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SECOND **CORINTHIANS**

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Foreword

This book does not intend to displace the Bible; it is intended to be a guide and help. The student should keep before him Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians while using this book. Although there is no introductory lesson treating matters of authorship, date, etc., these matters are all discussed within the book.

Some commentaries consulted and found to be most helpful were the following:

Erdman, Charles R., *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Phil: Westminster Press, 1929)

Lenski, R. C. H., *Interpretation of Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1946)

Lipscomb, David, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ed. J. W. Shepherd, Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1936)

McGarvey, J. W. and Philip Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1916)

Plummer, Alfred, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians in the International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960)

Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931)

Tasker, R. V. G., *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians in the Tyndale series* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960)

Scripture quotations in this book are from the American Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated. References to the biblical text are printed in bold face for the convenience of the reader.

Raymond C. Keley

Chapter One

Paul's Comfort While Under Pressure

Divine Consolation (1:1-11)

IN VS. 1 PAUL begins 2 Corinthians with his own name and a declaration of his apostleship. In 10:1 Paul again refers to himself by name; added to this is the fact that the letter is Pauline in both style and vocabulary. External evidence for its genuineness is likewise strong. In fact, it has been almost unanimously agreed that Paul is the author.

Timothy joins Paul in the salutation, which shows that he was with Paul at the time of writing. Paul had written 1 Corinthians from Ephesus and had sent Timothy to help the church in Corinth with its problems. In fact, he had sent Timothy ahead of the First Epistle but had expected the epistle to get there ahead of Timothy whom he sent by land (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). Paul had requested the Corinthians to see that Timothy returned to him and there is no reason to suppose that this was not carried out (cf. 1 Cor. 16:11). Timothy had been with Paul in Corinth at the time of the establishing of the church there (Acts 18:5); he had been sent by Paul on a special mission (1 Cor. 4:17); here again he is associated with Paul in greeting the Corinthian church.

The recipients of the letter are addressed as **the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia**. The letter was first of all for Corinth, but Paul is conscious of the fact that the letter will have a wider circulation and that its contents are needed by other Christians. Achaia was the province of which Corinth was the capital. The

salutation in which Paul expresses his desire that the readers be the recipients of grace and peace (vs. 2) is the same as that of the First Epistle.

Many writers have referred to the deep emotional tone of 2 Corinthians. It is a letter filled with deep feeling and written in a strain of high emotion. This is seen in vs. 3 where Paul, in praising God, refers to him as the **Father of mercies and God of all comfort**. God is a compassionate Father. Mercy is one of his chief attributes. God is one to whom men can look for strength in time of sorrow. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as "another comforter," implying that he, himself, was a comforter. Each person of the Godhead is thus a person of comfort. Continuing the same thought in vs. 4, Paul affirms that this God of all comfort **comforteth us in all our affliction**. Paul is speaking out of genuine personal experience. He has only recently undergone some trials that were deeply painful. He has narrowly escaped fatal physical violence. He has suffered mental anguish over the condition of the Corinthian church, and yet, his spirit had found relief and he traces the source of this relief to God.

Paul praises God who comforts him and he rejoices in this comfort. God intended that the comfort which he bestowed should do more than help Paul. He intends that the comfort which he bestows upon any individual shall do more than merely lift the burden from that individual. God comforts **that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction**. By comforting his people God equips them to be dispensers of comfort.

A Christian, having passed through deep and troubled waters, can go to another who is having a similar experience and say, "I understand." There is more healing in the words of one who truly understands. He who has experienced God's gracious comfort can bless others **through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God** (vs. 4).

By the expression, **the sufferings of Christ** (vs. 5), Paul means the sufferings which Christians endure for the sake of Christ, such sufferings as Christ endured but which continue in his people. These sufferings **abound unto us**, that is, they are abundant. Paul again is speaking out of meaningful experience; he, while in Ephesus, just prior to writing this epistle, had undergone both physical and mental anguish (cf. Acts 19). However, the comfort which comes through Christ also abounds unto us so that it corresponds to the sufferings which are endured for the sake of Christ (vs. 5).

Paul regards both the afflictions and the comfort as being for the sake of the Corinthian Christians. These Christians must realize that their leaders were willing to suffer in order that the gospel might be spread. They must realize the deep anxiety Paul felt in their behalf. They must see that God delivered these leaders from affliction and sustained them with his comforting care. When they should come to see all this, they would be inspired by such worthy example and would themselves be emboldened to endure hardships for Christ. They would be inspired to **the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer** (vs. 6). Paul expresses his unwavering hope that the same comfort which he had experienced would enable his brethren in Corinth to persevere. He knows that the loyal members in Corinth, by aligning themselves with him, had exposed themselves to the same vilification which the troublemakers were heaping upon Paul. However, Paul is confident that the Corinthians are partaking both of the sufferings and the comfort of Christ (vs. 7).

Paul next refers to a specific case in his own recent experience: **the affliction which befell us in Asia**. Just which affliction is not known. We can learn something from Acts 19 about what he endured in Ephesus; he could have this in mind or he could be referring to something that happened at a later time. Whatever it was, it was a trial so great **that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power**. It was too much for a human being to endure in his own strength; divine help was needed. When Paul had contemplated the danger, he saw no way of escape: **we despaired even of life** (vs. 8). He had felt that the **sentence** or verdict for him was death. He and Timothy had pronounced this verdict in their own hearts; and the purpose God had in permitting them to come to this point of despair was to demonstrate to them that God was the only one to whom they could look and the only one upon whom they could depend for deliverance. When hope deserts a man and he feels the hand of death upon him, it is only the **God who raiseth the dead** who can meet such a situation. Such an experience had taught Paul and Timothy not to trust in themselves but in God (vs. 9). Moreover, God has not only delivered them out of death; he will, Paul confidently asserts, continue to deliver (vs. 10). In this God, Paul has set his hope. After experiencing such a great deliverance, Paul and Timothy are prepared for whatever the future may hold. They reach out to the Corinthians, asking them to join them in prayer for future deliverance. The Corinthians can help by means of their

prayers. By the gift Paul means future deliverance and comfort to be bestowed by God. This gift would be bestowed by means of many, that is, by means of the prayers offered by many. Paul also is not unmindful of the fact that he, Timothy, and the readers should purpose to give thanks to God for his work in delivering them. Surely, those who seek God's blessings should never forget to praise him for bestowing those blessings (vs. 11).

Paul Answers A Charge (1:12-23)

It is quite evident that the charge of insincerity was being made against Paul by some in Corinth. Paul feels it necessary to defend his honesty and integrity. He begins by declaring that the testimony of his conscience had given him grounds for glorying, approving of his past conduct toward others and especially toward the Corinthians. He had not depended upon **fleshly wisdom**, human cleverness, but upon the grace of God. In reality, then, Paul is glorying in what God has done through him and not in what he has achieved in his own strength. This type of glorying is not contrary to the true spirit of Christian humility. Paul feels, even as he writes, that his conduct among the Corinthians was such that his sincerity was openly manifested (vs. 12). This verse has a connection with what precedes it in that Paul may be regarded as stating a reason why he may expect the prayers of the Corinthians for his safety; it also has a connection with what follows in that it introduces Paul's reply to the charges which questioned his integrity.

Paul next makes particular reference to his writings which, evidently, had been the basis upon which the charge of fickleness had been based. He maintains that he writes exactly what the Corinthians read; he does not pen statements with hidden or ambiguous significance. He employs no tricks of language which would allow reservations for the sake of future deception. And the majority of the Corinthian church acknowledged Paul's writings for what they were; only a minority had misconstrued his letters. Paul hopes they will continue "unto the end" to read and understand his writings properly (vs. 13). However, Paul agrees that their knowledge of him and his co-workers was partial and their glorying in them, feeling a pride in them, was there even though it was an imperfect estimate. Paul tells them that they are his pride and glory, and this mutual pride will be known and especially recognized in the day of our Lord Jesus (vs. 14).

By the expression, **in this confidence**, Paul refers to the things stated in vs. 13 and 14 — Paul's confidence in the Corinthians and his belief that they also had confidence in him. It was in this confidence that Paul had planned first to visit Corinth before going into Macedonia. The purpose of this intended visit was that the Corinthians might have a second benefit; their first benefit had been received at the time of Paul's first visit (cf. Acts 18). Also, trusting in their mutual confidence, Paul had planned to go from Corinth to Macedonia, then to return to Corinth, and had looked forward to being sent forward on his journey to Judea by the Corinthians (vss. 15, 16). In some way, unknown to us, the Corinthians had been informed of these plans. But Paul had changed those plans and had so informed the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 16:5-7). Paul went ahead and carried out the new plan, and it was while he was traveling the route described in 1 Corinthians 16:5 that he wrote this second epistle from Macedonia, only a few months after he wrote 1 Corinthians, possibly in the same year.

Paul had not anticipated that a change in travel plans would be taken as a ground for impugning his motives, but by some in Corinth it had been so taken. Paul asks if he had shown fickleness in making the plans described in vss. 15 and 16. Did he make the plan in a trivial vein, with no intention of fulfilling it? Or does he make plans **according to the flesh**, that is, in a way so as to satisfy fleshly, selfish motives? Does he do this with the result of becoming a man in whom others cannot distinguish his **yea** statements from his **nay** statements? (vs. 17). Does he say one thing and do another, thus lying? With an emphatic statement, **as God is true**, Paul avers that his words to the Corinthians had not conveyed a message which he did not mean. He had not spoken with the intention of deceiving (vs. 18). Christ, the center of Paul's preaching, was never **yea and nay**; he is not a wavering, vacillating Christ — **his word is always true**. This was the message that had been proclaimed by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, and had been received by the Corinthians for what it was (vs. 19). In connection with Christ, the center of gospel preaching, all of God's promises find fulfillment; through him also is the **amen**, a word which expresses the conviction of verity. This **amen**, this verification of fulfillment, is **unto the glory of God, and is through us**, that is, through God's chosen, inspired, human instruments. God's promises fulfilled in Christ glorified God by the proclamation of these inspired men (vs. 20). How unthinkable that Paul and his helpers should then be agents of deceit!

In tracing all to God and preventing the appearance of self-confidence or boasting, Paul affirms that it is God who continually establishes, strengthens, makes firm, both those who teach and those who are taught. It was this same God who **anointed** us, that is, consecrated us to the work we are now doing (vs. 21). Furthermore, God sealed us. This indicates confirmation as belonging to him. The Holy Spirit whom God has given to dwell in the heart of the Christian is an earnest, that is, the down payment by which the recipient is assured of final culmination of the contract (vs. 22). These great affirmations are to be viewed as a part of Paul's defense. How could such teachers who were in league with the Corinthians in receiving confirmation from God and the gift of the Spirit be guilty of duplicity?

Having replied to the charge of fickleness by appealing to such lofty principles as those heretofore discussed, Paul now proceeds to explain why he had changed his travel plans. He appeals to God as a witness of the truthfulness of what he says, and declares that his change of plans was made in order to spare the Corinthians. The carrying out of his new plan would make his arrival in Corinth considerably later than would his former plan. Considering the condition of the Corinthian church, which is reflected in 1 Corinthians, Paul's arrival there while it was yet in that condition would have demanded his dealing with them in severity. He thus delayed his arrival in order to give more time for repentance (vs. 23). However, Paul disclaims any desire to dictate or domineer; it was for their good, their joy, he was working. The faith in which a Christian stands that gives him a right relationship with God is a voluntary faith; it cannot be dictated by others. Paul assures the Corinthians that he is convinced that they are standing firm in faith (vs. 24).

Chapter Two

Why Paul Changed His Plans

Further Explanation (vss. 1-4)

IN FURTHER EXPLAINING HIS delay of a visit to Corinth in order to spare the Corinthian church, Paul states the determination he had made not to come again to them with sorrow (vs. 1). He wanted to give them time to straighten out their affairs and did not want to visit them at a time when a visit would have been painful both to them and to him. The question arises as to what Paul means by coming "again." Some scholars think that Paul paid a hurried visit, a painful visit, to Corinth, after the visit of Acts 18. This is possible but it cannot be established with certainty. If it be true, then Paul could mean that he does not wish to make another such sorrowful visit. However, it could be that Paul is saying that, having already made one visit, a joyful one (cf. Acts 18), he does not wish the second visit to be in sorrow. However, the uncertainty surrounding the movements of Paul does not affect the understanding of the great truths he sets forth.

Paul proceeds to tell the Corinthians that his gladness depends on them. He had written to them in order that they might be brought to repentance. Now he asks who can possibly make him glad except those whom he had made sorrowful. And how can these Corinthians make Paul glad? By receiving his correction in the proper spirit and responding to it as he had asked them to do. Paul states why he had previously written as he had: it was so that he would not receive grief from those from whom he wished to receive joy. And Paul has been holding confidence in the Corinthians, confidence that their joy and his are bound together and that what will bring joy to him will also bring true

joy to them. He had enough confidence in them to believe that true repentance would bring true joy (vss. 2, 3).

Now Paul lays bare the state of his heart at the time he had written 1 Corinthians (vs. 4). In that letter he had not revealed the depth of feeling which he here says he had felt. He had shed tears over that letter, had written out of pain and anguish. What he had written regarding the factions, the case of incest, the abuse of the Lord's Supper, and the other irregularities existing at Corinth, he had written in grief and tears. And, although he had intended for that letter to produce godly sorrow, he had not intended to write just for the purpose of grieving them; he was not desirous of producing grief for its own sake, but for the sake of that to which it would lead. He had not written just to hurt them, but that they might know the abundant love which he had for them. At times love must cause grief, but never for its own sake. True love does not condone sin but dares to stand before the guilty ones and speak the truth in order that they might be saved.

Regarding the Penitent Offender (vss. 5-11)

Paul's instructions in his previous letter concerning the incestuous man should be reviewed here (1 Cor. 5:1-5). It can be seen how serious Paul considered the matter to be, not only for the guilty party but also for the indifferent church.

Now Paul again makes reference to the case of incest, referring to the man who had caused sorrow. He says the sorrow caused was not so much to him, Paul, as to the church. However, not wishing to exaggerate the harm done by the man, Paul says he does not press the matter too heavily, and so declares the injury done the church was "in part," that is, he had injured them "more or less," or in varying degrees among the members. The man had not completely wrecked and ruined the church by his misconduct (vs. 5).

From the next verse we learn that the church had followed Paul's instructions regarding the administering of discipline to the offender. Evidently, Titus had brought the news to Paul, along with the good news of the man's repentance. Paul is greatly pleased with the man and with the church. However, Paul says the discipline administered was sufficient (vs. 6). Now, **contrariwise**, that is, as opposed to the withdrawing of fellowship, Paul tells the Corinthians to forgive and comfort the man. The purpose of the discipline had been to save and now the man has been saved. To continue to withhold forgiveness and fellowship from him is

likely to cause him to be **swallowed up** with sorrow or completely overwhelmed with remorse (vs. 7). The opposite effect would be accomplished from that which was intended by Paul's instructions. The Corinthians are, therefore, urged to show love toward the penitent man (vs. 8).

Paul next tells the Corinthians that he had given the instructions relative to the exercise of discipline to test the genuineness of the Corinthians. It was a real test case since it presented a most grave situation and demanded strict action by the church. Just what the Corinthians would do in the case would indicate what they would do in other matters. It caused much joy in the heart of Paul to know that the church had passed this difficult test and so had shown their genuineness (vs. 9).

When Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5, had written regarding the sinful man and the withdrawal of fellowship from him, he had assured the church that he would, in spirit, be present at the time of the withdrawal and the procedure would thus have his full endorsement. Now, he assures the same church that he is also with them in forgiveness. Paul has forgiven the man for the grief caused him. However, the man's sin was not directly against Paul; hence, Paul says, **if I have forgiven anything**, that is, if indeed he had anything personally to forgive. However, Paul, the leader in the discipline, now shows his leadership in the true spirit of forgiveness, and assures the Corinthians that his own forgiveness is for their sake. He was connected with the Corinthian church in a relationship that made their concern his concern. This relationship which he felt with them, this mutual concern, and their acting together in forgiving was **in the presence of Christ** (vs. 10). And the success with which the entire matter was completed was indeed a frustration of Satan's plans. If the Corinthians had failed to heed Paul's advice and had continued in sin, thus repudiating Paul and alienating themselves from him, Satan would have gained a signal victory. As it was, Satan met with defeat. Paul says that the forgiveness of which he has spoken was in order that Satan might not gain an advantage over them. Paul had seen through Satan's devices; he had strong proof that the Corinthians had, too. **We are not ignorant of his devices**, says Paul (vs. 11).

Some commentators do not think Paul makes reference to the incestuous case of 1 Corinthians 5 in the foregoing verses. Neither do they think that Paul, in vss. 3, 4, 5, and 6, refers to what he had written in 1 Corinthians. They rather think that Paul had

visited the Corinthian church between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, at which time he was treated with contempt and insult by the ringleader of the opposing party. Then, according to the theory, he returned to Ephesus and wrote a painful letter in anguish, affliction, and tears. The man to whom he refers in the passage now under consideration, according to the theory, is the rebellious leader who had insulted Paul at the time of the conjectured visit. Some of the commentators think the supposed letter written after the conjectured visit is what we now have as 2 Corinthians 10-13, and so they deny the unity of 2 Corinthians. However, there is no good ground, either from internal or external evidence, for questioning the unity of 2 Corinthians. Moreover, the evidence is in favor of its unity, and this writer holds that 2 Corinthians is a unit. As to a second visit, a visit not recorded in Acts, this is possible and certain statements may indicate this (cf. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). However, even these passages are not conclusive. But, granting the possibility of a second visit, we are left entirely to conjecture as to what occurred on that visit. The writing of a letter between the writing of our two canonical letters, a letter designed entirely for a specific problem in Corinth, and which was not preserved for the canon, is also possible. But the existence of such a letter is conjectural. And, if such a letter ever existed, its contents are also a matter of conjecture. There is nothing in the passage under consideration to call for the necessity of such a hypothesis. The case of 1 Corinthians 5 and what Paul wrote in that passage perfectly fit the situation. However, it should again be stressed that the truths set forth are not affected by our uncertainty of the events in Paul's itinerary. Paul's teaching regarding forgiveness and showing love for the man is not affected by our ability or inability to identify positively either the man or his offense.

Heavenness Turned to Joy (vss. 12-17)

Paul continues to tell the Corinthians of his deep affection for them and of his interest in their affairs. He wants them to know that his anxiety for them is great and that he could not have been acting with levity in his dealings with them. He recounts something of his recent activities, telling them that when he came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, that is, intending to preach the gospel, a door was opened in the Lord. An open door indicates an unusual opportunity for service (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3). However, though this great opportunity was afforded, Paul took his leave of Troas

and went into Macedonia. The reason for this departure was that he had no relief for his spirit; it was because of his failure to find Titus there that he had found no rest for his spirit. He had expected to meet Titus in Troas and receive news of the Corinthians. Paul's spirit was in such tension that he passed by the open door for the time and went on to Macedonia where he did meet Titus (cf. 7:6). This indicates something of the perturbed state of the apostle's mind over the condition at Corinth. And all of this emotion was not expended over his own welfare; it was in the interest of a church. He did not know what sort of news Titus would bring regarding the Corinthians and regarding their reaction toward what Paul had written to them. Whatever the news might be, Paul was eager to know (vss. 12, 13).

Now Paul breaks forth in thanks to God. The news Titus has brought refreshes his heart; he sees God as the one leading him and his co-workers in this victory which had occurred at Corinth and as the one who **always leadeth** in all their victories. Paul is using imagery borrowed from a triumphal march of an emperor, an emperor leading his exultant hosts in procession down a street. In these same processions vessels with burning incense were carried and flowers were scattered along the way. For the victors the odor was sweet, but for the conquered ones who marched as captives it meant death. Paul carries through with the figure: God makes known the savor, the sweet odor of the knowledge of Christ in every place visited by these inspired messengers (vs. 14). Next, Paul changes the figure a bit by declaring that these messengers are Christ's sweet savor offered to the Father; and they are accepted by the Father as such whether they labor among those who accept their message or those who reject it. They are acceptable to God when the gospel is accepted and when it is spurned. But though the men are a sweet savor to God, they are, to those who reject the gospel, a **savor from death unto death**, that is, from one evil condition to another. The thought is that of a deathly odor which results in death. Sunshine hardens some objects and melts others. To those who accept the gospel, the messengers are a **savor from life unto life**, that is, from beginning to end the vital fragrance issues in life. When Paul and his helpers faithfully did their work, they were acceptable to God regardless of the attitude of those among whom they worked (vs. 15).

Paul raises a question: **who is sufficient for these things?** This question challenges the Corinthians to weigh their teachers. Who is sufficient to be a savor unto God by bearing a message, a

savor that to some will mean death and to others life? Who is sufficient to bear such a weighty responsibility—the false teachers or the true apostles and teachers? (vs. 16). Next, Paul brings out a contrast between the many false teachers and himself and his helpers: **We are not as the many, corrupting the word of God.** Some of these “many” were in Corinth and they evidently claimed sufficiency for their work, intending to discredit the true teachers. Paul declares they were adulterating the gospel, corrupting the word of truth. And how have Paul and his associates dealt with the Corinthians regarding the word of God? **But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.** Their motives, Paul declares had been pure. What they had preached had been done in sincerity. Furthermore, they had spoken as of God, as commissioned by him and as being his spokesmen. They had realized that everything they said was in the sight, the presence, of God, and they had spoken with the realization that they must give account to God for every word they spoke. They had also realized that the sphere of their action, the realm of their speaking, was in Christ. So, while Paul insists that the sufficiency for these things was not to be found in the false teachers who corrupt the word, but in the commissioned teachers who speak in sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, and in Christ, it can readily be seen that he is not claiming sufficiency in and of the teachers themselves. They look to God as the source of their message, they speak with the consciousness of God’s eyes upon them, and they look to Christ as the sphere in which they move. Surely, they realize that their sufficiency is not of human origin, but from a power beyond and above themselves.

Chapter Three

The Letter and the Spirit

An Accredited Ministry (vss. 1-3)

AT THE CLOSE OF the previous chapter Paul has contrasted the false teachers with himself and his helpers. He has accused many of **corrupting the word of God**, and has made the claim for himself and others of speaking in sincerity, as of God in the sight of God. Now, he asks: **Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you?** He feels that what he has written in 2:14-17 might be taken by some as self-praise or as boasting. Or some might even say he was compelled to write his own letter of commendation, having none from others. Paul continues his rhetorical questions by asking the Corinthians if he and his helpers need letters of commendation to or from them. The answer is implied: Paul is not commending himself; he does not need such letters. The phrase, as do some, indicates that some of the false teachers had come to Corinth with letters of recommendation and that they had indeed felt the need of such letters. Paul denies such need for himself and his companions (vs. 1).

Paul assures the Corinthians that they are his epistle, **written in our hearts, known and read of all men.** He feels that his best credentials are to be found in the lives and hearts of the people among whom he had labored. Three facts stand out: (1) the Corinthians are the epistle of Paul and his helpers; (2) they are written on the hearts of Paul and his helpers; (3) they are known and read of all men. (vs. 2). Further, their being an epistle of Christ was being made manifest, being seen by others who came to Corinth from all parts of the world. They were a letter of Christ. Christ had produced the epistle; they were products of

Christ. Paul and his helpers were the agents employed by Christ; hence, **ministered by us**. The epistle had not been written with ink, **but with the Spirit of the living God**. The Holy Spirit was the divine person working through these inspired teachers. Christ worked by the Spirit by the apostles by the gospel to produce this living epistle at Corinth, the church. The writing had been done upon tables **that are hearts of flesh, and not in tables of stone**. The epistle was composed of living human beings and was not inscribed upon dead, cold tables of stone. But what does Paul mean when he says, **written on our hearts**? How was it that the Corinthian church, known and read by others, was written upon the hearts of these ministers? The idea of the unity between the church and Paul and of the love felt for the church by Paul and his helpers seems to be suggested again. There is the idea of deep affection. The Christians in Corinth were impressed in grateful remembrance upon the hearts of those who had converted them. Paul feels that these Corinthians themselves, so impressed upon his very heart, openly known and read by others, prove the quality of his work and that he does not need, as do others, letters of recommendation either to or from Corinth (vs. 3).

A Glorious Ministry (vss. 4-18)

Having spoken of their **triumphant ministry** (2:14-17), and of their **accredited ministry** (3:1-3), Paul now turns to the subject of their **glorious ministry**. He has declared his confidence in the Corinthians themselves as his credentials. He does not need letters of commendation as others do. This is not a confidence in self nor does it seek selfish credit, for it is **through Christ** and towards God (vs. 3). He disclaims sufficiency within self and points to God as the source of the sufficiency of himself and of his helpers (vs. 5).

Having said that the sufficiency comes from God, Paul now points to God as the one **who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant**. Again, note that all is credited to God. The **new covenant** is in contradistinction from the old covenant. Paul and others were ministers of the new covenant in that they were selected and commissioned to go forth and make known to men the provisions of that covenant. God had made these men ministers **not of the letter**, referring to the written Mosaic code; **but of the Spirit**, that is, of the new covenant by which the Holy Spirit seeks to regulate conduct by first converting the heart. Paul further contrasts the old and new covenants when he says, **the letter killeth,**

but the Spirit giveth life. The law brought to men a knowledge of sin, but since men could not keep the letter of the law perfectly, it could not bring salvation. It could only lead to death. But the Spirit gave life in the new covenant because it brings pardon and reconciliation through Christ. By sending Christ (cf. Rom. 8:3, 4) God did what the law could never do (vs. 6).

By the **ministration of death written and engraven on stones**, Paul makes reference to the giving of the law on tables of stone by God through Moses. It was **of death** because it brought guilt and made no provision for forgiveness. It came with glory in that the face of Moses shone with the light of divine glory; there was such brightness that the Israelites could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses. However, the glory on the face of Moses was temporary and was **passing away** (vs. 7). Now, the superiority of the ministry of Paul and his associates over that of the former covenant is seen in vss. 8-11. If there was glory connected with the former, shall there not be a greater glory connected with the new? (vs. 8). If the dispensation which brought the sentence of death came with glory, even so that ministration which brings justification exceeds in glory (vs. 9). This exceeding glory is not that of an overwhelming light shining on one's face, but the glorious light shining in men's hearts and bringing salvation from their sins. In fact, **that which hath been made glorious**, now does not appear to be glorious because the glory of the gospel so far surpasses it that it is outshone and eclipsed (vs. 10). If the transient was with glory, how much more does glory attend **that which remaineth!** (vs. 11). How glorious, then, is the ministry of Paul and his helpers!

Having shown the glory of his ministry by contrasting it with the Mosaic ministry, Paul now proceeds to show the superior effects of his ministry; he also uses the ministry of Moses and its effects for this purpose. He speaks of the hope which he and his fellow-ministers have: the hope that their glorious ministry will remain **in glory** (vs. 12). It is with such hope in their hearts, says Paul, that they speak boldly, that is, openly and frankly (vs. 12). They are not like Moses: there is no veil connected with their ministry. Moses placed a veil upon his face so that the children of Israel could not see the fading away of the glory. The main lesson of Paul seems to be that Israel not only failed to see the dying rays on the face of Moses, but they also failed to see the transitory nature of the law which was a schoolmaster to lead to Christ (cf. Gal. 3:24, 25). Paul sees in the veiling of the face of

Moses a spiritual significance: **their minds were hardened**. This refers, of course, to the nation of Israel. They failed to see the true design of the law and, when Christ came, they failed to recognize him as the end or purpose of the law. In Paul's day, even though he preached with boldness, openness, and frankness, he found the hearts of the children of Israel still in a hardened condition. **Until this very day**, writes Paul, meaning the time at which he was writing, **at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ** (vss. 13, 14). The same thought is expressed in the following verse in which it is said that **whenever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart**. They still do not understand the old covenant for what it truly is. A veil of unbelief is still upon their hearts and they do not see that the glory of the old regime fades in the presence of Jesus Christ. They reject the very Christ of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. With blindness of heart they set aside the word of God by their traditions (vs. 15).

However, **when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away**. As Moses would remove the veil from his face when he returned to the presence of Jehovah, so when any one of the children of Israel turns to Christ, the veil is removed from his heart, he sees that the end or purpose of the law is to lead to Christ, and he accepts Christ as the Lord of his life. Not all of the Israelites remained in blindness; some accepted Christ in Paul's day. Paul's use of the singular term could possibly be used to emphasize the fact that the turning is an individual matter; hence, **whenever it shall turn**, referring to an individual person (vs. 16).

In the following verse Paul proceeds to explain why turning to Christ removes the veil from men's hearts. It is because the Lord Jesus is one with the Holy Spirit. Christ and the Spirit are one in the same sense that Christ declared himself and the Father to be one (cf. John 10:30). Paul does not mean to confuse their individuality, but to show that the influence of Jesus Christ is everywhere felt through the work of the Holy Spirit. The influence of the two is difficult to distinguish. The Spirit is called the **Spirit of Christ** (Rom. 8:9). During his conversation with his apostles Jesus promised to come to them (John 14:18), but he was here speaking of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom he would send to them (John 16:7). Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, **he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you** (John 16:14). Christ and the Spirit are separate personalities, but because of the closeness of their work,

there is a practical identity, and to turn to either is to turn to the other. The Spirit came as the representative of Christ and is to be identified with Christ in that sense. The unity of the two is thus emphasized, but their distinction is also maintained by the statement: **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**. Here the Holy Spirit is called **the Spirit of the Lord**. To turn to the Lord is to turn to the Spirit. To turn to the letter of the law brings bondage and condemnation, but to turn to the law of the Spirit, the new covenant, brings freedom (vs. 17; cf. Rom. 8:2).

