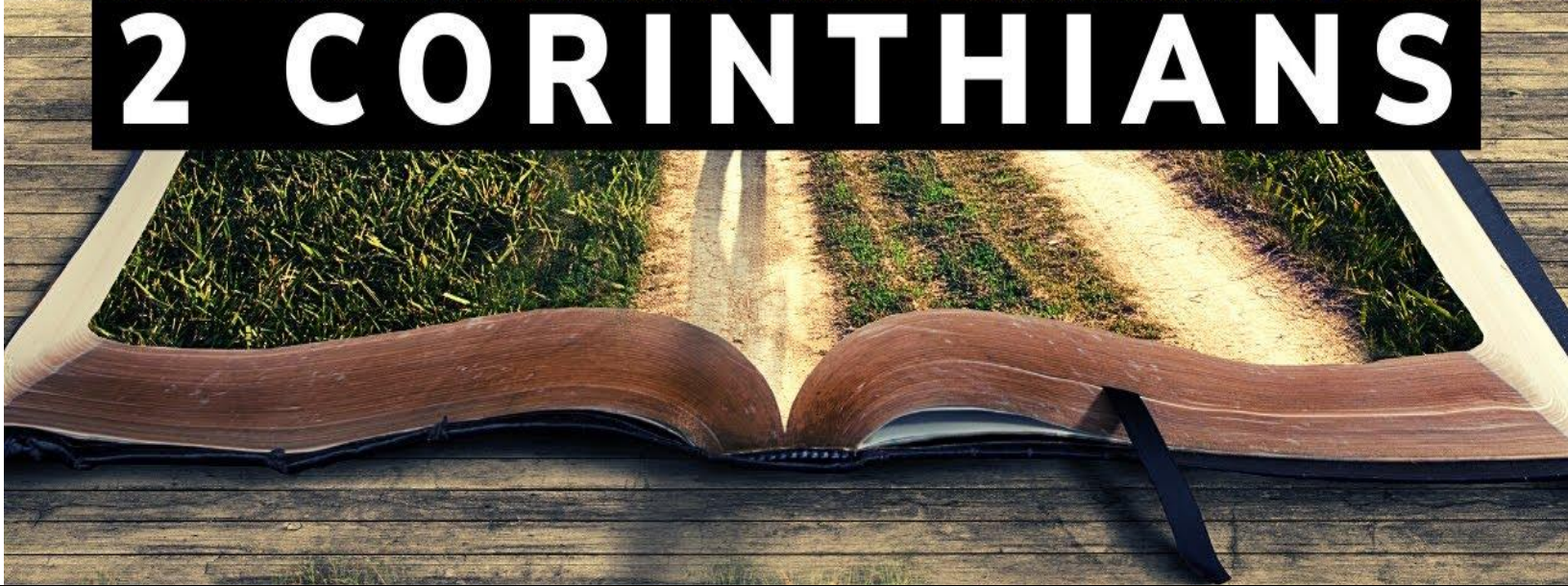




2 CORINTHIANS



THAT I MAY KNOW CHRIST

THAT I MAY KNOW THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

THAT I MAY BE A PARTAKER IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

THAT I MAY BE CONFORMED INTO THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF JESUS CHRIST



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LET'S START!



Introduction

Paul was the founding apostle of the Corinthian church, which means he was the first person to preach the Gospel in the Greco-Roman city. He started the church and lived in Corinth for approximately 1.5 years, establishing elders and maturing his disciples, until moving on to start other churches. Sadly, Paul soon received news that things were not going very well in Corinth.

The first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians) was intended to correct the problems in this prideful church. The congregation was divided into splintered parties and had an obvious spirit of division operating among the members. Furthermore, the leadership tolerated blatant sexual sin and spiritual gifts were being misused and abused. Some Corinthians quickly repented and were humbly corrected after Paul's first letter. However, others were driven deeper into rebellion and doubled down on their stubborn pride. It was likely that Timothy gave Paul a full report of the continued rebellion in the Corinthian church. There was a small, but loud, splinter group in the congregation that set themselves against the authority of Paul and challenged his right to speak over their community as their founding apostle. This caused Paul to personally make his "painful visit", where he harshly rebuked the church for their continued rebellion and spiritual pride.

After leaving Corinth once again, Paul reflected on his "painful visit" and wrote a second letter he said, was filled with "anguish and tears". This second "severe" letter was not preserved by the Corinthian church, so we don't really know what it said. Nevertheless, many repented again and submitted to the apostolic authority of Paul as their founding spiritual father.

Upon hearing the good news about their repentance, Paul wrote the third letter we know as (2 Corinthians) because the original second letter was lost. In this letter, Paul tried to reconcile with the church as he expressed his undying love for them as his spiritual children. However, he had some harsh words of warning directed to a small group of rebels within the church, who were still bitterly offended by the "painful visit" and did not accept Paul as their spiritual authority.

In this letter, Paul also strongly addressed the influence of "false teachers" who had gained a following in Corinth since the church was established. As usual, Jewish teachers claiming authority from the "denominational head office" in Jerusalem, crept into Paul's struggling church and actively undermined his authority as their founding apostle. Instead of expounding on radical grace, they aggressively preached a legalistic brand of Christianity. These Jewish teachers also claimed to have a greater revelation of the Scriptures than Paul, supplemented by angelic visitations, dreams, visions and special revelations. In response, Paul sharply condemned any

effort to introduce a theological perspective that complicated his understanding of justification by faith, as well as introducing other elements of false teachings, which undermined the message Paul first preached.

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.

In his introduction, Paul personally defends his assertion that he was called and qualified to be an apostle by Christ. He also joined with Timothy in his greeting, who was the second founding member of the Corinthian church, to solidify his claim to apostolic authority.

Paul was not an apostle by the decision or desire of any man, including himself. He was an apostle by the will of God. Even if the Corinthian Christians held him in low regard, it did not diminish his standing as an apostle before God.¹

In light of the criticism he faced, Paul instinctively defends his apostolic authority to bring order to the Corinthian church from the first sentence of his letter. By claiming to have personally received direct revelation from Yahshua, Paul solidifies his right to being considered equal in authority with other apostolic leaders like Peter or James, who governed over the Jewish churches in Jerusalem.

I am writing to God's church in Corinth and to all of his holy people throughout Greece.

While the Corinthians certainly had their fair share of problems, Paul addressed them as members of the family of God. The word translated as "holy people" is commonly referred to as "saints" in the older translations. This greeting indicated that despite their wrong believing and misguided thinking, according to Paul, they were still included among the redeemed. It is important to note, Paul always considered the Corinthians as "believers" in

¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

Why do bad things happen to

Christ, regardless of their rebellious nature and immature attitude towards spiritual authority.

² May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

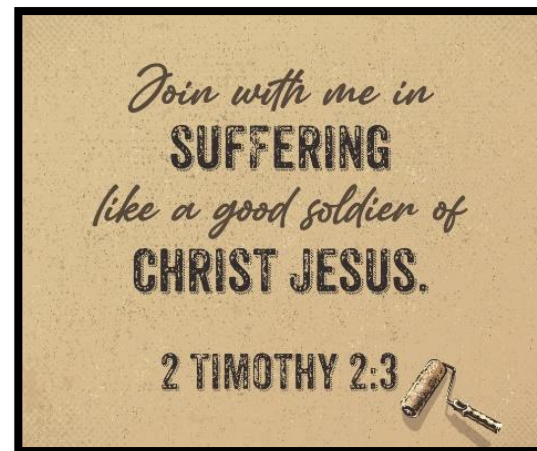
While this was considered a standard greeting in all of Paul's letters, it was still filled with great meaning and was a powerful expression of blessing. Grace was a common expression among the Greeks meaning "undeserved favor". Peace was the common Hebrew greeting, translated from the word "shalom". Moreover, from the beginning of the letter, Yahweh is identified as the Father, while Yahshua is given the titles of Lord and Messiah. Accordingly, there is no possible way to separate the Lordship of Yahshua from His finished work as the Messiah of Israel. If He is your Messiah, He must also be your Lord and only when He is your Lord is He truly your Messiah.



God Offers Comfort to All

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.

People will always have a problem with the existence of pain. If God has the power to stop human suffering, why does He not prevent our pain? Yet, Paul says that only in our mortal suffering, can we intimately experience the overwhelming comfort of God. Additionally, when we experience real suffering, because of our familiarity with pain, we are empowered to genuinely minister to others in a similar situation. Paul can honestly relate to the sufferings of others, because like Yahshua, he was constantly despised and rejected.



"Here was a man, who never knew if he would be dead the next day, for his enemies were many, and cruel, and mighty; and yet he spent a great part of his time in praising and blessing God." (Spurgeon)²

² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

“ GOOD PEOPLE ” ?

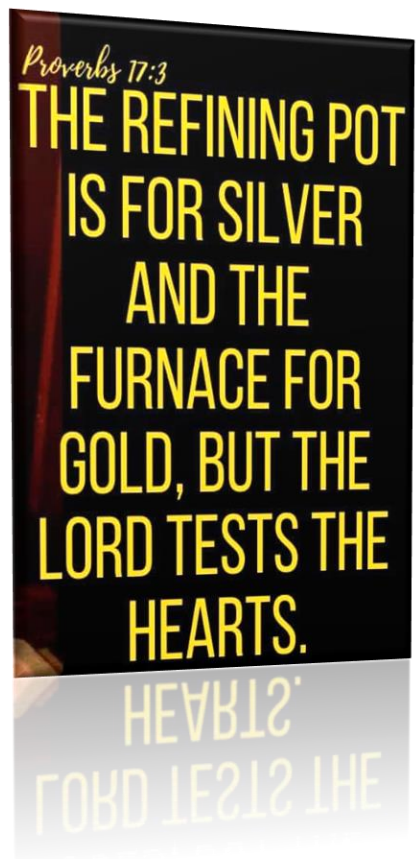
Secondly, Paul aggressively championed the unpopular message, that if you are faithful to partake in the suffering of Christ, you will also partake in the victory/comfort that comes from the Holy Spirit. A theology of suffering is a concept that has been deeply developed throughout church history but has been sadly neglected by our contemporary version of charismatic teaching. As a result, we have many believers who assume God has rejected and abandoned them, when they encounter pain, loss and suffering in their journey with Christ. If we are inclined to believe that having "enough faith" will always insulate us from all forms of loss in this life, we must also conclude that Paul, Peter and the rest of the original apostles were all filled with doubt and unbelief, because they all suffered greatly for the cause of Christ.

When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. ⁵ For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.

Suffering in itself accomplishes nothing in relation to our spiritual development. When children of God experience poverty, lack and despair, it does not bring any glory to Yahweh. Nevertheless, when believers endure such things for the sake of Christ with a good attitude, our witness is powerful. However, our suffering should not be the result of our bad decisions. We will not be spiritually rewarded for suffering caused by our own rebellion and foolishness.

"There is no tendency in pain to produce holiness. It is only of Christian suffering and of that sufferings of Christians, that is, of suffering endured for Christ and in a Christian manner, that the apostle says it is connected with salvation, or that it tends to work out for those who suffer an eternal weight of glory." (Hodge)³

⁶ Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. ⁷ We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.



