord about it 3times, that this thing would depart from him. 9The thorn was working for good, for God says, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in Paul's weakness.*" God allowed it to keep Paul humble. In Paul's weakness, God was protecting him, for then Paul could be covered in God's strength and not his own. God's power was strongest when Paul was weak. Therefore, "*Paul could gladly acknowledge that he would rather glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him.*" 10Paul now says "*Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress for Christ's sake.*" It's all for Christ's sake. He no longer kick against the prick. God shows Paul that when he is weak, then he is strongest because of Christ. God is showing up in his weakness. When we acknowledge our weakness before the Lord, then the Lord pours His strength into our mind and heart. He empowers believers to overcome and conquer all infirmities and weaknesses. This keeps us close; keeps us humble before God, for we will constantly need the fellowship of God (**12:8-10**).

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