In verse 18 Paul speaks of the transformation that is continually going on in the lives of Christians. With an unveiled face the Christian sees the glory of the Lord; and the glory of the Lord which he beholds as he looks into the new covenant is imbibed into his own spirit. The text reads, **beholding as in a mirror**. If we adopt this reading, the idea seems to be that we behold the Lord's glory as it is reflected in the mirror of his word. However, there is also in the word **beholding** the idea of reflecting, and the footnote of the ASV reads, **reflecting as a mirror**. And some of the more recent translations such as the NEB adopt this rendering. If this reading is adopted, the idea is that we reflect to others the glory of the Lord of which we have partaken and thus reveal the transformation that is taking place within us. Either makes good sense and both ideas are true. And as we behold the glory of the Lord we are transformed into the image of the Lord which we reflect. As Paul elsewhere taught, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). This glory which we reflect is not a fading glory as was true in the case of Moses, but is a progressively increasing something; it is a transformation **from glory to glory**, or from one stage of glory to another and greater stage. This is to continue until we awake in his likeness, **for we shall see him as he is** (cf. 1 John 3:2). But even in this life, the more we contemplate the great truths of the gospel, the more do our spirits become imbued with its spirit. And this transformation has its source in the Lord: **Even as from the Lord the Spirit**. The Lord works the transformation through the Spirit who, in turn, accomplishes it by means of the word. The work of the Spirit is thus the work of Christ, for Christ works through the Spirit. Paul here identifies the two. Each is in the other and the powerful union of the two is emphasized. However, as before noted, other passages indicate the fact that each is a separate person. They are one even as the Father and the Son are one (vs. 18).

How glorious the ministry of Paul! And what glorious results have been wrought in the Corinthians who are his living epistles, **known and read of all men!** How could one who is a minister of such a glorious new covenant be indicted on the grounds of deceit or duplicity? Surely the Corinthians will be able to see through the false teachers who are accusing Paul.

Chapter Four

What Keeps Christians Going

Sincerity and Frankness (vss. 1-6)

PAUL HAS ⁽¹⁾SPOKEN OF the ministry of himself and his associates as being triumphant, accredited, and glorious. It is this ministry to which he makes reference at the beginning of chapter 4. And as Paul considers their unworthiness he realizes that it is only by the grace of God that they have this ministry: even as we obtained mercy. Their entire sufficiency is from God. Because of this he can say, **therefore . . . we faint not**. Paul is saying that they are not discouraged, they do not despair, do not lose heart, even though many reject the gospel and even though false teachers stoop to base methods in order to bring discredit upon them and their ministry (vs. 1).

Paul describes the methods of this ministry when he says, **we have renounced the hidden things of shame**. Their methods had always been open and above-board. They had not acted the part of unscrupulous politicians, using devices in which disguise and deceit were employed while hidden from open view. By **renouncing** Paul does not mean to say that they had ever used such tactics, but simply to say that they had always disowned such methods, scorned such with the utmost aversion. In this statement Paul is defining more in detail what he means by the **hidden things of shame**. They had not lived in a cunning, unscrupulous way in order to gain the ends they were seeking. They had not played politics in order to gain adherents to their cause. Nor had they handled the word of God deceitfully. They had not adulterated the word by treating it in a dishonest manner. By describing their conduct in this negative way, Paul also is likely

alluding to the fact that such underhanded methods were being employed by certain teachers among the Corinthians. But he proceeds to describe their own conduct in a positive manner: by the **manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God**. They had made the truth manifest by proclaiming it openly and honestly; by this they had recommended themselves to the consciences of men. They realize that all of their work has been **in the sight of God** and they are willing to undergo the judgment and verdict of God (vs. 2).

However, the gospel which Paul had declared so openly was **veiled**, that is, hidden, from some. There is a reference here to the discussion of the veiling of Moses and to the veiling of the hearts of the Israelites in Paul's day (cf. ch. 3). Paul had declared in that discussion that the veil is removed from the heart when a person turns to the Lord (3:16). Now, he declares that the only instance in which the gospel is veiled is in those who are perishing; they do not understand its meaning (vs. 3). The reason for this is that Satan has blinded their minds with the result that the light of the gospel never dawned upon them. Compare the expression, **god of this world, with prince of this world** in John 12:31 and 14:30. For other passages on Christ being the **image of God**, see Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3; John 12:45. Thus it is seen that the light of this glorious gospel is not obscured; it shines forth in all its splendor and glory. It is veiled only from those whose hearts have been blinded; they walk in the midst of light and do not see it (vs. 4).

In making the statements he is making, Paul does not intend to secure glory and praise for himself and his helpers: **for we preach not ourselves**. To the contrary, they preached **Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake**. Christ as Lord was the theme of apostolic preaching. These preachers never exalted themselves but set themselves forth as slaves, for the sake of Christ, of the people to whom they ministered (vs. 5). The reason they preach in this manner is that God has shined in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory. The preachers are due no credit for the light they diffuse; the glory belongs to God who shined in their hearts to give the light. This same God had called light out of darkness at the creation; he is the author of both natural and spiritual light. And this glory of God which shone in the hearts of Paul and his co-laborers was to be seen and known through Christ, the mediator of the new covenant: **in the face of Jesus Christ** (vs. 6).

Sufferings of the Ministers (vss. 7-15)

Paul turns from the glory of the gospel to discuss the sufferings of its ministers. He refers to **this treasure**, thinking of the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God** of which he has spoken in vs. 6. **Earthen vessels**, alluding to common earthenware jars, is an expression emphasizing the frailty of those through whom the **light of God was to be diffused**. But divine power is made more evident by this frailty. By choosing unattractive vessels to be the containers of his treasure, God has chosen a plan which enhances the glory of that treasure. It can be seen that the excellence of the power which emanates from those vessels must be of God; it surely cannot emanate from such weak and fragile human beings (vs. 7).

Paul next speaks of the conflicts which he and his colleagues have endured. These conflicts have been severe and the vessels were frail. However the vessels have survived. This is another proof that they depend upon a power above and outside of themselves, even though **pressed on every side, a reference to a soldier surrounded by an enemy, yet not straitened**, that is, not completely hemmed in or restricted. At times these loyal soldiers of Christ were **perplexed or bewildered**; yet they are never driven to despair by these perplexities (vs. 8). Paul pictures soldiers in dire straits being **pursued but not forsaken**. They are never completely given over to the enemy and are never left to rely solely upon their own strength; God is always by their side. Further, he says, **smitten down, but not destroyed**. Here is a picture of soldiers beaten to the earth, yet not losing their lives. In each of these gradations of persecution, it is God who ever sustains and delivers. The frailty of the vessel emphasizes the necessity of such divine aid (vs. 9). Paul declares that they are **always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus**. The same hatred that pursued and killed Jesus now pursues his servants. They are continually being subjected to the danger of dying that marked Jesus, and it is for the sake of his name that they are thus subjected. They are one with their Master and the enemies are now treating them as they once treated him. The purpose which God has in permitting these servants to bear in their bodies the dying of Jesus is **that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body**. It was in order that it might be manifested to the world that Jesus still lives to sustain his servants in hours of trial (vs. 10). The thought is repeated in the next verse: these ministers were continually being subjected to the danger of death, and this was in order that it might be seen that the power of the living Christ was at work in delivering

their mortal bodies (vs. 11). As a result of all this the Corinthians were more rich spiritually in that they were in possession of life and of a greater knowledge of life (vs. 12).

Paul quotes from the psalmist (cf. Psalm 116:10), and declares that he and his helpers have the same spirit of faith and trust that characterized this Old Testament writer. It is a spirit that speaks because it believes and therefore defies dangers of every kind. It is a spirit that cannot maintain silence. **We speak, says Paul, knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also with Jesus and shall present us with you.** Here is the reason these men can speak with such confidence. Belief in the resurrection and the hope of being presented by God together with the Corinthians remove all fear of bodily injury (vs. 14). In the verse following, by all things Paul refers to the hardships which he and his helpers were willing to endure. It was for the sake of the people to whom they ministered. They want to share the grace which had been bestowed upon them so that it will be multiplied in the hearts of many others and so that a greater chorus of thanksgiving will rise up to the throne of God (vs. 15).

The Reason For Endurance (vss. 16-18)

Wherefore we faint not Paul assures the Corinthians. (As the NEB has it, **no wonder we do not lose heart!**) With the eternal welfare of the Corinthians in view, being constantly maintained by divine power, and being constantly inspired by a glorious hope, Paul can say, **wherefore, we faint not.** He continues the thought by saying that though the process of destruction is going on so far as the outward man is concerned, yet there is a constant process of renewal as concerns the inward man. Paul can, with poise, observe the destruction of the outward man. He knows that the inward man is experiencing a new vigor, youth, and strength, day by day (vs. 16). Paul can even refer to his afflictions as **light** and as something momentary. They are light and trivial in comparison with the eternal glory which lies ahead. And, while the enemies are determined that these afflictions work against the Christian, Paul asserts that, to the contrary, they work for him. The Christian can accept suffering as a means of developing character and as working out for him **an eternal weight of glory.** In this discussion **eternal** is placed in contrast with **a moment; weight** is placed in contrast with **light**; and **glory** is placed in contrast with **affliction.** What a wonderful outlook! (vs. 17). Yet such an outlook is possible only for one who can say, **we look**

not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Paul's gaze was fixed, not on the transient things of earth, but upon the eternal realities. It is only for such as have this outlook that the eternal weight of glory is being worked out by the afflictions of this life. And he who by the eye of faith sees the unseen has his eye fixed upon that which shall never pass away. The things which can be seen with the natural eye are temporal; only the unseen things are eternal (vs. 18).

still his main desire is not to be rid of this body in order to escape the burdens, but that it is an earnest desire to be clothed with immortality so that **what is mortal might be swallowed up** (or completely absorbed) **by immortality** (vs. 4). This consummation is what God has had in view in all that he has wrought for the Christian by redeeming him and by sustaining him in the midst of his afflictions and groanings. Further, he has given to the Christian the Holy Spirit as an earnest, a down payment, a guarantee, that his promise of immortality will be fulfilled (vs. 5).

In view of the great assurance vouchsafed to him, Paul can say with confidence, **being therefore always of good courage**. This courage he is able to maintain even in the midst of the most severe afflictions; and this same courage does not wane in contemplation of death. While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord, but Paul has shown that this is only temporary since the body is an earthly house and we are pilgrims on the earth (vs. 6). In this earthly existence, **we walk by faith, not by sight**. It is by means of faith, not of sight, that we take each step of our earthly pilgrimage. We are now absent from the Lord only in a relative sense; we shall be with him in a different sense when **we shall see him as he is** (vs. 7; cf. 1 John 3:2).

Paul now reaffirms the **good courage** of himself and of his helpers. He goes on to say that they are **willing to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord**. Indeed, this is their preference. To be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord, at home with him, in a fulness of his glory that is not realized while we live here as pilgrims in a world that is not our home (vs. 8).

However, these faithful ministers make it a matter of constant effort to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord whether they live or die. Their great determination is always to please the Lord. And the great fact, always kept in mind by Paul and his helpers, is the coming day of judgment when **we must all be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ**, and when each one may receive the things done in the body.

The Ministry of Reconciliation (vss. 11-21)

Having spoken of the judgment, Paul says that he and his colleagues **persuade men**, and that they do this **knowing the fear of the Lord**. This is the reverential fear which the godly ever possess; it is the fear which seeks to please God and ever seeks to avoid offending the divine Majesty. It is the fear which shrinks

Chapter Five

The Ministry of Reconciliation

The Hope of the Christian (vss. 1-10)

IN THE FIRST FIVE verses of chapter 5 Paul continues the subject of the sufferings of the Lord's servants and the relationship of those sufferings to the hope of the resurrection. The opening statement, **for we know**, indicates a connection with what precedes. That which Paul had learned by revelation and which was a matter of knowledge was that we shall have an eternal house in the heavens **if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved**. The earthly body is contemplated as an earthly structure or a tent and it will be dissolved at death. This earthly life is but a pilgrimage. In contrast with this material body we know that we shall have an eternal dwelling place, **A house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens**. This has reference to the spiritual body which shall be the habitation of the redeemed spirit in eternity (vs. 1).

Paul changes the figure from a house to clothing. In this body we groan from the pains to which flesh is heir. And while we groan in our present existence, says Paul, we have a longing to be clothed with the heavenly habitation which awaits us (vs. 2). Paul restates the thought: **if so be that we shall be clothed and not unclothed or naked** (vs. 3). It seems that by saying **if so be**, Paul is not expressing any doubt regarding being clothed with immortality but rather that he is emphasizing the certainty. It is as if he were saying, "if indeed it be true, and we have no reason for doubting it, but every reason for believing it." Another way of wording it would be, "since, indeed, it be true." Further, he affirms that though we groan in this present body, **being burdened**,

from calling forth God's judgment of condemnation. Paul thus is claiming that in their ministry of persuading men they are ever controlled by their fear toward the Lord. Further, Paul says that their aims and motives already **are made manifest unto God**; he hopes they are abundantly clear to the Corinthians as well. Paul has this hope, but he is aware of the opposition which has been registered against him at Corinth. In setting forth these principles of action which had been characteristic of himself and his helpers, Paul is seeking to answer the charges of his opponents (vs. 11).

What Paul says is not to be construed as self-praise; he is only giving his friends at Corinth some facts which they may use in his defense. His opponents had no moral character of which to glory; their glorying was in **appearance**, that is, in external position and appearance (vs. 12). Paul says that if he and his helpers are beside themselves, it is **unto God**. Possibly the opponents had made this charge. It will be remembered that Festus once, seeing Paul's zeal and fervor, accused him of madness (cf. Acts 26:24). Paul here assures the Corinthians that if they had spoken in a way that caused some to think they were unbalanced, that it is **unto God**, that is, it was motivated by a desire to serve God. Paul also goes ahead to assure the Corinthians that those who saw sanity and soberness in his conduct could know that it was for their own benefit (vs. 13).

Paul and his co-workers were impelled onward in their persevering service for Christ by the love of Christ. Their thought of the love Christ had for them constrained them, compelled them, and held them in its powerful grip. With this realization, they feel that nothing can deter them from their course. Paul continues his discussion of the nature of the love of Christ and the effect of that constraining love upon him and his helpers by the word **because**. The love of Christ is seen especially in his death and this death was for all men. Paul and his co-workers **thus judge**, that is, they had been convinced of the truthfulness of the death of Christ in behalf of all men and had accepted it as factual. And, since Christ died for all, paying the penalty for sin, offering himself as a ransom, then, Paul says, it is true that **therefore all died**. When Christ died, all died because his death was in their behalf. This thought had a compelling power in the life of Paul and should have in the life of every person who is convinced of this fact (vs. 14). In the verse following, Paul declares that Christ died "for all" so that men might live in such a way that would glorify the Christ and not in a selfish way so as to promote selfish in-

terests. In this same verse Paul now adds the fact of the resurrection of Christ in man's behalf to the fact of his death. Paul says all of this in explaining why he and his helpers live unto Christ alone; he also evidently intends to encourage the Corinthians to a greater dedication to the crucified and risen Lord (vs. 15).

Having shown that Christ died in order that we might cease to live for ourselves, Paul proceeds to show that, as a consequence of living Christ-centered lives, the entire outlook of himself and his helpers toward other people has undergone a drastic change: they **know no man after the flesh**. They no longer measure men by human standards. They do not consider a man's race, his natural gifts and abilities, his social standing, or his possessions. They do not form their estimate of others according to outward appearances. Paul acknowledges that they had once regarded **Christ after the flesh**; that is, they had looked upon him as a mere human being, had regarded him as a human impostor. But that has ceased; they no longer look upon Jesus through prejudiced and tradition-blinded eyes. Instead, they regard him as their risen and glorified Redeemer (vs. 16). And this change which has taken place in Paul may be true of any man, but only if that one is **in Christ**. In fact, the person in Christ is a **new creature**; by the new birth he has become a new creation. **Old things**, former prejudices, former attachments, former habits, former attitudes, and all other fleshly things which characterized the man before he was in Christ — these have **passed away**. His is a new life. He has a different outlook, attitude, interest, and goal. All has become new (vs. 17).