³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1



REFINER'S FIRE

God may allow situations in our lives where our only consolation is found through Christ. Sometimes we think the only consolation is found in a change of circumstances, but God wants to console us right in the midst of our difficult circumstances, and to do it through Christ.⁴

Because Christ is our comfort, even in the middle of trials and tribulations, our suffering humbles us and can benefit others. Suffering for the cause of Christ increases our witness and solidifies our testimony after we have victoriously passed the test. We become better ministers for Yahshua when we have been comprehensively tempered by fire. Significantly, most of our spiritual growth occurs during the most difficult seasons of our life. Living in a fallen world, we will always have difficulty. But when our suffering in this life is a direct result of standing for Christ, there is an outstanding blessing that is irrevocably connected to our righteous endurance of pain and loss, that will be fully manifested in the era to come.

Suffering in Asia

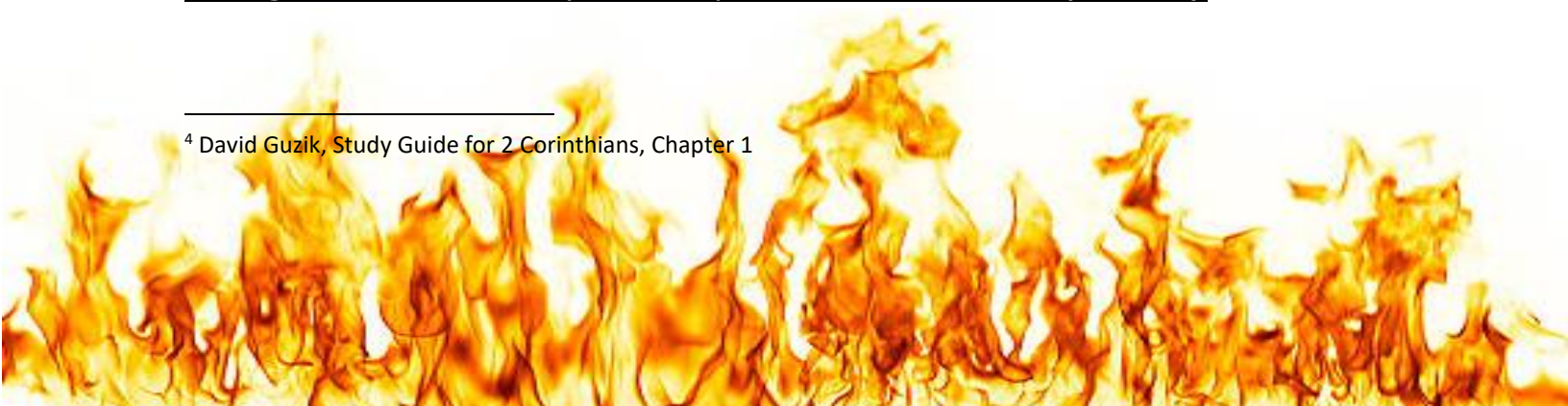
⁸ We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia.

We are not told specifically what this great suffering involved, but many prominent biblical scholars point to Acts 19 as the most likely context.

²³ About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. ²⁴ It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. ²⁵ He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

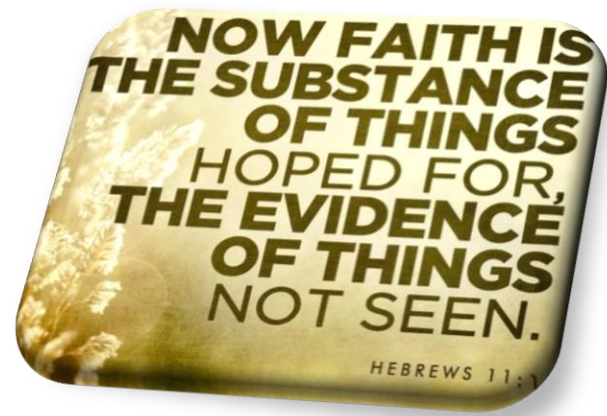
"Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. ²⁶ But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! ²⁷ Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. (Acts 19)"

⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1



Intercessory Prayer

Paul was nearly killed in Ephesus because of the mob. He had to flee for his life and traveled over to Macedonia where he wrote this letter. His suffering in Asia made him think it was the end of his ministry. But he was forced to trust in God when he came to the end of his own resources.



JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

Like Paul, we also need to come to the end of ourselves, so that the power of God can manifest in us. When we reach our breaking point, we are able to experience the evident power of grace. The story of Jacob is about coming to the end of self. The place of defeat is often the beginning of spiritual victory. Our emotional and physical extremities are God's opportunity to show Himself strong in us.

We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. ⁹ In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us.

Perhaps far more was going on in Paul's life than the Corinthians were aware of. Whatever was happening at the time, it seems Paul truly expected to die as a martyr for Christ. The fact that God rescued Paul many times in the past, gave him faith that He would do it again. God pushed Paul past his potential to cope, until he despaired of life itself. Our future spiritual conquests are established on the backs of our past victories. The past is a prophecy of the future. This is the interaction between faith and hope. Hope pulls us forward in our journey with Christ, while faith pushes us onward. Our present faith is deeply rooted in God's past faithfulness.

¹¹ And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety.

Paul knew the value of intercessory prayer and was not shy about asking the Corinthians, despite their many spiritual problems, to pray for him. The Corinthian



HURT BY THE CHURCH

Christians were really helping Paul when they prayed for him.⁵

Likewise, we can't underestimate the power of intercessory prayer when it comes to spiritual warfare. Peter was also in a desperate situation until the believers intervened in his defence by the power of prayer.

⁵ But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.⁶ The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. ⁷ Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸ Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered. (Acts 12)

Paul and Peter both understood the power of prayer, especially when it came to planting churches and preaching the Gospel. Understood correctly, the preaching of the Gospel is the greatest act of spiritual warfare possible. Winning souls is the ultimate expression of casting out demons, because when the influence of the Kingdom of God is expanded, the effect of the unseen diabolical agenda on society is reduced. As expressed by Daniel's time of prayer and fasting, things happen in the unseen domain, based on what happens in the physical realm.

1 Timothy 2:1

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people

Paul's Change of Plans

¹² We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have lived with a God-given holiness and sincerity in all our dealings. We have depended on God's grace, not on our own human wisdom. That is how we have conducted ourselves before the world, and especially toward you.

Like many churches, the Corinthians had some bad experiences with spiritual leadership and were "hurt by the church". As a whole, the entire church had a very low opinion of spiritual authority, and they wrongfully lumped Paul in with the rest.

⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

The difference between

Faith & **Hope**

The Corinthian Christians had become cynical. They believed that everyone had bad motives and was out for personal gain and power. They didn't trust Paul because they were cynical.⁶

¹³ Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand.

Paul demonstrated a lifestyle of simplicity and suffering. The life of Paul was always consistent. He was the same on the pulpit and in real life. His letters had no hidden meaning or motive. He was not looking for anything in return for his service to the Corinthians. Paul said what he meant and meant what he said.

A cynical heart always thinks, "You say this, but you really mean that. You aren't telling the truth." Paul assured the Corinthian Christians that he really told the truth and he didn't communicate with manipulative hidden meanings.⁷

Because they were manipulated and possibly deceived by wayward spiritual leaders, who pretended to have great spiritual authority, a spirit of rebellion settled among them, and Paul was often the object of their misguided wrath. By saying he has "nothing written between the lines", Paul reassures them that he has no hidden agenda in his concern for the congregation.

I hope someday you will fully understand us, ¹⁴ even if you don't understand us now. Then on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, you will be proud of us in the same way we are proud of you.

There is obviously some kind of underlying tension between Paul and some members of this community. Appealing to the highest authority possible, Paul knows he will be vindicated by Yahshua Himself on the day when all things are made visible.

⁵ So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due. (1 Corinthians 4)

¹⁵ Since I was so sure of your understanding and trust, I wanted to give you a double blessing by visiting you twice— ¹⁶ first on my way

⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

to Macedonia and again when I returned from Macedonia. Then you could send me on my way to Judea.

Paul was supposed to return to the Corinthians at a specific time, but he did not arrive when expected. His absence was seen as another example of a spiritual leader not keeping his word. His cynical critics saw this as an excellent opportunity to undermine his reliability. Paul was not a people pleaser, but was a disciplined man of great integrity.

The Corinthian Christians accused Paul of being unreliable and untrustworthy because he said he would come at a certain time and did not. He was unable to come as planned, so instead he sent a letter.⁸

From the very beginning, Paul intended to visit the Corinthians twice. He planned to visit them on his way to Macedonia and stop in again on his way back. Sadly, Paul's first planned visit was recorded as the "painful visit" because it was filled with great confrontation and strife. Because things were extremely heated in his first visit, Paul decided it would be better to let things cool off and opted not to return for a while. In Corinth, things did not get better for Paul, but tensions

increased. There was a strong anti-Paul attitude growing among specific members of the church, who disliked the correction they received. Moreover, this group had stronger affection for other teachers who they assumed were gentler than Paul and spoke with more elegance. Scholars assume Paul sent another letter to the church with Titus, known as the "severe letter" which was written between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. This letter was not preserved and recorded in Scripture, perhaps because it was destroyed by the offended parties. Titus not only came to deliver Paul's aggressively worded letter, but he also came to collect a donation for the suffering church in Judea. However, because of the increased tension caused by the letter and the Corinthians strained relationship with their founding apostle, the collection was not very generous.

⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

What happened since 1 Corinthians?

- Jewish Christians (possibly Judaizers) have come to town causing trouble
 - Letters of recommendation (2Cor 3:1)
 - Claimed apostleship (11:5, 13)
 - Were boldly authoritarian (2Cor 11:20-23)
 - Gained a following in the church in Corinth
 - Undermined Paul's authority (2Cor 10:1-12)
- Paul's "painful" visit to Corinth (2Cor 2:1)
- Paul's "severe" letter written (2Cor 2:3-4; 7:8-13)
- Receives report from Titus (2Cor 7:13-16)

CONTEXT

MATTERS

17 You may be asking why I changed my plan. Do you think I make my plans carelessly? Do you think I am like people of the world who say "Yes" when they really mean "No"? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you does not waver between "Yes" and "No."

Paul's critics among the Corinthian community accused him of being unreliable because he decided not to return to the church at the appointed time. As mentioned, Paul did not want to "gas light" the situation with another dramatic confrontation, so he gave things time to settle down. In response to this accusation, Paul assures the church that he is not like a political figure who makes promises he has no intention of keeping.

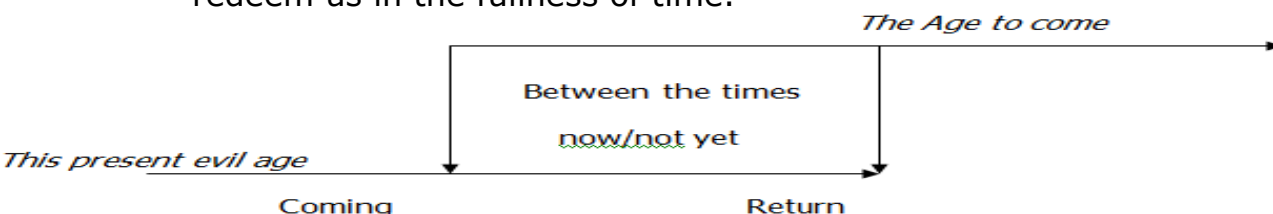
19 For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, does not waver between "Yes" and "No." He is the one whom Silas, Timothy, and I preached to you, and as God's ultimate "Yes," he always does what he says. 20 For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory.