Paul continues to show his sincerity by ascribing all to God. The things of which he has spoken are glorious, but no human being deserves any praise or glory for **all things are of God**. Again, Paul turns to a discussion of the ministry which gave him such a vital connection with the church at Corinth. God had taken the initiative in reconciling man to himself, making him his friend. It was not that man had decided to remove the barrier of sin which separated him from God; this was God's decision and he brought about this reconciliation **through Christ**. Paul and his colleagues had been commissioned to bear this good news to others; they had been entrusted with the gospel and in this sense had been given **the ministry of reconciliation** (vs. 18). Then the same thought is repeated. By the expression, **to wit, or namely**, Paul indicates that he is to explain more fully the nature of God's plan of reconciling men and of the ministry with which they were

entrusted. Christ was God in the flesh and made provision for man's reconciliation by his death. When a person hears the message of reconciliation and by faith and obedience accepts what God has provided, God does not reckon unto him his trespasses; he forgives, pardons. This word or message of reconciliation, Paul states, has been committed unto him and his colleagues (vs. 19).

Having stated that the word of reconciliation has been committed to him and his helpers, Paul proceeds to declare that they are **ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ**. An ambassador is one who acts as a representative of his sovereign. These inspired preachers acted as agents or representatives of Christ. Further, God admonishes, entreats, through them. Paul recognizes the great responsibility which he and others have: God speaks through them. With this realization, they continue to entreat men to be reconciled to God. This shows that, even though the work of reconciliation was inaugurated by God, that even though God was working through Christ reconciling the world to himself so that he might be both just and justifier, not imputing sins to men, still man has a determining voice in whether or not he accepts the offer of reconciliation. There are conditions on the part of man. Christ died for all, but not all will be saved for not all accept the salvation he offers (vs. 20).

In the last verse of the chapter, Paul condenses in a terse and meaningful statement the ground upon which reconciliation is made possible, the ground upon which he and others could plead with men to be reconciled to God. **Jesus knew no sin; he was absolutely sinless. He was a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19).** This sinless life God made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. This is equivalent to saying that we might obtain God's acquittal, be justified. Note that this is obtained in him, that is, in Christ. Christ was not made to be sin in the sense that he became guilty or was made a sinner. The only sense in which he was made to be sin was that **Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (vs. 21; cf. Isa. 53:6).**

Chapter Six

Hardship and Glory

Work and Trials of the Ambassadors (vss. 1-10)

THE FIRST TEN VERSES of chapter six are a continuation of the vindication of Paul and his helpers, though from a different viewpoint. In these verses Paul speaks of their conduct and experiences as ambassadors and ministers. They have, as discussed in chapter 5, been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. Now, Paul wishes to show how they had striven to make that ministry commendable. In this chapter Paul continues with the thought in mind of defending his motives and his principles of action. However, it is noticeable that, in the opening chapters of this epistle, Paul does not answer his accusers directly; he is rather setting forth truths which will strengthen his friends in Corinth and which will furnish them a basis which they may use in repelling the attacks being made against Paul and his helpers.

In 5:18-20, Paul has spoken of the ministry of reconciliation which God had committed to him and others. He now speaks of **working together** or working in cooperation with God in this ministry of reconciliation. As fellow-workers with God, they beseech men to be reconciled; furthermore, as such, they entreat the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. The Corinthians might turn against Paul, or they might return to their old manner of life. If so, the grace of God which had been offered and thus far received would be in vain so far as they were concerned. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the opportune time in which they live, a time of plentiful provision of God's rich grace. This age in which they live, and in which we live, is

the day of salvation. Paul uses Isaiah 49:8, a passage in which God, through the prophet, had spoken of a time of hearing and succoring, and declares this to be that day. Those who refuse the offer of reconciliation, or those who in any way make vain the grace of God provided for them, are spurning heaven's offer in this day of salvation, in this acceptable time, the most glorious age ever to dawn upon our race (vss. 1, 2).

Paul has said, **We entreat** (vs. 1). He now adds that, in addition to entreating, or while entreating, they conduct themselves in such a way as to give **no occasion of stumbling**. They did not wish to give anyone a ground for fault-finding. They knew that their ministry would be weakened if the character of the men who preached the gospel were such as to give grounds for criticism (vs. 3).

Rather than furnish grounds upon which their ministry could be criticized, Paul proceeds to set forth the ways in which he and his co-workers had, as **ministers of God**, commended themselves. Instead of weakening their ministry by unwise conduct or attitude, they had made it commendable by their conduct (vs. 4). In the latter part of vs. 4 and continuing through vs. 10, Paul delineates the experiences through which they had passed and in which they had, as faithful ministers of God, commended themselves. He begins with the statement, **in much patience**, referring to the courageous ability to bear and endure. He then proceeds to specify groups of troubles in which this steadfastness had been especially exhibited; indeed, the terms used indicate trials in which **much patience** had been required. Each of these can be seen to a remarkable degree in Paul's own experiences. **Afflictions** is a general term denoting all experiences in which one is under pressure of a physical, mental, or spiritual sort; **necessities** is a word referring to inevitable or unavoidable hardships, certain trials which a man seriously involved in the ministry must undergo; **distresses** suggest situations in which one feels shut in, suffocated, with no room to turn around, yet full of anxiety to be out where he can breathe freely again. These three abstract terms: **afflictions**, **necessities**, and **distresses**, were trials of a general nature which were often seen in the life of Paul; they must be perseveringly endured and **much patience** is needed.

Next, Paul specifies certain afflictions which he and others had received at the hands of men. While the terms of vs. 4 are somewhat general, these of vs. 5 are more definite. **Stripes** refer to lashings such as Paul received at Philippi (Acts 16:23; cf. 2

Cor. 11:24); **imprisonments** — an affliction borne often by the early Christians; **tumults**, mob violence, can be seen in the Book of Acts (e.g., 14:19).

Observe another trio in vs. 5, trials which Paul took upon himself in the performance of his work: **labors**, the hard and tiring activities of his busy life; **watchings**, referring to sleepless nights. In his strenuous labors, his travels, and his afflictions, Paul was often deprived of much-needed rest; **fastings**, or lack of food; there were times when these men went hungry for the sake of the task in which they were engaged. There were perhaps times when, in their journeys, because of pressures, eating was not possible. At other times, among strangers, they were perhaps destitute of food.

In vs. 6, Paul goes on to discuss what was in the hearts of himself and his helpers, the spiritual graces which God had helped them to acquire, and by which they had, as **ministers of God**, commended themselves. These were qualities which they had displayed, even while undergoing the various hardships of which he has just spoken. **In pureness** states that Paul and his colleagues had lived pure lives and had acted from purity of motive. They had been good men. But not only had they acted from pure motive, they had also ministered **in knowledge**. They had imparted true knowledge, had proclaimed what they knew as a result of revelation, and had not been peddlers of human philosophy. Then, equipped with a noble purpose and with true knowledge, they had exercised **longsuffering** in dealing with others as a wise teacher will always do. They had dealt with ignorant and obstinate people, but had not been hasty to give up or to turn away from such. Coupled with **longsuffering** is **kindness**. Paul's heart was filled with that love which suffers long and is kind. These four — purity, knowledge, longsuffering, and kindness seem to belong in a group as do also the four following.

The Holy Spirit was present in the work of these ministers. Indeed, they spoke and worked in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit was in them and their activities were in the sphere of the Spirit. Too, they had worked **in love unfeigned**, a love that was genuine, without hypocrisy. Further, their ministry was **in the word of truth**, that is, they were engaged in communicating to men the exact truth which God through the Spirit had given them. Consequently, their ministry was **in the power of God**. God worked by the Spirit and through the gospel which is his power unto **salvation** (cf. Rom. 1:16). The power which was evidenced

by the word and work of these men was not of themselves, but of God.

With the phrase, **by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left**, Paul shows that in the battle they were fighting they were armed with righteousness. **On the right hand and on the left** presents the idea that they were completely supplied with this important equipment, Paul says, **by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report**. At times they were praised and honored; at other times they were defamed and slandered. But regardless of how they were reckoned in the eyes of men, they held steadfastly to their course and were deterred by neither praise nor criticism.

Paul brings to a conclusion his numerous statements relative to the conditions of his ministry by a series of "as . . . yet" phrases, a series of striking opposites, of paradoxical facts. First, he says, **as deceivers, and yet true**. The enemies of these preachers accused them of being deceivers; yet, these men who were thus accused knew in their hearts that they were true, and were so recognized by God and by those who loved the truth. **As unknown, and yet well known** is another interesting contrast. In the eyes of contemporary, worldly, men, they were regarded as of no standing, unworthy of recognition; in the estimation of faithful Christians and of God, they were accorded recognition and honor, being well known. **As dying, and behold, we live**, portrays the constant dangers and the mortal perils which daily confronted these ministers. On many an occasion death seemed certain. But time after time, when human heart would despair, God came in deliverance and they came out of danger with revived heart and strength.

Paul regarded sufferings as a part of his schooling and education — **as chastened**. Yet, God's providential care had kept them from death — **and not killed**. Paul did not look upon sufferings as an indication of God's displeasure, but as occasions for the display of God's grace and power and as a means for developing character. Paul and his fellow-workers often had cause for being sorrowful; yet they had an inner serenity springing from faith and hope that could rejoice even in the midst of sorrow. The world does not realize this. Those who knew not God doubtless looked upon these Christians as people who were sad, sorrowful, and full of gloom. But the world does not know the extent of the internal peace and joy known by the Christian, a peace and joy that lift him above the trials of this earth. Paul continues: **as poor, yet making many rich**. Though poor as to this world's goods, they

made many rich by imparting to them spiritual wealth, a wealth that surpasses all the treasures of earth. Finally, Paul says, **as having nothing, and yet possessing all things**. They had given up all things for the sake of Christ; they had nothing so far as earthly property and prestige were concerned. Yet they thought of themselves as **possessing all things**. **All things are yours**, Paul had assured these Corinthians in his previous letter (1 Cor. 3:21). Paul and these helpers of his owned none of the things of this earth; yet they regarded the earth and all that is in it as theirs in the sense that they enjoyed it, saw in it evidence of God, and used it as God intended. Furthermore, they believed that all things were working together for their good; and, since this is true, then all things are servants, slaves, of the Christian, and are his in this sense.

An Appeal to the Corinthians (vss. 11-13)

The feelings of Paul have been stirred to the depths, as evidenced in the first part of chapter 6. Now he addresses his readers in a fervent and intimate appeal: **O Corinthians**. He says, **our mouth is open unto you**. He has spoken to them freely and without reserve; he has kept back nothing; he has spoken of his most intimate feelings. He has spoken of motives, sufferings, and, in brief, everything that he feels could be used rightly by his friends in Corinth in answering his accusers. He continues, **our heart is enlarged**. His feelings for the Corinthians were deep, his love was ardent, his heart was expanded. Paul lays bare his heart in this epistle as he does in no other (vs. 11). **Ye are not straitened in us**, he affirms. The verb used here means "to suffer restraint." Paul is saying that there was nothing in the way insofar as he and those with him were concerned; there was no lack of love in their hearts, no restraint, no holding back. Any restraint felt by the Corinthians toward these ministers was due entirely to their own feelings. Any lack of openness, any lack of love, any feeling of restraint or of holding back, was due to the Corinthians (vs. 12). So, Paul pleads with them in tenderness, as a father pleads with children, to return his love. This is the recompense for which he pleads, a love "in like kind," a love such as he feels toward them, an enlarging of their hearts or affections. An unrequited love was surely one of the greatest trials borne by Paul. When it is remembered how greatly Paul loved these people, and that some had been led to doubt his integrity and sincerity, his overflow of emotion can better be understood (vs. 13).

A Plea for Separation (vss. 14-18)

Paul's plea for the Corinthian Christians to reciprocate in love, to open wide their hearts to him and his helpers, is followed by a fervent plea for them to break all connections which run counter to such fellowship. A fellowship with God and his people involves a rending asunder of ties which work to the contrary. Unbelievers, of course, abounded in Corinth. Paul had spoken concerning associating with such in his first epistle, insisting that every precaution must be taken to avoid heathen vices, but at the same time insisting that complete separation was unnecessary and impossible (cf. 1 Cor. 5:10). It seems that his instructions had not been heeded, and that the Corinthians had gone beyond what he intended in their relations with unbelievers. Paul still does not forbid any and all contacts with unbelievers, but only such alliances as would involve a compromise of Christianity. He forbids an unequal yoking, an alliance, a joining, that would involve the Christian in the sins of the unbeliever. He evidently has in mind the Old Testament prohibition against yoking together a clean and an unclean beast, placing them under a yoke that they might work together (cf. Deut. 22:10). Christians should give great caution to the matter of forming unions with unbelievers, whether in business matters, in social life, in friendship, in marriage, or in any other union. All unions which involve the compromise of convictions or which place the Christian at a disadvantage in his service to Christ should be avoided. Paul gives force to his prohibition with a series of rhetorical questions: **What fellowship hath righteousness and iniquity?** This gives emphasis to the inner quality of the heart of the Christian and of the unbeliever. The next question, **Or what communion hath light with darkness?**, gives emphasis to the realm in which each lives, the Christian in light and the unbeliever in darkness (vs. 14). The third question has to do with the personal rulers of the two realms, Christ and Belial. The Jews used **Belial** as a name for Satan. The question asks what concord can possibly exist between these two persons. The fourth question, **Or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?**, comes to a consideration of the real subject under discussion. Paul wants the Christian to realize that the difference between him and an unbeliever forbids his being **unequally yoked** with the unbeliever. He wants him to realize that the difference is as great and as contradictory as righteousness versus iniquity, as light versus darkness, as Christ versus Belial (vs. 15). A fifth question is added: **And what agree-**

ment hath a temple of God with idols? Then the fact is stated that we are a temple of the living God, and Paul draws from several Old Testament passages in which God spoke and promised to dwell in his people, walk in them, be their God, etc. What agreement can possibly exist between God's temple, his church, made up of living people in whom the living God dwells, and a lifeless temple of dumb idols? (vs. 16).

Paul now introduces his appeal with **therefore**, which indicates that he is making the appeal in view of all he has just said. The appeal is made in words from a variety of Old Testament passages and attributed to God by the expression, **saith the Lord**. It is an appeal to Christians who are unequally yoked with unbelievers to become unyoked, an appeal to come out from among them and to be separate. In Corinth, in some cases, this would involve a man's leaving his job — a job involving his being unequally yoked with a pagan; in some cases it would involve cutting asunder of social ties and the cessation of certain types of festivities with pagan friends; in some cases it would involve turning one's back to the pleas of loved ones, and even giving up family ties. It would include any and every relationship that necessitated the compromise of Christian principles. The appeal continues: **touch no unclean thing**. It may well be that **unclean thing** in the immediate context has special reference to idolatrous rites and practices, but it surely has a broader meaning, including all the unholy and sinful things of this world. Following the appeal are seen God's promises: **I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty**. How wonderful these promises! In the opening verse of ch. 7, Paul makes reference to **these promises**, and, in view of them, exhorts: **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**. It is by true repentance and prayer that the Christian cleanses himself. He must make every effort to keep himself unspotted from the world. And he is to continue to strive to bring to completeness the virtue of holiness, **without which no man shall see the Lord** (vss. 17, 18; 7:1; cf. Heb. 12:14).

tion. He is laying bare his heart to the very depths as he writes to the Corinthians. And as he speaks to others about these Corinthians, his **glorying** in their behalf is great; he talks about these people with much confidence and pride. He can also say, **I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy**. The news brought recently by Titus had produced the comfort which naturally resulted in an overflowing of joy. This had come to Paul at a time of intense suffering; hence, he says, **in all our affliction** (vs. 4).

From Anxiety to Comfort (vss. 5-16)

Paul elaborates further upon the comfort and the subsequent joy which have come to him. The relief he felt is appreciated more when viewed in contrast with the anxiety he had suffered. He goes back to the incident mentioned at 2:13, in which he speaks of having come to Troas intending to preach the gospel. However, because Titus had not met him with word from Corinth, Paul felt a deep anxiety of heart and left Troas, going to Macedonia hoping to meet Titus there. Now he again speaks of the anxiety he felt when he arrived in Macedonia: **our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears**. By the fightings without Paul likely refers to the opposition which confronted him; by the fears within he likely refers to the uncertainty he felt as to the outcome of his first letter to Corinth and as to the news Titus would bring. He felt a great apprehension (vs. 5).

Paul next speaks of the comfort God had given him by the coming of Titus. Titus had met Paul in Macedonia and had brought favorable news. By the **lowly** Paul means those who are cast down, dejected, depressed. God often comforts, as in this case, through human instrumentality. And Paul was not only comforted at the coming of Titus, but also by the news he brought; and another thing which was of tremendous comfort to Paul was the fact that he could see that Titus had been comforted by the Corinthians. Titus had seen an attitude manifested among the Corinthians which encouraged him and he conveys that to Paul. The news he brought consisted of **your longing** — they earnestly desired a reunion with Paul; **your mourning** — they were sorrowful over their failures; **your zeal for me** — they were desirous of defending Paul and of carrying out his wishes. The coming of Titus brought rejoicing to the heart of Paul; the news he conveyed comforted Paul so that he could say, **I rejoiced yet more** (vs. 7).

Chapter Seven

Repentance for Christians

AS NOTED IN THE preceding lesson, 7:1 properly belongs with the exhortation of chapter 6. It is an exhortation for Christians to cleanse themselves from all defilement and to strive for a greater degree of holiness. From 6:14 through 7:1, the outstanding appeal is for separation from all that would defile flesh and spirit and that would impede the development of holiness.

Appeal For Affection (vss. 2-4)

In contrast with the separation for which he has been pleading, Paul now exhorts the Corinthians to open their hearts to him and his helpers. This is a plea for their affection. Paul has said in 6:12 that there was a restriction in affection on their part and his plea here is a renewal of his plea of 6:13. There should have been no restraint on the part of the Corinthians; Paul declares, **we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man**. They had not dealt unjustly with any person; they had not corrupted any person either doctrinally or morally; they had not dealt unscrupulously with any one in any way. Perhaps they had been accused by some at Corinth of such blameworthy conduct. Paul can appeal to the Corinthians for corroboration of what he knows to be a fact, that their conduct while in Corinth had been above reproach (vs. 2). But Paul hastens to assure the Corinthians that he is not saying this to condemn them — he is not saying that they are the source of such accusations, nor is he passing judgment on them. They are in his heart, and he is ready to share life or death with them. **I have said before** is likely a reference to 6:11-13 (vs. 3).

Paul maintains that he is writing **with boldness of speech**, that is, he is speaking frankly, to the point, and without reserva-

Paul had grieved the Corinthians by his former epistle and he has already referred to that fact (2:2). He had previously felt regret at the necessity of having to write as he did; he had written with love, but felt it necessary to criticize very severely. But now he has no regrets for he knows that his epistle had made them sorrowful **though but for a season** (vs. 8). However, his present rejoicing is not over the fact that they had spent a time in sorrow, but that their sorrow had led to repentance. One may suffer while seeing a loved one endure the pain that comes from the surgeon's knife; he rejoices when he sees the patient recovering as a result of the surgery. Paul continues, **for ye were made sorry after a godly sort**. Their sorrow had not left God out; it was a sorrow toward God, a grieving over the fact that they had sinned against God. It was more than remorse. As a result of the entire experience, the Corinthians had been helped by Paul's letter and did not suffer loss or injury by him in anything (vs. 9). The sorrow which can be described as **godly** produces repentance — a repentance that is **unto salvation**. This sort of repentance **bringeth no regret**. How could any person ever regret true repentance which is unto salvation? True, he had to experience the grief which led to such repentance, but the ultimate joy attained far outweighs the suffering. But there is another kind of sorrow, the **sorrow of the world**. It is a remorseful grief and takes no account of God; it produces death, condemnation. It leads not to repentance, but rather to a morbid despair which tends to make true repentance more difficult. Worldly sorrow is over the consequences of sin rather than over the sin (vs. 10). Paul calls upon the Corinthians to note the happy results of their godly sorrow: it had produced an **earnest care**, a diligent concern that proceeded to remove the evils that existed among them; **clearing of yourselves** — proceeding to discipline the offender as Paul had instructed in 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; **indignation** — their feeling over the shame brought upon the church; **fear** — of the displeasure of God; **longing** — for the approval of God and for the return of Paul; **zeal** — to do the will of God without further delay; **avenging** — disciplining the offender and setting themselves right in regard to the matter in which both they and he were guilty. In all of these points Paul assures them, **ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter**. Since the godly sorrow produced these wonderful results, the Corinthians now stand pure as regards the case (vs. 11).

So although I wrote unto you, Paul says concerning his instructions relative to the man who had taken his father's wife

(cf. 1 Cor. 5). Then Paul proceeds to state his principal reason for writing as he had: it was because of his anxiety for the entire church and in order that the church might, by means of dealing with the problem, be made fully conscious of their attitude toward their former teachers who had instructed them by inspiration. This was also to be made manifest **in the sight of God** so that both the church and God might see their true attitude. Paul writes, **not for his cause that did the wrong**, that is the incestuous man; **nor for his cause that suffered the wrong**, that is the man's father. Lenski points out that the Greek "not . . . nor" is equivalent to the English "not just . . . nor just." In other words, Paul is saying that he wrote not just for the cause of the offender nor just for the offended — that was not his main concern, though he surely had them also in mind when he wrote (vs. 12).

Paul restates the fact that he and his fellow-workers have been comforted and introduces the statement with **therefore**, indicating that the comfort had come because the **earnest care** of the Corinthians had become manifest to the church itself and also to God. Moreover, they rejoiced beyond the comfort caused by the news brought by Titus; this extra joy was caused by seeing the joy which Titus himself exhibited because his own spirit had been refreshed. This refreshing of the spirit of Titus was from the Corinthians — they were the source of the joy. Their attitude and conduct had brought rest to his heart (vs. 13).

Paul had spoken of the Corinthians with pride, and now he could say that he was not put to shame, for his praise of them had been justified by their conduct. The glorying which Paul had done was found to be truth even as everything Paul had ever spoken concerning the Corinthians was **in truth**. It turned out that what he had said about them in their absence was true just as what he had said to them in their presence had been true (vs. 14).

The affection of Titus for the Corinthians had increased as a result of his visit. He had witnessed their obedience when they received Paul's instructions. He had been received by them **with fear and trembling**, that is, with a fervent anxiety to do what they should do in order to please God (vs. 15). In view of the wonderful response given to Titus and to Paul's epistle, Paul can joyously say that he is **of good courage** concerning the church in Corinth. This chapter is filled with such words as **comfort**, **glorying**, **rejoicing**, and **boldness** (vs. 16).

"abounded" in producing in them a wealth of doing God's will (vs. 2). They gave according to their ability, even beyond their ability — beyond what would have been expected or thought possible. Moreover, their giving was voluntary and spontaneous, not a result of coercion or pressure. One of the great values in giving is to be found in its spontaneity (vs. 3). The Macedonians had besought Paul with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints. They had asked Paul, had even begged, to be permitted to have a part in the ministry to the poor saints at Jerusalem. It may be that Paul had urged some restraint in their giving in view of their dire poverty. Again Paul speaks of giving as grace for he considers it a fruit of the influence of God upon the heart. It was a fellowship in that, by means of giving, they would have a partnership in the ministry (vs. 4). The Macedonians went beyond Paul's expectations; not as we hoped seems to mean that they did more than Paul hoped for or expected. The following clause, introduced by *for*, is explanatory of what this extra something was: they first made a gift of themselves to the Lord and to the Lord's ministers. They surrendered completely to the Lord and put themselves at the disposal of Paul for the work of the Lord. It was more than money that they gave; it was themselves first and foremost, and this was what made it possible for them to give as they did and in the spirit with which they gave. Here is an example which Paul can hope the Corinthians will note and follow. If they will, first of all, give themselves to the Lord in trust and obedience and to the Lord's servants in confidence and loyalty, their monetary gift will certainly be such as will please the Lord (vs. 5). And it is because of the spirit displayed by the churches of Macedonia that Paul is encouraged to send Titus to Corinth again to complete the collection among them. It was a matter in which Titus had previously made a beginning, had had a hand in stirring up the Corinthians to action in the matter of giving (vs. 6).

Exhortations Concerning Giving (vss. 7-15)

By everything Paul is not speaking absolutely; the word is defined by the five nouns which follow. The Corinthians abound, says Paul, in these: **faith** — they are devout believers; **utterance** — the giving of expression to the substance of what is believed; **earnestness** — diligence in the work of the Lord; **your love to us** — the love they had for Paul and his helpers. In view of their abounding in all of these graces, Paul now exhorts them to **abound**

Chapter Eight

Benevolence in the Church

CHAPTER 8 BEGINS THE second of the main divisions of 2 Corinthians. This section has to do with the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, a subject discussed also in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Romans 15:26, 27; and Acts 24:17. The collection had been started in Corinth a year before Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, but much had happened in Corinth during the interval and the collection had not gone forward according to plans. However, now that matters have been cleared up, Paul feels it to be the appropriate time to urge a renewal of interest in the collection. The resuming of this subject is strong evidence that Paul felt optimistic about the condition of the Corinthian church.

Example of the Macedonians (vss. 1-6)

First of all, Paul cites the liberality of the churches of Macedonia, the place from which he is writing. He does this as a stimulus to the Corinthians. He sees this liberality of Macedonia stemming from the grace of God of which the Macedonian Christians had been the recipients. True liberality, as here depicted by Paul, is seen as a fruit of God's grace which has been bestowed upon the Christian. Paul is in reality saying that God had enabled these Macedonian Christians to be liberal (vs. 1). Their generosity is seen to be more remarkable when it is remembered that they were giving after undergoing a severe test of affliction — an affliction that resulted in great joy among them and also in very deep poverty. One of the churches of Macedonia was that in Thessalonica and 2 Thessalonians 1:4 speaks of their persecutions and tribulations. This joy in tribulation and their deep poverty

in this grace also, referring, of course, to the grace of giving. This is a plea for them to raise their standard in this grace so that it will be comparable to their other attainments. How often are people to be found who have many wonderful traits, but who are lacking in this important grace! (vs. 7). Paul assures the Corinthians that what he says is **not by way of commandment**. He is not giving orders as to what they must do; he does not want their giving to be from a sense of compulsion. He writes as he does about the diligence of the Macedonians as a means of testing the love of the Corinthians. One of the greatest evidences of genuine love is a willingness to part with what is valuable and dear to the possessor. Attitude toward giving is a good index to the degree of the genuineness of love (vs. 8). Having spoken of love as a motive for liberal giving, Paul proceeds to speak of the supreme example of love, that which was revealed in Christ and which Paul says the Corinthians already know. But though they already know it, Paul feels this to be a fitting place to remind them of the great fact in view of what he is seeking to motivate them to do. Christ laid aside something when he became a man; he gave up something in order to undergo the experience of humiliation. He shared the glory of the Father before his coming to earth. He was rich but became poor in order to make others rich. Paul assures his readers that it was **for your sakes** that Christ became poor (vs. 9).

After mentioning such an example of love as that of Christ, Paul is careful to say, when returning to the subject of the giving to be done by the Corinthians, that he is giving judgment relative to a matter of expediency, something that will be to their own best interests, a procedure that was fitting and proper. He maintains that he is not giving orders; he desires that their giving spring from a heart of love and out of appreciation for what the Lord has done for them. But for the Corinthians to proceed with the collection was entirely fitting and proper, for they had been the first who had acted in the matter. Indeed, they had been the first who had been willing to act, and this as far back as the previous year (vs. 10). Willingness is vital to Christian giving, but there must be more than a willing mind; there must be more than promises. Hence, Paul now urges these Corinthians to carry out their plans so that the completed act will measure up to their readiness and their previous plans. These Corinthians had purposed with a high resolve as is so often the case in our own experience. But in the intervening months they had allowed the work of

collecting the money to lag. Paul is urging them to go ahead with it and bring it to completion so that the finished deed will match the high resolution. Their giving is to be **out of their ability** (vs. 11). However, the first thing to consider is that the **readiness** be there; if it is, God accepts the person's willingness **according as a man hath, not according as he hath not**. Those who are poor and can give only a small amount are not to be deprived of the grace of giving and the subsequent enrichment which comes from such giving. God does not judge a gift according to size but according to proportion (vs. 12). However, Paul assures the Corinthians that his motive is not to bring about a state of distress among the Corinthians in order that there might be a state of ease among the Jerusalem saints; he merely wants them to share out of their abundance in the present need. And the possibility of the Corinthian Christians being in a condition of similar need is contemplated, at which time the Jerusalem Christians would be expected to help them. In this way there would be an equality. In the overall picture things would be balanced. At this point Paul quotes from Exodus 16:18 in reference to the manna in the wilderness. Some Israelites might gather more than others, but it was found that, in the providence of God, each would have the same amount when they measured what had been gathered. The point of the illustration is that of equality — an equality enforced by God in the case of the manna. Paul is desirous that the equality of which he writes will be brought about by the brotherly love of Christians and their willingness to share the burdens of one another (vss. 13-15).

Regarding the Messengers (vss. 16-24)

Titus has only recently come from Corinth; now Paul is sending him there again. Titus has a care for the Corinthians, an interest in them and in their spiritual welfare. This is one reason he is so concerned about this particular collection. However, as all Christian virtues are attributable to God in the final analysis, Paul ascribes the care which was in the heart of Titus to God. For this he is thankful. It is **the same earnest care** such as that which Paul himself had (vs. 16). Titus gladly accepts his new assignment; in fact, he needed no urging, as he was eager to return to Corinth. Paul says, **he went forth**, using what the grammarians call an "epistolary aorist," speaking of the event as already completed since it would be completed at the time the Corinthians would read this epistle (vs. 17).