Referring to Christ who does not change, Paul says he does not waver in his decisions also. He had a good reason for not returning to the Corinthians when expected. He tried his best to promote peace and reduce the chance of further conflict. Nevertheless, he also reminds the church, he was the apostle who brought them the Gospel in the first place. It was Silas, Timothy and Paul who were the first missionaries to reach Corinth with the Good News, and if it was not for them, they would still be separated from Christ. Indirectly, Paul is reminding them specifically who their spiritual 'father' is, especially in light of the disrespect he has recently received.



21 It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, 22 and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.

Moving towards a theological point of interest, Paul reminded the Corinthians that although he was the first person to preach the Gospel in their city, it was God who established them and sealed them with the deposit of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, living in us, is s down payment to the church. The presence of the Spirit constantly reminds us that we will also receive our resurrected bodies in the "not yet". If Yahweh has already paid for us, and we have the down payment of the Spirit in us, He will not fail to completely redeem us in the fullness of time.



“I am telling the truth”

23 Now I call upon God as my witness that I am telling the truth. The reason I didn't return to Corinth was to spare you from a severe rebuke. 24 But that does not mean we want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm.

Appealing to the highest authority possible, Paul calls on Yahweh as his witness to validate the truth of his testimony. Because his character was being questioned, Paul desperately wanted the church to believe what he was saying. The reason he wanted to wait for the right time to return to Corinth, was because he was still angry over the ongoing situation and did not want to say anything he may live to regret.

Moreover, he did not want to dominate the church, but expected them to mature in the Spirit. Paul wanted to participate in the spiritual growth of the Corinthians, but not control it. He wanted them to stand in faith being led by the Spirit. Instead of seeing himself as some kind of "lord" over the Corinthian Christians, Paul gives a great description of what ministers should be: fellow workers.⁹

**NO MATTER
HOW HARD
YOU TRY
TO PLEASE
PEOPLE
SOME PEOPLE
WILL
JUDGE YOU
ANYWAY**

Stunningly, Paul the apostle was one of the most influential men who ever lived. His life was a testimony to faithfulness and determination. Yet, even a man as outstanding as Paul had his critics. This stands as a sobering reminder that we can never please everyone. Imagine Paul raised the dead, but some people were still unimpressed with his “boring” manner of speaking.

⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1

“I am telling the truth”

Group Discussion

Please
discuss

Questions To Ponder

1. Paul is considered to be one of the most brilliant theologians ever. He is possibly the most influential follower of Christ in the history of the church. So why was he constantly undermined and rejected by members of the Corinthian community?
2. What is our contemporary understanding of apostolic authority, and does it apply the same way today, as it did back then?
3. Based on his history and lifestyle, if the apostle Paul applied for the position of Lead Pastor at Evangel Temple, would he be eagerly embraced and widely accepted?
4. From the start, Paul asserted that he has no hidden motive other than to love and protect the Corinthian church, but many in the congregation consider him to be harsh and unloving. Could Paul have done anything differently in dealing with the Corinthian church?
5. Paul said the more we "suffer for Christ" is the more we will experience His comfort. Would you personally embrace personal suffering in your own life if it made you a better and more fruitful servant of Christ?
6. From the beginning, Paul highlights the connection between personal brokenness and spiritual strength. How has brokenness in your own life made you spiritually stronger?
7. Paul begins to introduce his "theology of suffering" because he wanted the Corinthian church to understand that bad things happen to good people. Was this assumption based only on Paul's personal experience or is suffering something all believers should expect?
8. Do you have an expectation that persecution and suffering could become a normative part of Christian experience in the near future and how are you preparing for it?



2 So I decided that I would not bring you grief with another painful visit.

As mentioned previously, Paul already had a very painful visit with the church. He caused much contention because he aggressively attacked the sexual sin, false teaching, and the tribal mentality of the proud congregation. The visit was so painful for everyone involved, that Paul decided by the leading of the Spirit, not to do it again until their differences were completely resolved.

2 For if I cause you grief, who will make me glad? Certainly not someone I have grieved.

Paul also knew that another painful visit would not be good for him. The constant conflict with the Corinthian Christians could really damage his relationship with them.¹⁰

He did not want to risk completely severing his connection with the church he planted, so he opted to “cool down” the situation and give the relationship time to heal.

3 That is why I wrote to you as I did, so that when I do come, I won't be grieved by the very ones who ought to give me the greatest joy. Surely you all know that my joy comes from your being joyful. 4 I wrote that letter in great anguish, with a troubled heart and many tears. I didn't want to grieve you, but I wanted to let you know how much love I have for you.

Paul wisely understood, considering all the circumstances, a letter was better than a personal visit. A letter could show Paul's heart, yet not give as much opportunity for the deterioration of their relationship.¹¹

He was not looking to be heavy handed with the Corinthians, nor did he take pleasure in the harshness of his rebuke. He did what was necessary out of love for the spiritual health of the community. Likewise, Yahweh is not a powerful tyrant, but a loving Father who cares about His people. When we fail to understand that authentic love sometimes demands genuine



¹⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2

¹¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2

Excommunication

discipline, we have a twisted version of love that does not reflect the heart of God.

We see in the Scripture that Christ “wept” over the broken condition of humanity. His emotion was driven by His overwhelming love for us and His grief over our present broken condition. Likewise, Paul is also grieving over the situation with the Corinthian church. He takes no pleasure in winning the argument, if their relationship is irrevocably damaged in the process.

In this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul is lamenting over the harshness of his rebuke concerning a man who was living in unrepentant sin among the congregation. Paul’s solution to this problem was to have the individual “excommunicated” from the fellowship of believers. He intended to cut off the cancerous behaviour from his beloved community, before it began to spread all over the body.

CONTEXT MATTERS

³ Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man ⁴ in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. ⁵ Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns. (1 Corinthians 5) NLT

Notice, the intent of the “excommunication” was to protect the church from lawlessness and to bring the sinful man back into fellowship with God. If his individual sin was socially accepted among the church, there would be no real motivation for a lifestyle of holiness and authentic repentance. However, when he was cast out of fellowship with all other Corinthian believers, he had the time to evaluate the seriousness of his transgression and finally came to authentic repentance.

This type of church discipline is nearly impossible to practice in our contemporary society. First of all, in our modern church culture, you can always find a congregation that will welcome and celebrate any kind of sinful behavior. Secondly, in Paul’s day, there was only one church per city. The single church was divided into smaller groups, meeting in different house fellowships. Therefore, it was impossible for the man to simply go to another



Excommunication



church across the street. Being isolated from Christian community gave him a real opportunity to contemplate the seriousness of his sin and imagine what it would be like if he was eternally separated from the body of Christ.

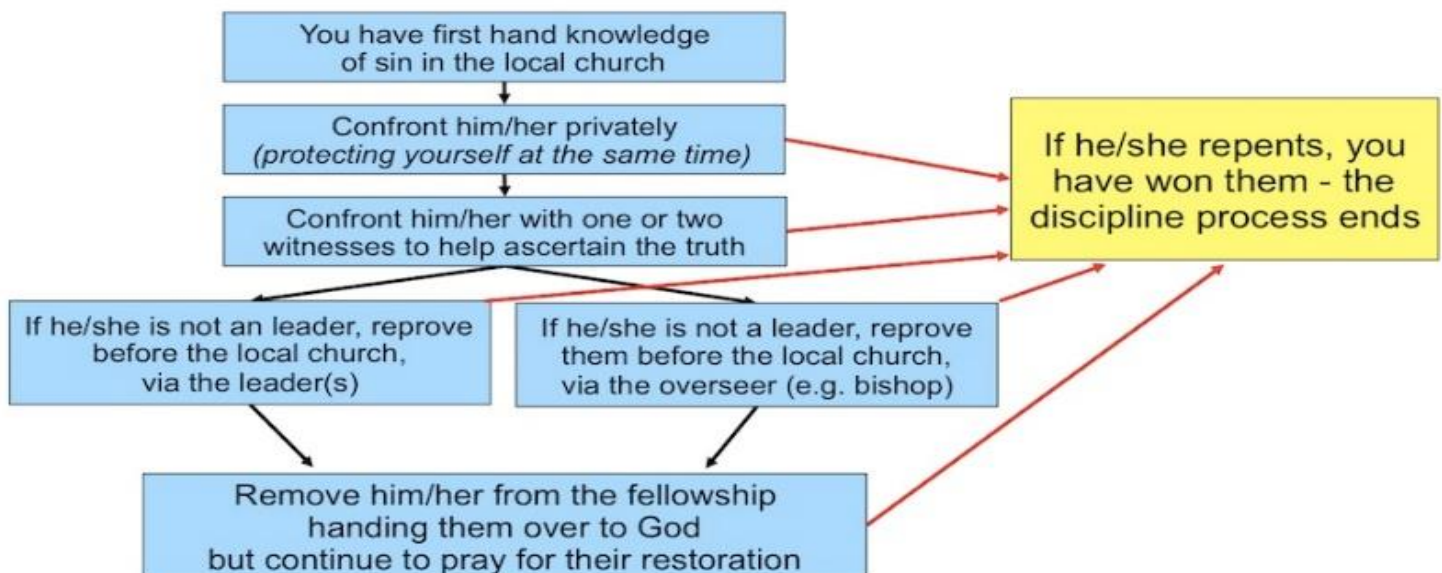
Forgiveness for the Sinner

⁵ I am not overstating it when I say that the man who caused all the trouble hurt all of you more than he hurt me.

Paul displays real pastoral wisdom and compassion. He refers to a specific person among the Corinthians, but he does not name the man. Certainly, this man is happy his name was not recorded in God's eternal Word.¹²

As noted above, Paul is addressing the unnamed congregant who was openly living in sin. There was great division in the congregation, likely because this man held a prominent position. Paul's rebuke of this individual was considered too harsh by many in the community, while others supported his firm stance against this sinful lifestyle.

The Process of Church Discipline



¹² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2

⁶ Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough. ⁷ Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement. ⁸ So I urge you now to reaffirm your love for him.



Amazingly, the sinful man repented and abandoned his wayward lifestyle. Now Paul encouraged the Corinthian community to openly accept the repentant man back into fellowship, for the protection of his own soul. He did not want this broken person to become hopeless and possibly self-destructive, without the comforting influence of the community around him.

Their harsh stance towards this man had a real danger: By withholding restoration and forgiveness from the man, they risked ruining him, causing him to be swallowed up with too much sorrow. ¹³

Paul was very intentional in his desire to remove the sinful man from church fellowship. His goal was reconciliation, not punishment. Our objective as believers should always be redemptive, especially when it comes to issues surrounding church discipline. We should never allow punishment to become our purpose. This attitude is motivated by a wrong spirit and will also increase the level of judgement we face concerning our own sins. Scripture says we will be judged by the same standards we use to evaluate the sins in the lives of others. Hence, your own level of legalism will reflect on the kind of judgment you face when you stand before Christ concerning your eternal rewards, and the evaluation of your faithful/unfaithful service.

⁷ "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. (Matthew 7)

If you have always been a grace filled person, you can likewise expect a high level of grace to be returned to you. In essence, what you give will be given back to you in greater abundance.

³⁷ "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be

¹³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2

forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”



One of our favorite prosperity verses in the Bible has more to do with judgmentalism than money! Are we freely and generously giving the gift of grace to others? If we are generous in giving grace, we will receive it back multiplied, when we need it ourselves. Taking great pleasure in the discipline of another believer, is a spiritually dangerous place to be. Although church discipline is essential, we should never celebrate punishment in itself. If Yahweh only wanted to punish us for our sins, He would have never saved Noah and his family from the flood or sent Yahshua to die on the cross for our sins. Additionally, allowing unforgiveness to root in the heart is extremely dangerous and opens up a believer to demonic torment.

³¹ "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³² Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. (Matthew 18)

⁹ I wrote to you as I did to test you and see if you would fully comply with my instructions.

Paul wrote the instructions to have the man banished from the church, knowing fully well that he would be resisted by many. Apparently, many Corinthians believed the church was supposed to be a caring community, without any type of rebuke or judgment. Sadly, this expression of assumed love is just lawlessness in disguise.

Fortunately, the church accepted Paul's instruction and rejected all fellowship with this congregant, until he publicly repented and came under the authority of the elders.



Extreme A**Extreme B**

There are two extremes in church culture that are equally unbalanced. There are some people who refuse to confront sin, and others who refuse to forgive it. Both are poisonous and if left unchecked will damage the church.

¹⁰ When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ's authority for your benefit, ¹¹ so that Satan will not outsmart us.

Because of his repentant attitude, Paul now agrees with the compassionate judgment of the Corinthian elders to have this man accepted back into the communion of the saints. As mentioned, this was Paul's intention from the beginning. His punishment was for the purpose of restoration and repentance. Nevertheless, now that the individual genuinely repented, it was the duty of the elders to protect this man from further isolation and bring him back into the sheep fold. If the remorseful man remained isolated, he would be an easy target for demonic attack because believers are only spiritually protected in community and communion.

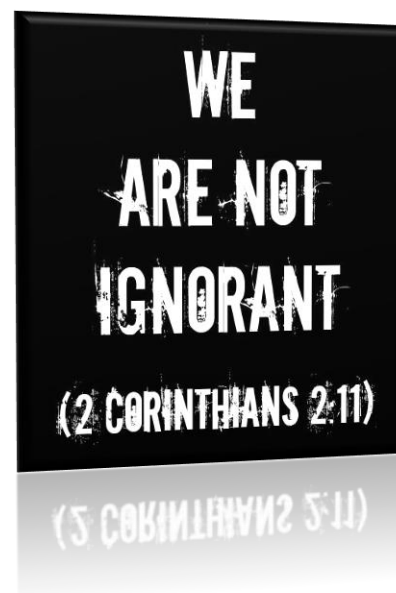
God does not forgive apart from repentance. Therefore, Paul is following the same example. The moment a believer repents, going along with the teachings of Christ, we are obligated to forgive and restore fellowship with that individual.

For we are familiar with his evil schemes.

Paul clearly understood the spiritual warfare directed against the Corinthian church. The spirit of division was looking for an opportunity to enflame the situation concerning this sinful man. It intended to poison the entire church with division. By turning the congregation members against the leadership of the elders, Satan was looking to divide and conquer this community, while shutting down their witness to their lost and dying city.

On the other hand, Paul was protecting his brother in Christ from demonic destruction. To withhold forgiveness from the repentant is to play into the hands of Satan. "There is nothing more dangerous than to give Satan a chance of reducing a sinner to despair. Whenever we fail to comfort those that are moved to a sincere confession of their sin, we play into Satan's hands." (Calvin)¹⁴

¹⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2



Communion Community



¹² When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me. ¹³ But I had no peace of mind because my dear brother Titus hadn't yet arrived with a report from you. So I said good-bye and went on to Macedonia to find him.

Paul was deeply concerned about the disunity of the Corinthian church. After sending his first letter, he waited eagerly for news from the congregation. An opportunity opened for Paul to preach the Gospel in the city where he was waiting for the arrival of Titus, his spiritual son. However, when Titus was delayed, Paul left a great opportunity to establish another church, and anxiously traveled to Macedonia to find him. It seems the situation in Corinth had become such a distraction in Paul's life, that an opportunity to plant another church was squandered because he could not stay focused on the task at hand.

Ministers of the New Covenant

¹⁴ But thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession.

This is a confusing concept. We are captives to Christ, yet we follow Him as glorious soldiers entering a cheering colosseum. We are slaves to Christ, yet we are adopted sons of Yahweh. Both are simultaneously true in the mind of God, who perpetually lives outside of the "now and the not yet" of space and time.

Here, Paul takes an image from the Roman world, seeing Jesus as the victorious, conquering General in a triumphal parade. A Roman triumphal parade was given to successful Generals as they returned from their conquests.¹⁵ The heroic General would parade his captive slaves through the streets of Rome, to bring glory and honor to his military conquest. Likewise, we bring praise and admiration to Yahweh, as He displays us in eternity, as His beloved children. What was presented as a position of shame in the Roman Empire, is translated into the highest position of prestige, in the Kingdom of God.

Aside from this theological gem, Paul wants the Corinthians to know that he is doing his best to follow the will of God and not his own. He is a captive to the mind of the Spirit, and only goes where the Spirit leads.

¹⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2



The Fragrance of Christ

Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. ¹⁵ Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God.

The life of the believer is commonly compared to both salt and light. Regardless of the illustration, we are supposed to have an impact on everything around us. Our witness to the world is beautiful in the eyes of our proud Father. It pleases Him when we live loud and proud for Yahshua. In yet another illustration of influence, Paul explains how a fragrance changes the environment it enters. Fragrance, in the form of incense, was common at a Roman triumphal parade. In Paul's mind, this fragrance is like the knowledge of God, which people can smell as the triumphal parade comes by.¹⁶



But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume.

The message of the Gospel is both grace and judgment, good news and bad news. For the wicked, the Gospel is a burning reminder that Yahweh is a God of justice, who will hold sinners accountable for their rebellion and lawlessness. For the saved, the message was the best news ever. The smell of the Gospel depends on the condition of the heart. To the repentant the message of grace is wonderful news, worthy of celebration and joy. To the unrepentant the message of salvation solidifies the judgment of God. The Gospel is both good and bad news at the same time.

¹⁶ "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸ "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God's

¹⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2



I would go to church, but all they want is **MONEY**

light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.” (John 3)

Our response to the Gospel highlights the condition of the individual’s heart. The righteous will run towards the light because light represents freedom from darkness. The wicked will run away from the light, because light represents the revelation of their hidden wickedness. Whether Gospel bring salvation or judgment, it will accomplish its purpose because the Word of God cannot return void.

And who is adequate for such a task as this?

Preaching the message of the Gospel is a life and death responsibility. Eternal lives are at stake. Its an incredibly heavy responsibility that Yahweh only assigns to the new “family” of God.

¹⁷ You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit.

The word peddling (huckster) has the idea of "adulterating" or "watering down" for gain, and was especially used of a wine seller who watered down the wine for bigger profits. Paul was not like others who watered down the gospel for gain.¹⁷

There will always be those who try to make the Gospel into a money hustle. This is as old as the sun. Yahweh will specially and specifically judge such people with the harshest type of condemnation.

¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. (Philippians 3)



¹⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2





BEWARE!

Yahshua personally confronted "worthless shepherds" who murdered the Son of Yahweh in His own house. They did this horrific crime to protect the power and prestige they received from the business of religion. Likewise, in our contemporary culture, there are people in religious service who are enemies of the cross. While authentically embracing the cross

demands suffering and sacrifice, the counterfeit version of the Gospel only promises success and prosperity. When confronted with the notion of suffering loss for the ministry of Christ, false teachers will "beat out" and leave the sheep to the ravenous wolves.

We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.

The responsibility of preaching the Word of God is stunning because we are witnesses of Yahshua. As a witness of Yahshua, you are automatically a preacher of the Gospel to somebody. Aside from being a witness, we are also being witnessed! People are constantly evaluating our witness to determine if its genuine or not. More importantly, Yahweh is witnessing our witness and will reward us for what we did or failed to do in the service of His Kingdom.



Believe it or not, Paul was tormented with critics who constantly undermined his credentials as a genuine apostle. They found his ministry style aggressive and unsophisticated. Furthermore, he was not the most talented speaker and was not considered a very successful minister of the Gospel. Everywhere Paul

CONTEXT

MATTERS

preached, people tried to kill him. He had a reputation as a man of suffering. Paul was not very popular with the people who saw the Gospel as a means of moving up in life and a way to prosperity.



Adding insult to injury, there were specific teachers that followed Paul's ministry in order to corrupt his disciples and bring them back under the bondage of Jewish legalism, or lead them towards pagan lawlessness. Therefore, Paul constantly needed to defend himself against his critics, even in the churches he planted himself.

Evil people constantly say, "pastors are in ministry for the money". Sadly, this is certainly true in a few cases. However, the damage caused by a few bad apples is tremendous. A few worthless preachers have caused the general population to despise Christian ministry and approach the collection of offerings as a "money hustle". Incredibly, even Paul was accused of being a "scam artist" because he desired to collect an offering for Jerusalem.

Because giving has been abused so many times in the past, it's a very sensitive topic in Christian congregations. Corruption among spiritual leaders has been around from the beginning of organized religion. It was always a problem in ancient Israel.

***12** Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord **13** or for their duties as priests. Whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, Eli's sons would send over a servant with a three-pronged fork. While the meat of the sacrificed animal was still boiling, **14** the servant would stick the fork into the pot and demand that whatever it brought up be given to Eli's sons. All the Israelites who came to worship at Shiloh were treated this way. **15** Sometimes the servant would come even before the animal's fat had been burned on the altar. He would demand raw meat before it had been boiled so that it could be used for roasting.*

***16** The man offering the sacrifice might reply, "Take as much as you want, but the fat must be burned first." Then the servant would demand, "No, give it to me now, or I'll take it by force." **17** So the sin of these young men was very serious in the Lord's sight, for they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt. (1 Samuel 12)*

Nevertheless, Yahweh dealt specifically with the two sons of Eli by killing them in battle and judging Eli the High priest for his lawless leadership. In the end, Yahweh is not mocked, and people will receive the just reward or punishment for their service of Christ.



Group Discussion



1. Paul understood that being "loving" demanded that he made the Corinthians feel uncomfortable at times. Is this the kind of love that Yahshua demonstrated in His ministry?
2. The crowds constantly walked away from the teaching of Yahshua during His ministry. Should a church be willing to see people walk away from the Gospel or do whatever it takes to keep uncommitted people attending in the hope of them eventually changing?
3. Paul assumed that if you truly love someone, you will tell them the truth, regardless of how they respond. Is this a quality we still appreciate from spiritual leaders in our contemporary society?
4. Some members of the Corinthian church accused Paul of overreaching his authority by demanding that the sinful man who was having sex with his father's wife, be removed from the congregation. How would the modern church respond to this kind of church discipline?
5. There are two extremes in church culture that are equally unbalanced. There are some people who refuse to confront sin, and others who refuse to forgive it. What is more deadly to our Christian witness, lawlessness, or legalism?
6. Division and unforgiveness in a church are so dangerous, that Paul said it caused some to be sick and die prematurely. Do we take this as seriously as we should in our church?
7. Is there anything we can do as a church to filter out those who preach the Gospel for their own personal gain?
8. What are some questionable practices you have experienced in respect to collecting offerings and what should be done to prevent such practices in the future?



3 Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not!