Another brother is mentioned in vs. 18; he is to accompany Titus to Corinth. He is a Christian of high reputation among the churches. Further, the churches had chosen this brother to travel with Paul and to assist him with the collection. Paul refers to the collection as **this grace which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord**. In addition, the presence of this brother would show the readiness of Paul to have others along so that there could be no occasion for suspicion on the part of anyone regarding the handling of the funds. Paul felt it wise to take such precautions. The presence of others would lift him above suspicion and would leave his ever-watchful enemies without any ground for criticism in the matter. It was Paul's aim to do what was honorable in the sight of men as well as in the sight of the Lord (vss. 19-21).

In addition to Titus and the anonymous brother of vs. 18, Paul sent along another brother who had been put to the test often and had proved himself. He is a man who has great confidence in the Corinthians and this confidence made him **much more earnest** about the work in Corinth. If any questions are raised about Titus, he can be commended as Paul's partner in behalf of the Corinthians. In regard to the others, it can be said that they are special messengers of the churches. The word translated "messengers" is the Greek word "apostles." One chosen and sent by a church or by several churches would be an apostle of these churches just as those specially called and commissioned by Christ were apostles of Christ. Further, in commendation of these men, Paul adds that **they are the glory of Christ**. They glorified Christ in their lives and in their work. In view of all this, Paul can admonish the Corinthian Christians to show to these men the proof of their love. Their treatment of them will be **in the face of the churches**. Other churches, especially those who have chosen and sent these men, will be watching to see how the Corinthians treat them. Paul pleads for the Corinthians to show the proof of their love toward these messengers for still another reason: they will thus justify the boasting Paul has done in behalf of them and he will have no reason to regret such boasting or to be ashamed of the Corinthians (vss. 22-24).

Chapter Nine

Giving and the Gospel

More About the Messengers (vss. 1-5)

PAUL CONTINUES THE SUBJECT begun at 8:16, the purpose in sending the messengers and the work of the messengers. He states that the Corinthians already know about the need at Jerusalem. Instructions had been given in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, and they had likely had information from various other sources. At any rate, they were acquainted with the need and with their duty; hence, Paul says further information from him on the subject would be **superfluous**. When the matter had originally been brought to the people of Achaia, they had shown an eager readiness to participate. Of this readiness Paul had boasted to the Christians in Macedonia. The fact that the Corinthians and others of Achaia had been ready for a year was a fact which Paul could use to stir up others to a similar zeal (vss. 1, 2). However, in order that the glorying done by Paul on behalf of the Corinthians might not be an empty boast, Paul sends Titus and the two other brethren. Then if certain brethren from Macedonia should accompany Paul when the time comes for him to go to Corinth, the Corinthians would be found ready and no one would be embarrassed. Paul had made the boast that the Achaians had been ready a year ago. If those to whom he made the boast should come and find the collection still lagging, it would indicate lethargy among the Corinthians and might also indicate a lack of thoroughness in Paul's teaching, at least as the Macedonians might view the matter. So, the sending of the messengers in order that the Corinthians might be prepared was very much in order (vss. 3, 4). In view of all of this, Paul can say that he thought

it necessary to entreat Titus and the others to go to Corinth before he should arrive. These men will **make up beforehand** the contribution from the Corinthians, that is, they will get it together before Paul's arrival. The collection is referred to as an **afore-promised bounty** because the Corinthians had promised a year before to render this assistance. With all of this advance preparation, the collection would thus **be ready as a matter of bounty and not of extortion** upon Paul's arrival. Paul wants the gift to be a true blessing, a gift of love; he does not want any appearance of pressure upon the Corinthians by him after he arrives. He does not want it to appear that he, out of covetousness, is wringing or extracting something from them (vs. 5).

Paul Encourages Liberality (vss. 6-15)

The statement of Paul in vs. 6 has the appearance of a proverb. Likely it is a sentiment gathered from a number of proverbs such as 11:24, 25; 19:17; and 22:9. He who sows may expect to reap in proportion to his sowing. Giving is therefore not to be viewed as careless throwing away or as casting to the winds. The generous man will receive in proportion to his sowing; so will the one who gives sparingly. It is often observable in this life that the one who gives generously prospers greatly. But if it does not work out this way in every case so far as material blessings are concerned, still the principle will hold true of spiritual blessings. God blesses the man bountifully who gives bountifully; he who gives is laying up treasures in heaven (vs. 6).

Paul is desirous that only voluntary giving be done and that no one feel under compulsion. Each man is to act on his own free will, having seriously determined in his heart what he will give. He is to give **not grudgingly**, that is, he is not to part with his money reluctantly and then regret having parted with it. Nor is he to give of necessity, that is, from a feeling of compulsion or from fear of criticism. If such feelings dominate, then the person cannot give willingly and joyfully, and it is the cheerful giver that God desires (vs. 7). Paul also reminds the Corinthian Christians that **God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work**. Divine blessings rest upon the liberal person; no one is made poorer by the right kind of giving. God is able to make all **grace** abound for the liberal giver, that is, he is able to give all things which are needful for him. He who does what he can with what God has given him may be assured that

God will enable him to abound more and more; God will qualify him for doing good and will furnish him with all that he needs for it (vs. 8). At this point Paul quotes a description of a righteous man as given in Psalm 112:9. The man whose righteousness abides is there said to be he who scatters abroad and gives to the poor (vs. 9).

Paul describes God as **he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food**. In reality, all gifts are from God. And this same God, says Paul, **shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness**. Those who use properly what God has given to them may expect their abilities and their means for service to be increased (vs. 10). Further, in vs. 11, Paul tells the Corinthians that their being rich in the grace of liberality would work through those who ministered the gift to produce thanksgiving in the hearts of the saints in Jerusalem. However, Paul says that the ministration of the money gathered among the churches would not only supply the deficiencies of the poor saints; it would cause these same needy people to offer many thanksgivings unto God. The glory of God is the ultimate aim of all Christian service, and God is glorified when a chorus of praise and thanksgiving arises from the hearts of his people (vs. 12). The Corinthians would prove by their liberal and cheerful giving the reality and the sincerity of their faith and their fidelity to their confession of belief in the gospel. The recipients would glorify God for this faithfulness on the part of the contributing churches and for their liberality unto them and unto others. Paul thus sees the Judean Christians glorifying God for two facts regarding the Corinthians (vs. 13). He further sees these same Christians uniting in intercession for the Corinthians and longing after them by **reason of the exceeding grace of God** which had been manifested by these Corinthians. Those who truly experience God's grace long after others who also live in this grace (vs. 14).

In the closing verse of chapter 9, Paul bursts forth in a wonderful doxology: **thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift**. This is more properly translated **undescribable gift**. Paul has repeatedly, throughout this discussion of giving, spoken of God's grace, his gift. He has directed the minds of the Corinthians upward to God as the one who enables them to exhibit the grace of liberality. He explains the liberal giving of the Macedonians as the gift of God. Then he moves on to the saints at Jerusalem and sees them praising God for the genuineness of the faith of the Corinthians and for

their liberality toward them. He sees them longing after these Corinthian Christians and praying for them. All of this and much more Paul sees as God's indescribable gift. Paul had many reasons to rejoice over the anticipated results of this contribution.

Chapter Ten

A Minister at War

THE LAST FOUR CHAPTERS of 2 Corinthians constitute the third division of the epistle. In this last section Paul vindicates his apostolic authority. There is indeed a change of tone. In the first nine chapters Paul speaks to those of the congregation who have returned in loyalty to him. He seeks to remove certain doubts and to stimulate the Corinthians to renewed activity. Now, in this last section, Paul turns to deal with certain Judaizers who had come to Corinth and caused the disturbances there. The reason for the lag in the collection now becomes apparent; in fact, many things said by Paul become more meaningful when viewed in the light of the last four chapters. In this closing section, Paul attacks his accusers outright. He had shown a great deal of restraint in chapters 1-9; in this closing section he annihilates the opposition. When the situation at Corinth is understood, the unity of this epistle and the masterly skill with which it is put together can more fully be appreciated.

Paul and His Weapons (vss. 1-6)

Paul begins with a tender appeal to the faithful members of the Corinthian church. He makes this appeal in a spirit of tenderness or, as he says, **by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.** The latter part of the verse is evidently a quotation; Paul describes himself as the enemies are describing him — one who was lowly while in the presence of the Corinthians, but of good courage when absent. These enemies said he was mild and gentle when in Corinth, but after he left, he was a coward who wrote in strong language. In other words, they were saying that

Paul's bravery was evident only when he was at a distance, that he talked big when absent. Paul continues, **yea, I beseech you.** It is as if he says, **I about whom these accusations are made beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.** But what is the sum and substance of Paul's beseeching? Just this: that when he comes to Corinth he will not have to exercise the boldness of authority, the boldness he planned to show toward some in his dealings with them. He plans to challenge certain ones upon his arrival. He pleads with the Corinthians not to force him to deal with them all in that spirit. These enemies accused Paul and his helpers of walking according to the flesh, that is, seeking their own advantage according to worldly policy and carnal nature (vss. 1, 2). Though Paul and his helpers walked in the flesh, that is, they were human beings, they did not do battle after a carnal fashion as men of the world. They did not resort to underhanded methods such as lying, insinuation, misrepresentation, and slander (vs. 3). The weapons of their warfare are not those of frail, human flesh; the equipment they use in their great battle for Christ and against sin refers to the means used by them through which God worked and thus rendered mighty in the casting down of opposing forces (vs. 4). Yet, there was nothing personal in the warfare waged by these men; God worked through them in **casting down imaginations**, or demolishing human reasonings and philosophies, and every other **high thing** which men exalt in their pride and self-confidence. But the thought of warfare is carried further: not only is there a warring and a casting down; there is also the taking of captives. What is it that is taken captive? It is the reasonings and devices of human thought which oppose the truth. These are represented as being taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Proud man who had previously used his ingenuity in opposition to the gospel, now, when conquered by the gospel, turns his intellect over to the service of Christ (vs. 5). And, even though the enemies had accused Paul of being a weakening when present, he affirms his **readiness to avenge all disobedience.** Paul does not go into detail as to what the disobedience was nor as to what the avenging will be. It will be something he will take care of when he arrives in Corinth. **Whenever your obedience shall be made full** refers to the Corinthians setting their house in order. Paul hopes that whatever difficulties existed among them will be regulated before his arrival. He had written 1 Corinthians, he had sent Titus, and he had purposely delayed his own visit in order that he might come

to them in gentleness. As he writes 2 Corinthians, he is hopeful that anything lacking among them will be supplied (vs. 6).

A Contrast (vss. 7-18)

Paul now begins to draw a contrast between himself and the false teachers at Corinth. It is evident that they were saying that Paul did not sustain the same relationship with Corinth which they sustained. There is some question as to whether ye look of vs. 7 is indicative or imperative. There is no way of determining since the forms are the same in the Greek. It seems preferable to think of it as imperative in which case Paul is asking the Corinthians to look at what is before their eyes and to let the simple, undeniable facts speak for themselves. By any man Paul seems to be referring to any certain Corinthian, who, though a Christian and belonging to Christ, was perhaps being impressed by some of the foolish accusations of the opponents. This certain one is persuaded that he is a Christian, belonging to Christ; now Paul asks him to consider the fact that he, Paul, is also a Christian. This is a fact right before their eyes. They thought of themselves as Christians; they should also regard Paul as a Christian since they had first learned of Christ from him and knew his teachings and his life (vs. 7).

Paul can go beyond the claim he has just made; he can speak of the apostolic authority which he has. If he should boast of such authority, he would never be put to shame for he can fully substantiate this claim. This apostolic authority, says Paul, was given for the purpose of building up and not destroying. But what Paul had built was being destroyed by the false teachers. Paul had used his genuine authority to build up; the false teachers were using a spurious authority to tear down (vs. 8). And what Paul says about being able to glory in his authority and not be put to shame is said with this purpose in view: **that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.** He is saying this that he may not appear to be doing what the false teachers accuse him of doing — scaring people by his letters. He could boast of authority, authority given for edification, and would not be put to shame when he made his appearance in Corinth for he would be able amply to demonstrate that authority. So, Paul is urging the Corinthians not to think that his authority is evident in letter only (vs. 9). Paul next quotes one of the contemptuous sneers of the enemies. They said his letters were **weighty and strong** — he was firm and bold in writing; but when present he

was lowly and humble, and what he said was not impressive. The sum of the criticism was that Paul was bold in writing but feeble in acting (vs. 10). Let such a one reckon this, exhorts Paul — referring to one who would utter such a criticism, with a possible allusion to some foolish church members who would give credence to such criticism — this one ought to consider this fact, declares Paul, **that, what we are in deed when we are present, the time will come when it will be abundantly clear that Paul's deeds harmonize with his writings** (vs. 11).

Paul admits that there is one type of courage he does not possess! The deceivers who pretended to greatness were very adept at self-commendation — commending themselves without support of any corroborating evidence. These were **without understanding**, or completely foolish. They used only one standard of comparison — themselves. They could always rate high according to this standard. They never looked beyond their narrow circle for comparison; they sang their own praises; they expected to be accepted upon their own evaluation. Paul says he does not have the courage to compare himself with such as these! Certainly, Paul and his co-workers could not follow such a procedure of commendation (vs. 12).

Paul says, **but we will not glory beyond our measure**. The glorying which he and his helpers may do will not be like that done by the false teachers. It will be kept within clearly defined limits; it will not be without measure. In this context, the word used by Paul, "province" or "measuring rod," has reference to the area and the work which God had given to him and his helpers. They can be measured by the yardstick of the province or field of work which God had assigned to them, not by comparing themselves with one another. The measuring rule which God gave extended as far as Corinth — **to reach even unto you**. This is something else right before the eyes of the Corinthians and which they should be able to see (vs. 13). Paul and his companions had been the first to come to Corinth with the gospel. Corinth was a part of the field to which they were commissioned to go. The false teachers came into a field that was not assigned them and for the purpose of destroying what Paul had built up. By preaching in Corinth and by continuing to exercise influence in the church there, Paul and his helpers were not stretching themselves **overmuch**, that is, they were not exceeding their God-ordained field of labor (vs. 14). They did not glory beyond their measure,

that is, in other men's labors. Paul looks to the possibilities for the future: **having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto further abundance**. Paul hopes that the deceivers will be put down; he hopes that the true ministers will be magnified according to the province or measuring-rod which God had laid down. And Paul hopes that this magnifying will be **unto further abundance**. He expects to go to other fields. He reveals in Romans 15:24 that he hopes to take the gospel into Spain (vs. 15). He goes on to explain what he means by **further abundance** — reaching others with the gospel. He does not want to glory in work already done by others (vs. 16). In fact, anyone who glories, **let him glory in the Lord**. No selfish credit is to be taken for one's labors (vs. 17). To have the Lord's approval is the important thing. To have one's own approval, as the false teachers did, is not the decisive factor (vs. 18).

be included; but it includes the daily and constant relationship of Paul with the Corinthians. He thought of himself as presenting them to Christ as a **pure virgin** all along during his ministry (vs. 2).