*Such letters were common and necessary in the early church. A false prophet or apostle could travel from city to city and easily say, "Paul sent me, so you should support me." To help guard against problems like this, letters of recommendation were often sent with Christians as they traveled.*¹⁸ The Corinthian church was a successful assembly, puffed up with pride. Paul was mocking the practice of demanding letters of recommendation from notable Christian leaders, before accepting traveling teachers and preachers into their meetings. He sarcastically asks if he also needs a letter of recommendation to be presented, even though he was their founding apostle and spiritual father.

² The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. ³ Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

Because Our Gospel Came To
You Not Simply With Words,
But Also With Power, With
The Holy Spirit And With
Deep Conviction. You Know
How We Lived Among You
For Your Sake.

1 Thessalonians 1-5

Paul asserted that the only letter of recommendation he needed, were the results of his ministry and the fruit that still endured by the power of the Spirit. The only reason the Corinthian church existed was because Paul planted and watered the church, until they took root and flourished.

There was nothing wrong with a letter of commendation written on paper, but how much better to have a living letter of commendation! The Christians

¹⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT

at Corinth, along with groups of Christians wherever Paul had worked, were Paul's "living letter" to validate his ministry.¹⁹

4 We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. 5 It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own.

The only qualification necessary under the New Covenant to validate a ministry, is the fruit of our hard labour. Even in the time of the Corinthians, there was an obsession with recommendations and qualifications. This could be compared to our modern-day preoccupation with Bible school degrees and doctorates from Seminaries. Paul asserts that only the Spirit can make anyone sufficient to do what can't be done without God. Recommendations and education can only go so far without the power of the Spirit, to transform lives.

There is obviously a need to be adequately "qualified" to be a minister of the Gospel. Nevertheless, there is a "calling" to occupy a spiritual office in the church. There is no degree of personal study or formal education, that can equip a student with a spiritual gifting. Only the Holy Spirit can "appoint and anoint" anyone into the "five fingers" of the Five-Fold Ministry.

11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. (Ephesians 4)



Our qualification comes from God. 6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.

The Old covenant functioned by the keeping of the Law of Moses. Legalism always ends in condemnation. Keeping the law demands keeping all the laws under the entire Old Testament, not the ones we like! Under the New Covenant, Christ has kept the entire law for us, and set us free from the obligation of rules written on stone tablets. The Holy Spirit who lives in the

¹⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3

New Creation believer, gives us the laws of the Spirit, written on our hearts, and also gives us the power to keep them. Notice, Paul says his qualification come from God because only God can give the necessary "gifting" to accomplish the task.

Paul will not miss an opportunity to "bun down" legalism. In nearly all of his pastoral letters, he constantly warns against the poisonous effect of following religious traditions, over the leading of the Spirit. Paul passionately hated legalism and the corresponding judgmentalism that always accompanied it. Legalistic people have always wrongly assumed that rules increase morality, when in application the absence of religious rules does far more to encourage righteousness. Likewise, Paul is battling a group of legalistic believers among the Corinthians who have been influenced against Paul by the prideful false teachers. To the Colossian church Paul wrote:

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it. (Colossian 2)

When you are a legalist, you spend a lot of time evaluating others, making sure they measure up.

False teachers use many different techniques to further their control of feeble-minded congregations by enslaving needy people into exclusively depending on them for spiritual revelation. Some false teachers claim to have hidden revelations which come from dreams and visions, while others rely on ancient traditions and a few even claim to have received angelic visitations. Regardless of the means, the end is usually the same. False teachers strive to introduce something extra to the Gospel of salvation by faith through grace alone. The element they add usually makes them

**The sting of death
is sin, and the power
of sin is the law.**

**1 Corinthians
15:56**



indispensable to the “hidden knowledge” they peddle. This makes them rich in the process because they can sell their religious service for outrageous prices to deceive people who want to purchase a blessing.

The Glory of the New Covenant

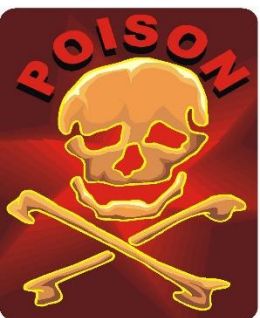
7 The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face.

Was it wrong to call the Old Covenant the ministry of death? No, because that is what the law does to us: It slays us as guilty sinners before God so that we can be resurrected by the New Covenant. It isn't that the problem was with the law, but with us: The sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.²⁰

Unapologetically, Paul once again states that legalism leads to spiritual death and not life. When the ministry of the Law of Moses was introduced to the people of Israel, 3000 people were instantly killed because breaking the law is punishable by death.



Ministry of Law



27 Moses told them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Each of you, take your swords and go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. Kill everyone—even your brothers, friends, and neighbors." 28 The Levites obeyed Moses' command, and about 3,000 people died that day. (Exodus 32)

On the other hand, when the ministry of the Spirit was introduced on the day of Pentecost, 3000 people were instantly saved.

²⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3



JESUS IS GREATER THAN MOSES

Ministry of Grace

³⁸ Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." ⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹ Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. (Acts 2)

Both covenants demonstrated the glory of Yahweh, but the Old Covenant manifested it in the power of death, while the New Covenant manifested it in the abundance of life. The power of the New Covenant is much greater than the power of the Old Covenant. The glory of the Old Covenant was always fading, even though it once shined brightly upon the face of Moses the servant of Yahweh.

For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away.

The Old Testament had great glory attached to it. When Moses stood in the presence of Yahweh Almighty, he literally absorbed the glory of God. The glory of Yahweh was so strong that Moses glowed with the radiance of His presence. Nevertheless, the glory of standing in the presence of Yahweh is greatly inferior to the glory of God revealed to all the people in the person of Yahshua.



The glory of the Old Covenant was predestined to fade and be replaced by the New and final Covenant, established by the blood of Yahshua. This was the collective testimony of the prophetic material which spoke of the day when God would put a "new heart and new Spirit" in all the people of Israel.

⁸ Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life?

The Ministry of Death, Written and Engraved on Stones

NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS

If the old covenant, which brought death had this glory, we should expect greater glory in the new covenant, which brings the ministry of the Spirit and life.²¹

The coming of the Spirit was the restoration of everything Adam lost in respect to his relationship and fellowship with God. The New Creation is infinitely superior to the status Adam lost, because the Holy Spirit lives in us. The power of light greatly exceeds the power of darkness. It's impossible to turn up the darkness, to overcome light! Darkness is the absence of light that fills a void. Likewise, death is the absence of the power of life that flowed into Adam when he sinned. The glory of the resurrection of Christ overcame the condemnation connected to the fall of Adam. There is simply no comparison between the old wine and the new.

⁹ If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God!



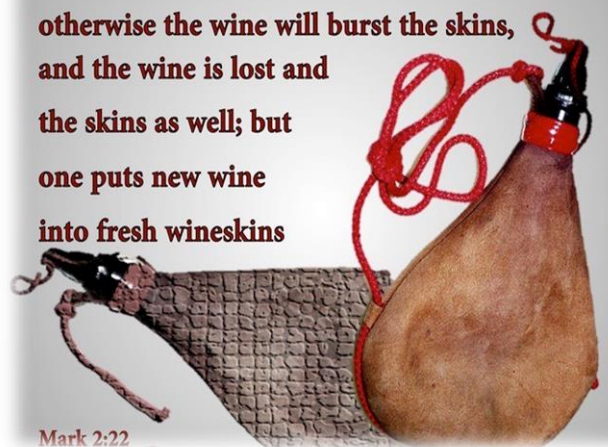
The glory of the Old Covenant was rooted in the power to destroy. It reminded us of the justice of Yahweh and the necessity to punish sin and reward righteousness. The outcome of the Old Covenant was always condemnation because everyone naturally falls short of perfection.

The glory of the New Covenant is the power of restoration. It reminds us of the mercy of Yahweh and the necessity to be compassionate and offer grace, because, as mentioned above, everyone naturally falls short of perfection.

¹⁰ In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. ¹¹ So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

The glory of the Old Covenant was temporary and therefore fading in the light of eternity. The New Covenant is infinite, irreplaceable, and eternally

No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins



²¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3

Religion blinds you

glorious. There is no comparison between the covenant of law and the covenant of grace.

Returning to the problem of legalism, Paul constantly hammers home the fact that grace is infinitely more powerful and glorious than the ministry of the law. Yahshua also said law and grace could not be mixed or contained in the same vessel. Nevertheless, He said some will refuse the taste of the noticeably superior wine, because they refuse to evolve and continue to consume the dead wine of religious tradition and Jewish custom.



³⁷ "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. ³⁸ New wine must be stored in new wineskins. ³⁹ But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. 'The old is just fine,' they say." (Luke 5)

¹² Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away.

The purpose of the veil was not to shield the people of Israel from the glory of God, but to hide the fact that the glory was slowly fading and would not always remain on Moses. As long as Moses continued to glow, the people of Yahweh were fearful, and also faithful. Nevertheless, as the glory faded, their faithfulness to the Lord faded as well. The Old Covenant was useful only when the people saw the glory, but it had no power to change the sinful heart of the people. The moment the glory disappeared, their sinful nature resurfaced, and they were pulled back into the idolatry of the pagan people around them.

Even Moses did not have real boldness under the old covenant. A veil is not a "bold" thing to wear; it is a barrier and something to hide behind. Moses lacked boldness (compared to Paul) because the covenant that he ministered under was fading away and fading in glory.²²

¹⁴ But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so

²² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3

God's grace

to your need for

they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.

The veil that Paul referred to is spiritual blindness, caused by religious pride. The Jews became proud of their special relationship with Yahweh under the Old Covenant and actively resisted the new thing God was doing among His people. Although a remnant of Israel accepted the Messiah and conditions of the new wine (Covenant) in the new wineskin (heart), the vast majority were blinded by Satan to the point of murdering their Messiah.

³ If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. ⁴ Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4)

In a casual reading of Scripture, one might assume Paul was just a theologically gifted individual, who always spoke in a high-minded way. According to the Corinthians, the opposite was true. Paul was straight forward and always got directly to the point. He was extremely specific in what he wrote about, if you understand the context of the discussion. In the back of Paul's mind looms the threat of the Judaizers, and their influence on the Corinthian church.

CONTEXT MATTERS

The veil according to Paul represents the separation between a sinful man and the holiness of Yahweh. Under the Old Covenant the veil was necessary to maintain the distinction between mortal humanity and immortal Deity. The veil protected man from the awesome glory of an unapproachable God. It was only under the covering of the "blood" that the High Priest could venture behind the veil, entering the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. During that time, the High Priest risked his life by entering into the glory of Yahweh and needed to keep all the religious rules, regulations, and traditions perfectly, or he would die like Aaron's sons.

¹⁰ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the Lord by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. ² So fire blazed forth from the Lord's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the Lord. (Leviticus 10)

HOLY HOLY HOLY

Aaron's two sons were not killed because they were especially sinful. They were simply too casual with the commands of Yahweh and failed to respect the proper protocol in approaching a majestic King. The people had to be protected from the glory of Yahweh by the vail, not His anger. Yahweh is not angry at His heavenly sons, but even the angelic host, who surround the throne day and night, cannot look directly into His unapproachable grandeur. Even the mighty seraphim shield themselves from the burning presence of God's Shekinah glory.