In view of Paul's great love and concern for the church at Corinth, his fear of their being corrupted can surely be appreciated. He refers to the beguiling of Eve by the serpent in his **craftiness**. He fears that the false teachers will similarly corrupt the Corinthians from their simple-hearted devotion toward Christ. In speaking of the craftiness of the serpent, Paul is at the same time describing the methods of his opponents at Corinth. They had slipped in among the Corinthians, and were engaged in making false accusations and holding forth deceptive promises (vs. 3). What some were teaching about Jesus really amounted to a different Jesus from the one Paul preached; the spirit connected with such teaching was not the Holy Spirit; the **good news** they announced was not the true gospel preached by Paul. Yet, Paul says, when such a teacher makes his appearance, the Corinthians seem to put up with him quite well: **ye do bear with him well**. The more recent translations render this accurately, but both the KJV and the ASV miss the irony of Paul's statement and have him saying that the Corinthians are doing a good thing in bearing with the false teachers. **You bear with him well** is an accurate translation. And the connection is quite apparent: Paul has asked the Corinthians to bear with him in what he is to say; he has expressed his fear of the Corinthians being corrupted. He now tells them ironically that they endure in a beautiful manner one who comes with something different. This is why he fears for their safety. Too, this is one reason he can ask them to bear with him, a true apostle, in what he has to say (vs. 4).

Paul begins his boasting in a rather mild manner. By the expression, **the very chiefest apostles**, Paul is referring in a sarcastic manner to the Judaizing teachers in Corinth who claimed to be acting with an authority exceeding that of Paul. They are called **excessive** or **superlative** apostles, words which could very well be used instead of **very chiefest**. The point is that Paul **reckons himself as being not a whit behind these super apostles!** Paul is not comparing himself with the twelve apostles, as some have thought, but with the spurious apostles at Corinth (vs. 5). If Paul is unskilled in speech, as the false teachers alleged, yet there is no way in which this charge can be brought against his knowledge. It seems that Paul is saying, "If I be as they claim,

Chapter Eleven

A "Lover's Quarrel"

With the Church

Paul's Jealousy for the Corinthians (vss. 1-15)

PAUL IS ABOUT TO enter into a comparison of himself and the false teachers in Corinth. First of all, however, he feels the necessity of justifying himself for entering into such a comparison. He expresses his wish for the Corinthians to bear with him in what he calls a **little foolishness**. He then says they are so bearing. Paul feels that self-commendation is folly, but it is a role forced upon him by the tactics of the enemies. He feels that for a time he must descend to their level and answer folly with folly (cf. Prov. 26:5). It is a course from which he shrinks, pursued only because he feels it to be a necessity. In a true spirit of humility he boasts — does so because he feels that the spiritual welfare of others is at stake (vs. 1).

Paul assures the Corinthians that he is pursuing the course of **foolishness**; he hopes they will bear with him, for, he says, **I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy**. This is the kind of jealousy God feels for his people when they give their affection to other gods (cf. Exodus 20:5). Nothing but such an extreme feeling of love could induce Paul to write in the vein which he designates **foolishness**. It was through the instrumentality of Paul that these Corinthians had been led to form a union with Christ which Paul thinks of here as espousal and marriage. He is most desirous for the purity of the church, the bride of Christ; he does not want her to be corrupted. He had espoused them to Christ in order that he might present them as a **pure virgin**. There is no necessity for thinking that Paul has in mind particularly the Second Coming as the day of presentation although that would

lacking in rhetoric according to their standards of oratory, still, in regard to my knowledge, there is no way in which they can claim that I am lacking." Perhaps they had pointed to Paul's lack of certain techniques in his speaking, pointing to a mere superficiality and ignoring the important thing — the content of Paul's knowledge. The Corinthians had had abundant opportunity to test Paul's knowledge; they had heard him, had received communications from him through the years. This was one of the things which had been before their face or eyes (vs. 6; cf. 10:7).

Another accusation made against Paul was that he had received no financial support from the Corinthians. He has discussed his refusal to do this (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1-15). Now he asks if he had committed a sin in abasing himself, refusing to accept pay, earning his living by other means in order that the Corinthians might be exalted to a high spiritual plane by his labors. He asks, **did I sin . . . because I preached the gospel of God for nought?** The folly of the opposition is made apparent by Paul's question. In refusing to take support, in working at other tasks, in abasing himself so that the Corinthians might be exalted — was that a sin? Perhaps the enemies had said that Paul's refusal to take money showed that he realized that he was not a true apostle. By getting to the heart of the matter immediately, asking if he had sinned in such refusal, Paul shows the utter emptiness of the charge (vs. 7). In order to minister to the Corinthians without being supported by them, Paul took wages from other churches while he was in Corinth. ~~He uses the hyperbole, robbed.~~ He uses such strong expression because he was not serving the churches from which he took money, but took it in order that he might serve another church. He took from them what he would not take from the Corinthians, and, although he had good reason for this, which he explains elsewhere, it appeared, in a manner of speaking, almost robbery (vs. 8). Even at times when Paul was in want, he was not a burden on anyone. He was able to refrain from being burdensome due to the fact that brethren from Macedonia assisted him. Moreover, Paul is determined to adhere rigidly to his practice of refusing to be a burden to the Corinthians. He had good reasons for his refusal to accept support from Corinth; and even though he was being criticized for such refusal, still he will not yield and alter his course (vs. 9). He is determined to receive no compensation from those in Achaia; and he is determined that he will not be deprived by any man of **this glorying in . . . Achaia** (vs. 10). Why? What is his motive in refusing monetary support from them?

Surely, it is not because of any lack of love for the Corinthians, as God, who knows the heart, knows (vs. 11). Further, what Paul has been doing and what he will do in the future is for the purpose of eliminating any occasion of criticism from those who were looking for something to criticize. If Paul should begin taking money from Corinth now, that would serve as a point for these false teachers in the boasting they were doing, the boasting by which they sought to convince others that they are something which they are not, namely, genuine ministers of Christ. If Paul should start receiving money, they could then claim to be as unselfish as he. As it was, they, evidently, were taking whatever they could get from the Corinthians while Paul and his friends took nothing (vs. 12). With the utmost plainness Paul describes these men as **false apostles, deceitful workers**. They appear outwardly as **apostles of Christ**, but they are false and deceitful (vs. 13). This is not incredible, for their master, Satan, disguises himself as **an angel of light**. Paul uses the present tense, indicating something which Satan continually is doing. Satan poses as an angel of light and claims to speak divine truth, but what he speaks is deadly and deceptive (vs. 14). And, since Satan poses as an angel of light, it is perfectly natural to expect his ministers to appear in the guise of ministers of truth. But the divine recompense will be theirs, however successful they may appear at times (vs. 15).

Paul's Work and Sufferings (vss. 16-33)

Let no man think me foolish, Paul pleads. He realizes that the boasting he is about to do is something which has to be done. Boasting is usually done by foolish people, and Paul is in reality saying, "though I am speaking as a foolish person, do not think that I am actually a fool." What Paul had in mind as the end to be accomplished by his glorying was important enough to warrant his procedure. Hence, Paul says that if the Corinthians are not willing to grant his request and if they must take him for a fool, then they will surely grant him the privilege they would grant a fool and would indulge his boasting. At every step Paul shows that he realizes the folly of self-commendation under ordinary circumstances. He would not thus speak were he not compelled to do so (vs. 16).

When Paul speaks as he does, **as in foolishness**, or what may appear to be foolishness, he is speaking after the manner of his adversaries at Corinth. He has made this point abundantly clear from the start; he is meeting the opponents on their own ground.

These opponents had delineated their qualifications with a selfish end in view; they had also belittled Paul for the same purpose. Circumstances compelled Paul, for the truth's sake, to indulge in what would appear to be foolishness if all the facts and circumstances are not taken into consideration. It is clearly a departure from the ordinary norm of Christian behavior; it was not the Lord's method under ordinary circumstances for his ministers to recite their own personal qualifications. This is evidently what Paul means by the phrase, **not after the Lord**. It was not the Lord's usual method, but Paul, speaking by inspiration, certainly has the Lord's approval. The Lord granted this because it was the best weapon to use in the situation faced by Paul. Note again that Paul does not here say that in the employment of this confidence of glorying he is speaking in foolishness, but **as in foolishness**. On the surface, it would appear as folly (vs. 17).

Many were glorying **after the flesh**. The false apostles at Corinth were boasting about human, fleshly standing; they took pride in such things as rank, nationality, and other externals. Since they are doing this, Paul says that he, too, will do likewise. Surely, no one can find fault with Paul for employing these tactics if he will only consider that which motivated him to do so and that which he was seeking to accomplish. Indeed, he does it all in such a spirit of humility, lamenting the necessity of so doing, and setting forth facts about his own life, in a way as to expose the folly of the false teachers. He reveals himself more forcefully as a servant of Christ who is ever ready to give Christ the glory for whatever advantages he enjoys (vs. 18). Irony shows through again in the following verse: **being wise yourselves**. The Corinthians professed to be intelligent and wise. And they, being wise in their own estimation, had borne with foolish men. They had given an attentive ear to the men who were real fools, men who had freely boasted of their own attainments and qualifications. Paul's implication is that since the Corinthians had tolerated fools and had done so **gladly**, surely they will bear with him when he speaks **as in foolishness** (vs. 19). In fact the Corinthians are so wise that they will bear with teachers who make them subservient to their wishes, who make slaves of them. They will bear with men who by exorbitant demands secure from them as much as possible. They will bear with men who enslave them by false teaching in order to do with them as they wish. They will bear with men who make arrogant claims. They will even bear with men who, in their domineering ways, heap violence and insult

upon them! How wise these Corinthians are! Yet Paul is not, by the use of irony, seeking to hurt in order to see people writhe; he is seeking to expose the false teachers in order to help the Corinthians to see the true state of things at Corinth (vs. 20). Irony is evident also in the following verse. Paul says that he is speaking by way of disparagement of himself and his helpers as though they had been weak. In other words, he is saying, "It is to our disparagement that we confess that we must be considered weaklings when it comes to conduct of this kind!" He implies that if they had shown such strength as to make slaves of the Corinthians, then the Corinthians would have gladly consented to them! Yet, where some would make bold claims, Paul shows his readiness to respond; and again he wants the Corinthians to know he realizes he speaks **in foolishness** (vs. 21).

If the false apostles give emphasis to such matters as being Hebrews, Israelites, or of the seed of Abraham, Paul can claim the same (vs. 22). Do these men claim to be **ministers of Christ**? Paul can claim a great supremacy in contrasting himself, a true minister of Christ, with these false ministers. In speaking of himself as a minister of Christ and showing his superiority over these false teachers, Paul says, **I speak as one beside himself**. He is saying in effect that he feels so unworthy as a servant of Christ that he seems to be speaking as one beside himself to speak of such ministry in terms of praise. The necessity and the wisdom of such glorying has been amply discussed in remarks on previous passages. In comparing himself with the false apostles, Paul states that his labors had been more abundant. A study of his activities in the Book of Acts reveals a life of hard work. Imprisonments had been **more abundantly** for Paul; he had received stripes, cruel floggings, **above measure**; he faced death on numerous occasions. Note the four points of comparison and their arrangement in an ascending style: labors, prisons, stripes, death (vs. 23).

On five different occasions Paul had received thirty-nine stripes by means of scourging at the hands of the Jews (vs. 24). In addition, Paul had, on three occasions, been beaten with rods, a form of Roman punishment. One instance of this is related in Acts 16. Acts 11 records the instance of stoning to which Paul here refers. He "suffered shipwreck" on three occasions, incidents to which Luke does not refer in Acts; it was not Luke's purpose to write a detailed biography. It may have been on the occasion of one of these shipwrecks that Paul was floating on a piece of wreckage, **a night and a day . . . in the deep** (vs. 25).

Continuing to relate his experiences for Christ, in order that his life might be seen more clearly in contrast with that of the false teachers, Paul says, **in journeyings often**. This is something which Luke does reveal in Acts, though not the full extent of it. Traveling, going, moving from place to place, was the story of Paul's life. This was something, doubtless, with which the false teachers could not even begin to compare. And, of necessity, travels brought consequent trials and dangers. The list which follows specifies the particular trials suffered by Paul on his journeys: **perils of rivers** — possibly referring to crossing dangerous rivers in time of flood, rivers that had no bridges; robbers were a constant threat to the traveler; members of Paul's own race, Jewish enemies, often sought his life and this is mentioned in various places in Acts; the Gentiles, often stirred up by the Jews, were also a source of constant danger; even in the city, where officials were near at hand, Paul was not safe; naturally, **in the wilderness**, far from any sort of protection, he was often in peril; the small sea-going vessels were fragile, and travel in them exposed one to **perils in the sea**, especially in time of storm; and there were traitors among those who pretended to be friends. **Perils among false brethren** would be particularly distressing (vs. 26).

Paul next speaks of **labor and travail**, referring to his arduous toils and his constant state of weariness. The words which follow emphasize the hardships in the midst of which he toiled and labored: **in watchings often** — loss of sleep caused by toils and dangers; **in hunger and thirst** — at times unable to obtain food and drink; **in fastings often** — perhaps at times due to the pressing duties of his work and at other times to the lack of food; **in cold and nakedness** — a reference to winter travel and to insufficient clothing. Note the recurrence of the word **often**. These hardships must have been suffered on many occasions. How do the false teachers compare in the matter of such hardships? (vs. 27).

In addition to the things Paul has enumerated, he now adds what to him was the continual burden of his heart: **anxiety for all the churches**. This was a matter which pressed upon him daily. The word used by Paul, translated **presseth**, suggests a crowd or a besieging mob. These cares, anxieties for the churches, rushed upon Paul, pressed upon him like a tumultuous crowd. Think of all the problems at Corinth with which he had been concerned. In addition, there were many others. There were

wranglings, disputes, apostasies, heresies. These matters pressed daily upon the mind of Paul (vs. 28). In further elaboration of his anxieties for others, Paul asks two questions: **who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble, and I burn not?** These questions show Paul's great heart of compassion and sympathy. He took the weaknesses of others upon his own shoulders; to the weak he became weak (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22). As to Paul's reaction when one was made to stumble, several suggestions have been made concerning the expression, **I burn not**. Two suggestions worthy of mention are: (1) that he burns with indignation against the one who caused the offense; (2) that he burns with shame, sharing the remorse of the sinner. Other ideas have been offered as to the significance of the expression. In any event, the idea is that Paul feels deeply in such cases and cannot look upon the injuries of others with indifference (vs. 29). Since he feels the need of glorying, he will glory in those things that pertain to his weakness, things which cause some to despise him. He evidently refers to his persecutions, his hardships, and his tender-heartedness. He enumerates these rather than his accomplishments (vs. 30). In vs. 31, Paul affirms that God knows that he does not lie in what he has said. In vs. 32 and 33, Paul refers to his experience in Damascus (cf. Acts 9:23-25). The connection of this incident with what precedes is interesting. Paul has spoken of glorying in weaknesses. Now he goes back to the early days of his ministry, showing that he made his exit from Damascus by means of a basket and fled under cover of darkness. This was a very humble and weak beginning! Paul relates it here as a part of the weaknesses which he suffered for the sake of Christ and in which he was glorying.

event near the time that Paul worked with Barnabas in Antioch. It is impossible to identify this experience with any event in Acts; any attempt would be conjecture. The experience was that the man in Christ was **caught up even to the third heaven**. The Jews thought of a heaven where the clouds are; they thought of a heaven where the sun, moon, and stars are; and they thought of a heaven which was the dwelling-place of God. Being caught up to the third heaven conveyed the idea of a most sublime exaltation. How the transference was made — whether in the body or apart from the body — Paul does not know (vs. 2). Paul repeats the statement, making it more emphatic, but this time using the word **paradise** to refer to what he previously called the **third heaven**. Evidently, what Paul heard was entirely for his own encouragement; he was not permitted to relate it (vss. 3, 4).

Paul declares that he will glory in **behalf of such a one**, that is, such a one as he has just described who was caught up to Paradise. He could boast of this wonderful experience for he was the passive recipient of divine grace; he could claim no personal merit as though being caught up was his own labor or attainment. But as to personal glorying, Paul says he is determined that he will not glory except in his weaknesses. He here repeats his statement of 11:30. He glories in things that show him to be weak such as hardships and tender-heartedness (vs. 5). However, if Paul should boast of personal honors and achievements, he would not be acting as a fool for he would be speaking the truth. The false apostles were boasting of accomplishments which were not theirs; they were acting as fools. If Paul should boast beyond the truth, he, too, would be an actual fool. In other passages he admits to the use of folly, but he was not being an actual fool. He was using folly only according to certain standards and only if one did not understand his reason for the use of it. But Paul forbears boasting of personal honors and achievements. Why? **Lest any man** might form an estimate of him which was higher than his deeds and words might warrant. Paul feared being respected too highly more than he feared being despised on account of his weaknesses (vs. 6).

The unusual revelation granted to Paul might have caused him to be **exalted overmuch**, that is, be lifted up with pride. To prevent this, a **thorn in the flesh**, described as a **messenger of Satan**, was given to him. The agency was Satanic; God permitted Satan to attack Paul. This is strongly reminiscent of the permission granted by God to Satan in the case of Job. It seems impossible,

Chapter Twelve

Boasting About Weakness

A Further Comparison (vss. 1-13)

THERE IS A VARIATION among the versions as to the punctuation of vs. 1. According to the arrangement of KJV and ASV, Paul is saying that it is not expedient for him to glory. Then he says he will come to visions and revelations. According to the arrangement of RSV and NEB, Paul says that he must glory. Then he says that, though it is not expedient, he will come to the subject of revelations and visions. The difference is not so very great when it is remembered that Paul is saying that the matter of boasting is forced upon him and that what he is saying will not bring any particular spiritual benefit to the Corinthian church. It is done with the view of replying to the enemies. However, the weight of textual evidence seems to favor the arrangement of RSV and NEB. Paul says, **I must needs glory**. Glorying on his part was made necessary by the claims of the false apostles. Then he says, **while it is not expedient, I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord**. Relating this very unusual experience has its place in the overall picture, but it is not expedient so far as making a real contribution to the spiritual state of the Corinthian church is concerned. **Of the Lord** indicates that the visions and revelations came from the Lord (vs. 1). There is no doubt that Paul refers to himself when he says, **I know a man in Christ**. His use of the third person is probably due to his reluctance to speak of himself as having had such a glorious experience. The prepositional phrase, **in Christ**, emphasizes that the one enjoying the experience did so because of his relationship with Christ; even in his glorying, Paul turns the attention of his readers to Christ. For Paul, Christ was the sphere of his work, his life, and his longings. **Fourteen years ago** would place the

from the data available, to decide just what the **thorn in the flesh** was. It was something of an agonizing nature and was permitted in order that Paul might be kept in deep humility and that he might depend the more on the Lord (vs. 7). Paul had prayed three times that the thorn might be removed (vs. 8). God's answer was that his grace was sufficient. His grace was mightier than the thorn and Paul found that grace sufficient in every ordeal. Rather than remove the thorn, God gave Paul the grace to bear it with patient endurance. God's power becomes more evident when man's weakness is made manifest; his power becomes perfect, reaches its goal, in an individual when that individual realizes his own weakness and depends on the power of God. On this account, Paul says that he will glory in his weaknesses **that the power of Christ may rest upon him**. The power of the risen Lord overshadows and rests upon the one who sees in his weaknesses an opportunity for the power of God to reach its goal (vs. 9). It is in the time of man's greatest inadequacy that the presence of Christ is more fully realized. So, Paul can **take pleasure** in such things as weaknesses, injuries, necessities, persecutions, and distresses, when they are for the sake of Christ, **for when I am weak, then am I strong**. When Paul experienced his greatest seasons of weakness, he found these to be his greatest times of strength for in them he leaned heavily upon the power of Christ (vs. 10).

Again, Paul asserts his folly in the course he is pursuing. Under ordinary circumstances he would not have spoken of himself in such way as to show his superiority over others. However, he says, **ye compelled me**. The Corinthians had not vindicated him as they could have, and should have, done. They could have done so for Paul was not **behind the very chiefest apostles** in anything. This is another ironic reference to the "super" apostles, the false apostles, who so gloried in their assumed supremacy. By such arrogant claims they were doing serious injury to Paul's reputation and to the church at Corinth. The Corinthians had not commended Paul; hence his need for writing as he does. He calls to their remembrance his conduct among them, and reminds them that he was in no way inferior to these boasters. Yet, Paul felt that he was **nothing**. In fact it was in his nothingness and his weaknesses that he gloried. In all of his glorying his deep humility is seen (vs. 11). **In all patience**, steadfastness in the midst of trials, Paul had worked the signs of an apostle among the Corinthians while in their midst. He had proved his genuine apostleship by **signs and wonders and mighty works**. This has reference

to miraculous deeds viewed from three different perspectives: **Signs** indicate that they were manifestations to prove the power of God at work in an individual; **wonders** indicate the effects wrought in others by stirring them to astonishment; **mighty works** indicate deeds done by the power of God (vs. 12). Paul asks the Corinthians in what particulars they had received treatment that was inferior to that received by other churches. And, again, Paul brings irony into his words: **except it be that I myself was not a burden to you?** In what way had they been treated in an inferior manner except that Paul had refused to be supported by them! He had robbed other churches and refused to burden them. **Forgive me this wrong**, Paul pleads. Again, this is irony — irony keen and cutting (vs. 13). How utterly devastating is Paul's reply to the false apostles!

The Proposed Visit (vss. 14-18)

Paul mentions that his proposed visit is **the third time** he is ready to come to Corinth. It was on his first visit that the church was founded. There is no record of his second visit; so it is not known just when it was made. However, he wants to assure the Corinthians that he will be as independent of them as before and will not depend on them for support. This refusal was not due to his lack of care for the Corinthians; he sought them, their very souls, and not what they had. Surely he has the right to refuse support — the right to act as parents do toward children. He had begotten them through the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15). He now speaks to them as a father to his children. He is asking them to allow him a parent's privilege (vs. 14). He will spend his time, money, and strength for these Corinthians, and in the process himself **be spent**. He will do this **gladly** for the good of their souls. Do the Corinthians want it to be so that the more love Paul shows for them, the less that love will be appreciated and returned? (vs. 15).

But, Paul continues, the enemies will grant that he himself did not burden the Corinthians, but he did this, **being crafty**, using it as a means to trick them **with guile**. In other words, the vicious slander being peddled by the false teachers was that Paul used underhanded methods to get money from the Corinthians, though appearing not to be interested in their money at all. Paul is quoting the enemies in this passage (vs. 16). He proceeds to answer the charge: Had he ever taken advantage of the Corinthians through any person he had sent to them? (vs. 17). Paul

mentions Titus and another whom he had sent. Can the Corinthians think of anything about the conduct of these two men that would indicate Paul's use of them for personal gain? Had these men sent by Paul not walked in the same spirit in which he walked? Had they not walked in the same steps? By this series of questions Paul brings before the minds of the Corinthians once again the course of devotion and unselfish service pursued by him and his helpers (vs. 18).

Some Fears Expressed (vss. 19-21)

Even though Paul has said things in self-defense, even though he has refuted certain charges, the Corinthians are not to think that he does so with selfish interests. Paul anticipates their feeling that he is merely defending himself. But what he has written has been primarily for the edification of the Corinthians. He has defended himself because he felt it necessary for their good. Notice the affectionate term, **beloved**. There is another point of emphasis in his declaration. What he had written was not to excuse himself and others "to you," that is, he does not feel that he is pleading a case before the Corinthians with the idea in mind that they are the judge. No, to the contrary, **in the sight of God speak we in Christ**. There was the constant recognition that God alone is Judge (vs. 19).

Paul expresses his feeling of a fear — a fear that when he arrives in Corinth he will not find the Corinthians as he wants to find them. In that event they would not find Paul as they might wish, for he would have to deal with them in severity. Paul feels an apprehension that certain sins might exist with which he would have to deal: strife or contention; jealousy, a fruitful cause of strife; wraths or explosive tempers; factions or selfish rivalries; backbitings or open slander; whisperings or secret defamation of others — not so much in the open as backbitings; swellings or contemptuous attitudes caused by being puffed up with pride; tumults or various sorts of disturbances. Paul realizes that carnality is yet in existence to a certain extent in Corinth among the church members; he is also aware of the damage that might be caused by the false teachers (vs. 20).

If Paul should find the Corinthian church in a sinful and impenitent condition, he would feel ashamed and humiliated. Even so, Paul could look upon such humbling of himself as a trial which God would permit him to undergo. From that viewpoint, he could speak of being humbled by God. In his humiliation, should

he find the Corinthians impenitent, he would mourn for them. He thinks of the lives of many of them before their conversion (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11), and fears that some may relapse into such sins as **uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness**, and that they may not repent (vs. 21).

salvation of the Corinthians, in the giving of spiritual gifts, and in other ways as well (vs. 3). In a sense, it was through weakness that Christ was crucified; he took upon himself human nature which involved a voluntary limitation. He took upon himself human nature in order to die. However, he was raised, and lives by the power of God. And there is a sense in which the servants of Christ share in the weakness manifested by him; they suffer persecution for his cause, and exercise meekness and forbearance in dealing with others. **But we shall live with him through the power of God toward you**, declares Paul. The reference to being weak and living through the power of God seems to have special application to Paul and his helpers. They had appeared to the Corinthians as weaklings, at least to some of the Corinthians, and the enemies had accused them of weakness. Yet Paul is certain that their influence among the Corinthians will be revived and their power will again be known. **By we shall live** Paul seems to be referring to what would be accomplished by his impending visit (vs. 4).

The Corinthians had been putting Paul and his helpers to the test. Paul is willing to be tested and is able to meet the test. However, he now turns the tables upon them and calls upon them to try themselves to determine whether their faith be genuine. This they should be able to do. They should know that Christ dwells in them unless they are **reprobate**. This word means **disproved** or **unacceptable**. It carries with it the idea of having failed in the testing to which one is subjected (vs. 5). Paul hopes that the Corinthians will meet the test and will come to know that he and his fellow-workers stand approved before God (vs. 6).

Paul and his friends are interceding for the Corinthians; they are praying that they will do no evil. Yet, Paul assures them that this prayer is not from a selfish motive. They do not want the Corinthians to lead godly lives in order that they, Paul and his helpers, may be approved by them. Paul desires that the Corinthians be approved even though he and his colleagues should be as **reprobate**. If the Corinthians repent and all is well at Corinth when Paul arrives, he will not have the opportunity of exhibiting disciplinary powers. This is a power he would be glad not to have to prove even though he and the others might remain in the sight of certain skeptics as **reprobate** (vs. 7). It would be completely contrary to the character and to the desire of the apostle to do anything against the truth of the gospel. Interest in self-vindication was never paramount. Advance of the truth was

Chapter Thirteen

"Finally, Brethren, Farewell"

A Warning (vss. 1-10)

AGAIN PAUL REMINDS THE Corinthians of his approaching third visit to them. He hopes for peace and purity, but not peace at any price. If certain irregularities exist when he arrives, they will be handled properly. If there should be cases in which disciplinary action would have to be taken, proper witnesses would be heard. Paul will not proceed in such matters so as to take everything exclusively into his own hands (vs. 1).

When Paul returns to Corinth, if he finds matters in an unfavorable state, he **will not spare**. Patience will have reached its limit and rigorous discipline will be applied. In reference to Paul's previous warnings, the exact wording in the Greek is: **I have said before and I say before, as being present the second, and being absent now. When I was not in the original.** It seems that Paul is saying that he had warned a first time as being present (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3) even though he was absent, and that now he is warning as being present a second time though he is in reality absent now. The severe warning is that he will not spare stubborn offenders when he arrives (vs. 2).

Paul will not spare, seeing that ye seek a **proof of Christ that speaketh in me**. He would prefer not to have to give such proof, but if sinners persist in their sins, it will be necessary for him to do so. There seems to have been a demand, at least among some, at Corinth that Paul give some sign that Christ was speaking through him. The Christ who speaks through Paul had demonstrated his power already at Corinth. Toward the Corinthians he had not shown any weakness; neither had he been lacking in power among them. That power had been demonstrated in the

always uppermost in the mind of Paul. If this were done at the expense of his appearing as reprobate in the minds of certain ones, he is willing that it be so (vs. 8). He is willing that he and his fellow-workers appear as weak; indeed, he can rejoice in such weakness if the Corinthians show themselves to be spiritually strong. He is perfectly willing to be deprived of the opportunity of manifesting his apostolic power among the Corinthians and perhaps be thought weak by some, for it would be due to the strength of the Corinthians, shown by their penitence, that he would thus be deprived. In fact, this perfecting of the Corinthians, their spiritual maturity, was that for which he was praying (vs. 9). To this end he was writing this epistle — that is, the accomplishing of their spiritual maturity. He longed for their maturity so that when he should arrive in Corinth, he would not have to act with severity toward the Corinthians. The apostolic authority possessed by Paul was given to him for the edifying of others and not for their destruction. Even if he should feel it necessary to use severe measures, he would do so with the welfare of the church as the end in view. This is in sharp contrast with the work of Paul's adversaries in Corinth, whose one object was that of tearing down what had been built (vs. 10).

Conclusion (vss. 11-14)

It can be seen from the foregoing passages that both hope and fear exist in the mind of Paul — hope for improvement of the situation at Corinth, and fear that conditions may be such that drastic measures will have to be taken. But he has sounded forth the note of hope and that also of warning. Now, in a tone that is affectionate and mild, he brings the epistle to a close. He uses the affectionate address, **brethren**, and bids them a farewell. **Be perfected** is an admonition for them to receive the divine instructions and to be brought by them to a higher spiritual level. **Be comforted** is an admonition to receive the corrections as a means of securing the consolation of **the God of all comfort** (cf. 1:3). **Be of the same mind; live in peace** are admonitions to unity and harmony among the Corinthian Christians. Attached to these exhortations is the promise that **the God of love and peace shall be with you** (vs. 11).

The kiss of greeting, a social custom of the time, was not to be a meaningless formality; it was to be holy. It seems clear that Paul is seeking to regulate a custom, not to dictate a method. The

kiss of greeting is to be sincere and holy, not hypocritical nor meaningless (vs. 12).

The saints who were with Paul in Macedonia at the time of the writing of 2 Corinthians join Paul in sending salutations (vs. 13).

Paul's final prayer for the Corinthians expressed in the epistle is that **the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit** may be with them. This is the fullest form of a closing benediction used by Paul. It calls attention to the three persons of the Trinity in such fashion as to indicate their separateness and the personality of each. At the same time their unity is seen. Christians are to live in the atmosphere of the grace of Christ; they are to enjoy constantly the love of God; they are to live continually in the communion, the fellowship, which the Holy Spirit provides. This is a fellowship with the Spirit, with Christ, with the Father, and with all who are united in the body of Christ.