6 It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ² Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ They were calling out to each other,

**"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!" (Isaiah 6)**

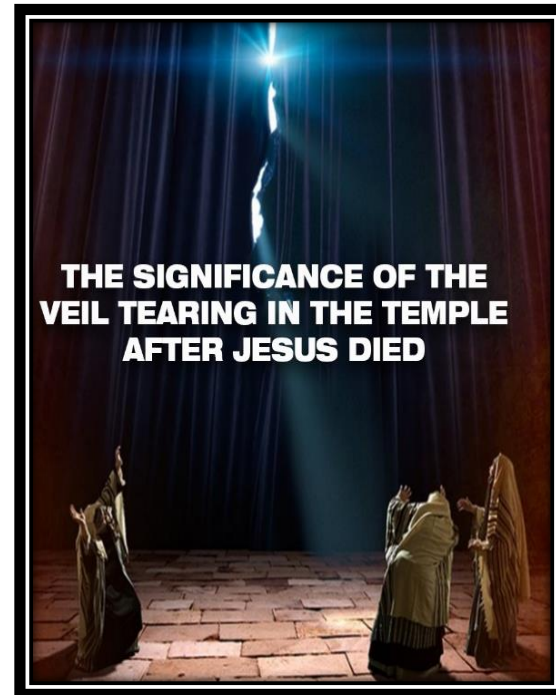


Under the Old Covenant, the God of Israel was unapproachable because of His "transcendent" nature. He was beyond the range of human understanding. His presence constantly caused humanity to fear Him and hide from His face. Under the New Covenant, that same Almighty God, condescends or comes down to our level so we can speak with Him face to face without the fear of dying. In Christ, the transcendent nature of Yahweh becomes immanent. The "transcendence" of Yahweh means that God is outside of humanity's full experience, perception or grasp. The "immanence" of Yahweh means that He is knowable, perceivable or graspable.



The New Covenant relationship with God is vastly superior to the Old Covenant relationship because we can approach Yahweh without covering our faces. We do not need to fear that the transcendent glory of God will kill us instantly. When Yahshua died, the separation between man and God that was established in the Garden of Eden after the fall of Adam was permanently reversed.

50 Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, 52 and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. 53 They left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27)



Now that the veil is destroyed by the Hand of God, there is no need to re-establish the curtain of separation with religious traditions and Jewish legalism. This is the heart of what Paul is discussing. The Old Covenant was an inferior and fading means of relating to Yahweh through the broken lens of sin and death. The New Covenant is infinitely superior because sin no longer separates man from God, because Yahshua became sin on our behalf. It troubles Paul greatly that anyone would reject the "grace-based" liberty of the new way of approaching Yahweh and instead attempt to return to a "law-based" method that never worked in the first place. In addition, the "law based" covenant was abolished after the death of the Messiah.

According to Paul, the Judaizers were extremely dangerous because they were encouraging the people of God to return to the spiritual slavery of religious Egypt. They were corrupting the freedom of justification through faith by adding legal requirements that were outside the prerequisites of the Gospel. By demanding that New Covenant believers be circumcised, they were deliberately trying to connect them to the Law of Moses, which was intended to minister death and not life. This was a tragic occurrence in the eyes of Paul because it degraded the finished work of Christ on the cross by reintroducing the necessity of human effort to cooperate with the process of salvation.

Growing Up

15 Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.



Everywhere the Old Covenant is venerated, legalism is the dominant spirit which leads people to slavery and death. Unfortunately, everyone under the veil of legalism has a level of blindness and remains under the shadow of a weak and faded relationship with God.



Sadly, Christian legalism has the same outcome. While it does not nullify the power of salvation through grace, any kind of tradition or ritual that adds to the finished work of the cross is religious bondage. People in general are not attracted to the religious bondage and will reject the Gospel because of the manmade pollution that has been added to cloud its beautiful simplicity.



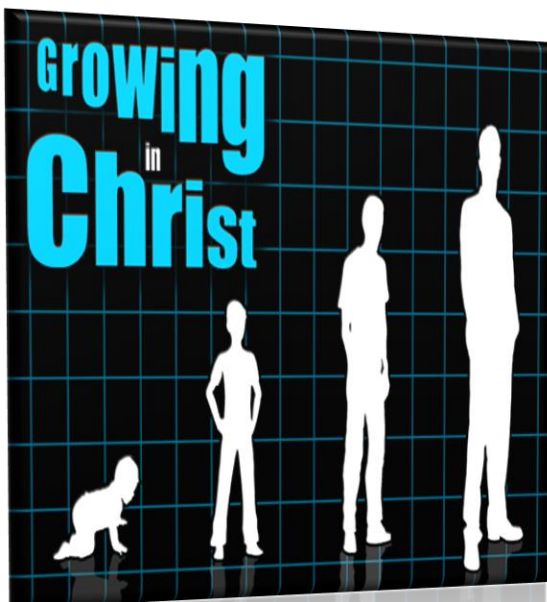
16 But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.



The revelation of "righteousness by faith" has the power to break the bondage of legalism. The Old Covenant hinged on man's obedience to the Law of God, but the New Covenant depends on the faithfulness of Yahweh Almighty to us. The coming of the Spirit is the evidence that we are made the "righteousness of God" because the Holy Spirit can't live in the heart of a sinner.



Notice, Paul says the Spirit gives liberty from the requirements of the Law. However, the Spirit of the Lord is not the author of confusion. Liberty is



never an excuse for disorder. This was another ongoing issue among the Corinthian church in respect to the proper use of spiritual gifts. Charismatic freedom will not excuse the kind of disorder caused by people exercising the gifts of the Spirit in selfish and self-seeking ways. Freedom from legalism is not a justification for lawlessness in the community of Christ.



18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the

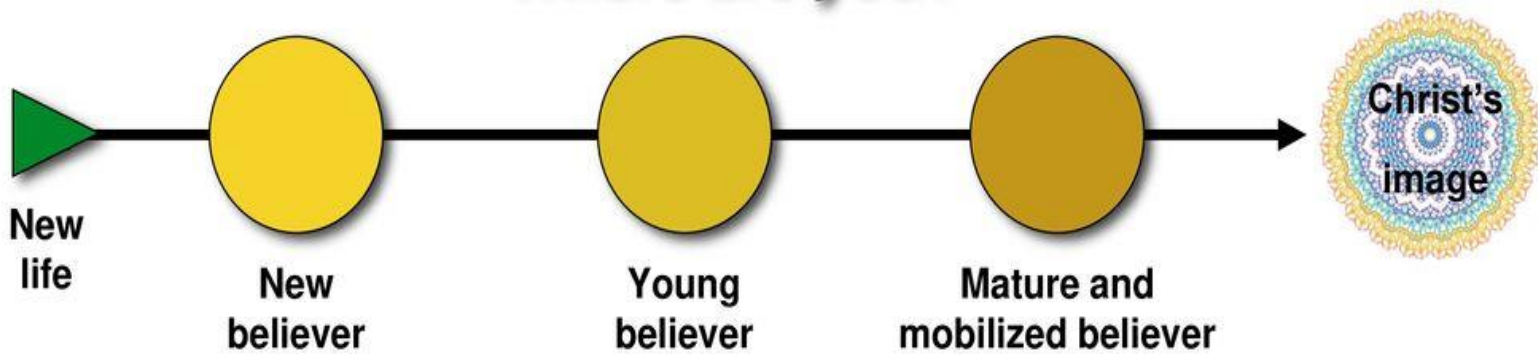
Spiritually

Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Being a believer does not necessarily mean that the religious veil is removed. One can still be saved but still not know the liberty of the Gospel. Only the Spirit can progressively remove the blindness from the eyes of the believer, until they mature into the fullness of the glorious image of Christ. *The work of grace-based transformation is a slow process. We are being transformed; the work isn't complete yet, and no one should expect it to be complete in themselves or in others. No one comes away from one incredible time with the Lord perfectly transformed.*²³

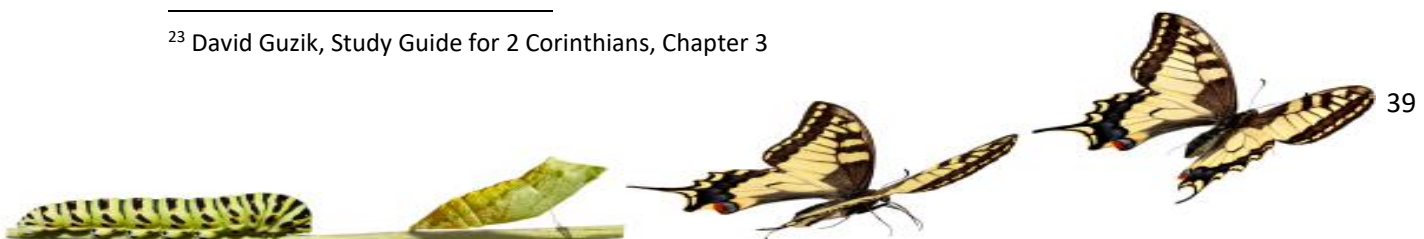
Discerning One's Spiritual Growth

Where are you?



- | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have new life? • What signs of new life do you have? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you doubt your salvation? Why? • Are there any sins you think God has not forgiven? What are they? • Why does God want to have a close relationship with you? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps are you taking to deepen your intake of God's Word? • How do you handle defeat? • What temptations are you learning to overcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you going through any trials right now? Is your faith being strengthened or weakened? • Who are you presently serving? • Can you share a lesson of life with another to help them? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree are you becoming made more in Christ's image? Explain. • Are you presently growing? |
|--|--|---|--|---|

²³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3



Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Paul said his letter of recommendation was the results of his ministry. Is it wise to accept spiritual leadership on the basis of gifting?
2. How important is theological education compared to spiritual gifting?
3. Would you rather have a spiritual leader who is extremely educated and theologically sound or a spiritually gifted minister who is theologically weak, but has powerful signs following his/her ministry?
4. Paul asserted that the Old Covenant ends in death, but the New Covenant ends in life. What do you think he means?
5. Paul said the reading of Moses writing caused the Jewish people's hearts to be covered by a "veil" connected to their religious pride. How is legalism connected to pride in Paul's estimation?
6. How does a legalistic understanding of the Gospel still blind the minds of religious Christians today?
7. It was extremely difficult for the Jewish people to embrace what Paul said about their traditions because they loved their religious rituals. Why is accepting change so difficult for many religious institutions?
8. The words "we have always done it this way" is the most dangerous phrase in church history. What does this mean to you?



Treasure in Fragile Clay Jars

4 Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. ² We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.

Paul was not seeking to hype up the Gospel to reach people on an emotional level. Nor would he flex on the truth of the Word to make the message more socially acceptable. Teaching and preaching the Word of God without gimmicks is the pure milk that brings growth to authentic believers.

Many preachers fail on this exact point. They have the true Gospel, but they add to it things of human ingenuity and wisdom. Often, they add these corrupting or diluting things to the Gospel because they think adding them will make the Gospel more effective or give it a greater hearing. They are still doing what Paul insisted he would never do, handling the word of God deceitfully.²⁴



Contextually, Paul is continuously jabbing at the supporters of the false teachers, especially among the Corinthian leaders. Although the false teachers were successful in gathering a crowd and speak with great eloquence, their message was dishonest, filled with personal ambition and demonic wisdom. Just because it seems to work, does not mean it comes from God. If the root is grounded in selfish ambition or legalism, the fruit will be corrupt and filled with poison.

³ If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing.

Paul preached an open and authentic Gospel. Anyone could look at what Paul preached and see the plain truth of it. He did not preach an elaborate system of hidden mysteries.²⁵ There were many false teachers in Paul's day who claimed to have "secret knowledge" that was hidden from ordinary believers. People who claim to have "hidden knowledge" or "personal

²⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4

²⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4



the GREAT DECEIVER

revelation" of something undiscovered in the Scripture are usually self seeking. The Gospel was fully revealed by the teaching of Paul. The only thing hidden about the true Gospel, is hidden from unbelievers, who are separated from God by the veil of spiritual blindness.




"spiritual blindness
is far worse
than
physical
blindness."
2corinthians 4:4

⁴ Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe.

The Biblical truth that Satan is the god of this age can be understood in a wrong way. Some later Christians (like the Manichaeans) promoted a dualistic understanding of God and Satan and emphasized this phrase the god of this age. Their idea was that God and Satan were "equal opponents," instead of understanding that in no way is Satan the opposite of God. In reaction to these false

doctrines, many early Christian commentators (like Augustine, Origen, Chrysostem, and others) interpreted this verse strangely to "remove ammunition" from the heretics. But this is wrong. Just because someone twists a truth one way, it doesn't mean we can twist it the other way to "compensate."²⁶

The theological pendulum has always swung between two extremes. Either spiritual warfare is overemphasized or underemphasized in our contemporary theology. This is not a new tension and has been around from the time of the early church, who needed constant theological correction.



When the Scripture calls Satan the god of this world, we must be careful of not adding to what the Bible teaches. Satan is in absolutely no way equal to Yahweh or even worthy of His attention. The gap between a rebellious created angelic servant and the uncreated Almighty God, is too vast to comprehend. Satan was given a stage only because Adam relinquished his authority to him and handed over a lease agreement concerning the management of the earth. Satan has

²⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4



Who is the God of this World?

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

OUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

a legal, short-term, lease to exercise power over the children of Adam until the time this contract expires. He is not presently ruling in hell or torturing the souls of the departed dead. He never owned the keys to death and hell because both were created by Yahweh. Satan exercised the power of death, but never had it. Moreover, the authority of Satan over the resurrected sons/daughters of Yahweh is broken. In Christ, the power of sin and death is forever broken, and we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness and now live in the light of grace.

¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. (Colossians 1)

There are always two opposing extremes that emerge when it comes to Satan and his diabolical influence. You can overemphasise the power of Satan until you see him everywhere, or you can undermine the influence of the Devil until you can't see him at all. Both are distortions of the truth and lead to unhealthy conclusions in the area of spiritual warfare. Spiritual wickedness in the atmosphere above the earth and on the earth is very real. However, as believers we need to graduate from the influence of cartoon like representations, medieval art, and charismatic nonsense, to a place of biblical enlightenment.



The enemy is defeated! We are seated with Christ! Yahshua is enthroned in the heavens and rules the earth right now. The Scripture assures us that Yahweh's Messiah is seated comfortably waiting for the time of His return.

***¹ The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet." (Psalm 110)***



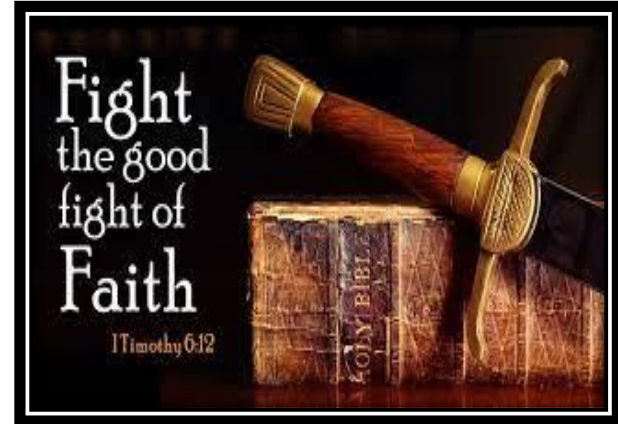
SPIRITUAL WARFARE

OUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

PRINCIPALITIES



In the eyes of Yahweh, the resurrection of Yahshua ended the dominance of Satan over humanity, and freed mankind from the dominion of death that Yahweh imposed as a result of rebellion. There is no cosmic arm-wrestling match going on between Satan and Yahshua for control of the earth. The cross ended the power of Satan to control the destiny of humanity because the curse placed upon the human race is forever broken. While Satan and his rebellious angels will never escape the punishment of eternal separation from Yahweh, the seed of Adam has been redeemed and restored to a better relationship with God, under a stronger and everlasting covenant. As believers, our greatest battle in the realm of spiritual warfare is not with Satan, but ourselves. We are called to fight the fight of faith! Far too many Christ followers, spend way too much time, fighting the devil instead of growing in spiritual revelation and knowledge. While we are called to wrestle with unseen creatures, we are commanded to fight the good fight of faith.



11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses. 13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. (1 Timothy 6)

They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.



The power of Satan is deception. He is a created being who usurps authority that did not belong to him in the first place. The greatest deception Satan employs is to make people think he is more powerful than he truly is. The Devil is only powerful when he can successfully blind people to the power of the

AND POWERS?

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves.

Gospel, and he does this in two ways. First, he is powerful in the eyes of the unbeliever when he prevents them from seeing the light of salvation radiating from the glorious cross of Christ. Secondly, he is powerful in the eyes of the believer who remains in an immature condition and does not understand their true identity, as a resurrected, "New Creation", child of Yahweh. Both conditions are persistently maintained by the influence of spiritual blindness.



Like the ancient Jews, who were blinded by religious pride when they crucified their Messiah, the people of this world who reject the Good News are also blinded to the obvious truth of the Gospel. Satan is actively seeking to obstruct and distort the "good news" of Yahshua to keep humanity continuously living in darkness. This is not a random strategy, but an organized effort involving both fallen angels, demons, and the political rulers of the earth to maintain the power of deception. Spiritual wickedness extends downward from the atmosphere above the earth, towards the nations controlled with demonically manipulated kings and princes. The dominion of Satan is established in a spiritual, social, political, and cultural tapestry that veils the entire earth and is designed to keep lost people in spiritual darkness.

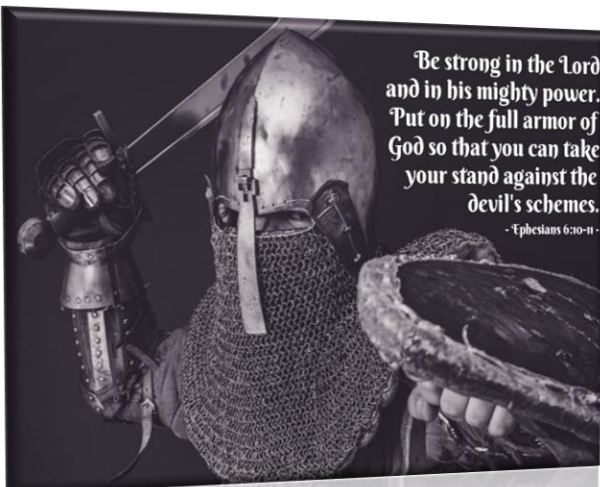
Nevertheless, people who authentically want to know God, will receive the revelation of Christ, who is the perfect representation of Yahweh. When Yahshua is revealed, Yahweh is made visible also. The revelation of Christ is always a matter of spiritual warfare! The spiritual blindness must be removed, so that the revelation can be seen.



⁵ You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake.

False teachers rely on the power of their own personality to draw and keep people interested in the Gospel. Paul, on the other hand was not known to

be a charismatic speaker. He built his message on rock solid theology and the unrepentant cross of Christ. A following built on the personality of the preacher is sandy ground that will erode if the messenger falls from grace or decides to leave. However, the foundation built on Christ is not dependant on the personality of the preacher and will endure the trials and tribulations of life's storms.



We are all jars of clay, fragile and poor, yet we carry within us an immense treasure.

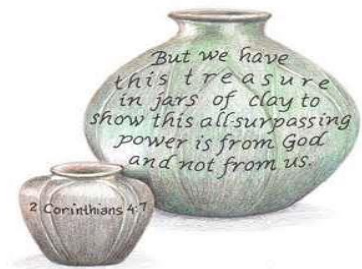
Pope Francis

⁶ For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

Expanding on the concept of the Satanic veil that blinds the eyes of the unbeliever, the same God who spoke light into the darkness on the day of creation, is still speaking light into the blindness of humanity. Christ is the light of the world who destroys the power of Satan to blind the children of Adam, and keep them in slavery to sin.

⁸ But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3)

⁷ We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure.



Only a fool would hide inconceivably valuable treasure in a weak clay jar. Treasure is normally kept in a strong steel box or buried in a wooden chest to prevent it from being stolen. Conversely, Yahweh has hidden the greatest, most valuable treasure in the universe, in weak, broken, human containers. Our eternal value does not come from the dying body we presently occupy, but from the Spirit who lives within us, giving us the unsurpassed wealth of eternal life.

Notice, there is no lasting wealth in this world aside from eternal life. Everything is pointless if it's only temporary. Our salvation is the only expression of lasting wealth that will not be burned up in the coming judgment.

This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

Even the most strong and athletic person in the world is just a collection of dying cells and water. We have no lasting value in ourselves, aside from Christ in us. Anything that celebrates humanity apart from Christ, is prideful

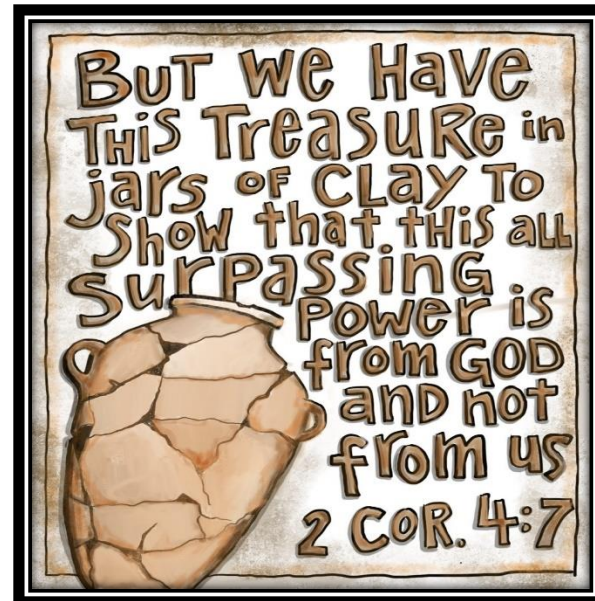
We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake.

human vanity destined for the fire. We were never supposed to be attached or attracted to the jar, but to the glorious content it contains.

This is yet another veiled jab at the prideful Corinthians, who hold one minister above another. The only person who is supposed to be celebrated in the church is Christ who is the only celebrity worthy of our adoration. The fashionable "celebrity pastor" is an invention of the modern church propped up by our obsession with social media. Like the ancient Corinthians, we gather around and "idolize" our favorite spiritual leaders, at the expense of our collective unity. Then we proudly display the depth of our deception by publicly fighting in front of unbelievers, demonstrating our spiritual immaturity. This loveless behaviour repels sinners from the message of the Gospel, especially when believers are unkind people passionately divided by pastoral personalities.

As containers of the glory of God in human bodies, we are the expression of Christ upon the earth. We are as close to Yahweh as humanly possible. We are called to reign in this life as kings and priests exercising the authority of God over all of life's circumstances with a radical demonstration of the power of love.

On the other hand, our spiritual treasure is often revealed by the brokenness of our own life and the suffering we endure for the sake of Christ. Modern charismatic theology has exclusively focused on the privilege of "reigning" with Christ but has downplayed the pleasure of "suffering" with Him. We have built a paper Gospel about dominating the circumstances of life through the power of faith, which excludes the possibility of our faith being most manifested in times of suffering and persecution.



³ Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. ⁵ And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. ⁶ And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. ⁷ Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things. (2 Timothy 2)

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

2 Timothy 2:12 KJV

WHY DO **BAD** THINGS HAPPEN TO **GOOD** PEOPLE?

11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: (2 Timothy 2:12) KJV

Paul preached both realities equally. He reigned in Christ victoriously in the midst of his trials, rejection and suffering as evidence of the power of God. The power of God in his life did not give him the ability to escape his persecution, but it gave him the supernatural endurance to overcome every obstacle that hindered his triumphant race.

The prosperity Gospel is not new. It was King Solomon who said, "there is nothing new under the sun." Humanity in general, has no desire to suffer. The problem of human suffering is further complicated considering our present identity as children of God. As believers, we are "presently" children of a loving, all-powerful Father. We have been given right standing with Yahweh by the blood of Yahshua. Therefore, if we are truly the children of an all-

powerful Father, why should we as His sinless church have to suffer? Does our loving Father receive pleasure from our suffering, pain, and loss? If so, does this belief make God the author of both good and evil? Are we not called to be kings and priests? Is this a "now" reality? Or a "not yet" reality?

10 And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

All Bible believing, "believers", struggle with such questions. Many Christians don't really believe the Bible at all. Many believe in a church-based version of their own "Jesus", divorced from the Scriptures. Regardless, all believers who take the Bible seriously will have a problem with pain. Like Job, we will struggle with the question of "why do bad things happen to good people?"

GOOD INTENTIONS
BAD THEOLOGY



WHY DO **BAD** THINGS HAPPEN TO **GOOD** PEOPLE?

For the Corinthians, they wanted the kingdom to be now, so they could begin to reign on the earth without trials and tribulations. There were likely false teachers telling the congregation what they wanted to hear. The real problem was not only with the false teachers, but the wayward believers who refused to accept sound doctrine or balanced wholesome teaching. Paul blamed false teaching in the church on people who seek after it because they reject the truth.

³ For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths. (2 Timothy 4)

We all want to hear messages that promise us victory without suffering, but that is not the process of death and resurrection. Sound doctrine highlights the tension between the “now and the not yet” emphasizing the fact that the Kingdom of God is “here and still coming” simultaneously. Like the rest of us, the Corinthians longed to hear about prosperity without the necessity of suffering in the process. Moreover, when Paul professed that it was a pleasure to be granted the privilege of “suffering with Christ” many Corinthians opted for the teaching of their favorite false teacher to avoid the implications of what Paul was saying.

Paul preached a prosperity Gospel that promised believers they could “reign in life” over the circumstances and situations that arose against them. He personally experienced peace, in the midst of the storm, just like Yahshua. The Gospel does not promise us the absence of storms, but that we will rise above our circumstances because Holy Spirit lives in us.

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Romans 5:17 NIV



Beloved

I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth

3 JOHN 1.2 KJV



Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Paul said there were “shameful deeds and underhanded methods” that distort the truth of the Gospel. What are some examples of this in our contemporary society?
2. The Gospel is clear and uncomplicated. Unbelievers are blinded and need a miracle to see the truth. They need a resurrection, not just information. How does this change the way we present the Gospel? What does this statement mean to you?
3. Paul wanted to establish a theology of suffering among the Corinthian believers. Do we have a firmly established theology of suffering in our church?
4. In the illustration of the clay jars, Paul connects his personal brokenness to his effectiveness as a minister of the Gospel. Was this merely Paul’s personal experience or is it a spiritual principle that can be applied to us all?
5. Paul appealed to Timothy to endure suffering as a good soldier of Christ. Was this advice contextually given only to Timothy as a fellow pastor or does it apply to the entire body of Christ?
6. As believers we all enjoy messages about “reigning” with Christ, but messages on suffering are not very popular. Is it good to preach more messages about hardship, suffering and endurance in the church?
7. God doesn’t want to hurt you. He wants what’s best for you. Unfortunately, sometimes what’s best for you may cause you to suffer. What does this statement mean to you?
8. Paul had suffered greatly for the sake of the Corinthians. Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ? Please discuss.



CONTEXT MATTERS

As previously noted, some members of the Corinthian church had a huge problem identifying with Paul as their founding apostle. His life was filled with so much tragedy and ongoing misery, that several Corinthian believers wanted to distance themselves from him, because he did not represent their personal version of the "prosperity" Gospel.

Paul constantly appeared to have the worst luck. Everywhere he went people were regularly attempting to kill him. Moreover, it seemed that nature itself was trying to stop Paul from accomplishing his mission.

28 Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta. ² The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

³ As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand. ⁴ The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live." ⁵ But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. ⁶ The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and decided he was a god. (Acts 28)



The people of Malta witnessed the ever-present supernatural warfare which constantly followed Paul, but wrongfully assumed it was incredibly bad luck. What kind of man barely survives a horrific shipwreck and then gets bitten by a snake on the beach? They wrongfully assumed Paul was surely cursed by the gods. Interestingly, they were correct in their assumption, but wrong in their conclusion. Paul was truly cursed by the gods! As he understood it, the ongoing resistance in his life was caused by territorial spirits called "princes", who ruled over the regions where the Gospel had not yet reached. Their task was to stop the preaching of the Gospel. So, they hindered and frustrated his missionary work all the days of his life. Paul was intimately



aware of the spiritual warfare that surrounded him and even prayed for its removal.

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12)

Taken in context, the "messenger" in the above passage, is a common Old Testament reference to a fallen angelic Son of God, who is obviously working against the will of Yahweh in his resistance of Paul. Therefore, Paul was primarily battling a fallen angelic being who was specifically assigned to prevent him from preaching the Gospel in Rome. This "god", as the pagans understood them to be, caused trials and tribulations everywhere Paul went to establish his churches. The unseen diabolical entity often stirred up the crowds to murder Paul and caused confusion wherever he preached. Moreover, the pesky "messenger" even appeared to have influence over the weather, stirring up storms, in an effort to hinder his travel plans.

It's completely understandable that many members of the Corinthian congregation disassociated themselves from Paul because he was seemingly unsuccessful in everything he did. He was certainly not an eloquent speaker, compared to other famous Greek orators. On the surface, he did not look like someone who carried the "blessing" of God. To be associated with an apostle who attracted such negativity, placed the Corinthians in a direct line of demonic attack. Perhaps they noticed when they aligned themselves with Apollos, there was less spiritual resistance to their ministry. Sadly, many Corinthian believers made the classic charismatic mistake of assuming that increased spiritual resistance is evidence of a lack of blessing or God's approval. In reality, the absence of spiritual warfare is a powerful indication that we have not gained the attention of the kingdom of darkness and don't deserve any diabolical attention because we are actually inconsequential in the spiritual realm.

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 2)

Indeed, all who desire to live a
godly life in Christ Jesus will be
persecuted.

- 2 Tim 3:12



perplexed, but not in despair;

The idea of suffering is very unpalatable to everyone who believes in an all-powerful God. This was the central theological point of the Book of Job. Nevertheless, as believers we will never escape the "problem of pain" with dishonest theology that promises a carefree life without persecution, anguish and struggle.

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.

Just because we don't understand what's happening in the spiritual realm, does not mean that we must despair and feel abandoned by God. Faith reminds us that Yahweh is still in the boat and will not leave us or forsake us.

The story of Job is a striking reminder that we will never fully understand what is happening in the spiritual world. Nevertheless, we are called to continue to trust and obey even when we are completely bewildered by the circumstances of life.

⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

Paul is expressing a level of persecution that very few people can relate to. The illustration of being hunted down like an animal is quite graphic. At times he obviously felt like "prey" to diabolical powers beyond his control.

Paul's life was hard, and it was hard because of his passionate devotion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. Yet look at the triumph of Jesus in Paul's life: not crushed... not in despair... not forsaken... not destroyed. Paul knew the power and victory of Jesus in his life because he was continually in situations where only the power and victory of Jesus could meet his need.²⁷

Stunningly, with all the spiritual power and authority Paul possessed, he could not bind or rebuke the will of Yahweh for his life. He was destined to

We are hard pressed
on every side, but not crushed;
persecuted, but not abandoned;
struck down, but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:8



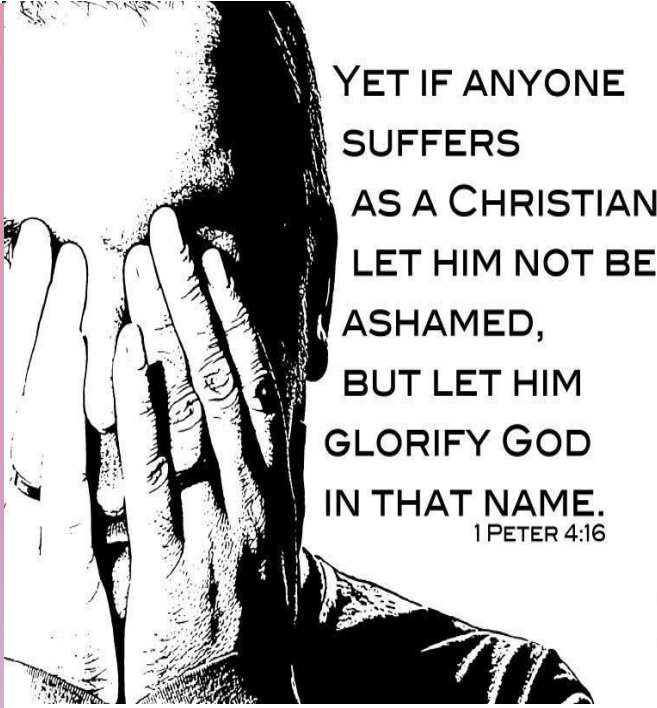
²⁷David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4

hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;

persecuted, but not abandoned;

struck down, but not destroyed.

ASHAMED



YET IF ANYONE
SUFFERS
AS A CHRISTIAN
LET HIM NOT BE
ASHAMED,
BUT LET HIM
GLORIFY GOD
IN THAT NAME.

1 PETER 4:16

DO NOT BE

ASHAMED

suffer greatly for the sake of Christ. This was made clear from the moment of his conversion.

***15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. **16** For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9)*

Charismatic believers have extremely weak theology concerning the

concept of suffering. Many people try to avoid the subject all together, as if the Word of God really promises that faith is the key to avoid difficulty in life. For Paul, faith was not a means to escape the difficult situations that constantly pursued him. It was his connection to the ever-flowing supply of grace that gave him the supernatural ability to triumph over his circumstances and live in victory regardless of the situation.

10 Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

Paul, like any Christian, wanted the life of Jesus evident in him. Paul knew this could only happen if he also carried about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. There are some aspects of God's great work in our lives that only happen through trials and suffering. ²⁸

As mentioned previously, we are treasures hidden in cracked clay pots. Ironically, the greater the brokenness, the more intense the light shines through. Accordingly, there is great glory in participating in the suffering that comes to those who are closely associated with Christ. This was not a message the Corinthian church wanted to embrace. They were a rich and prideful community who wanted to avoid the wave of persecution that was coming soon. For a Christian congregation, trying to manipulate the message of the Gospel to avoid the painful reality that everyday life involves real suffering, Paul's perspective was obviously unpopular with many in Corinth.

²⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4

DO NOT BE

Romans 8:17

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and **co-heirs** with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory

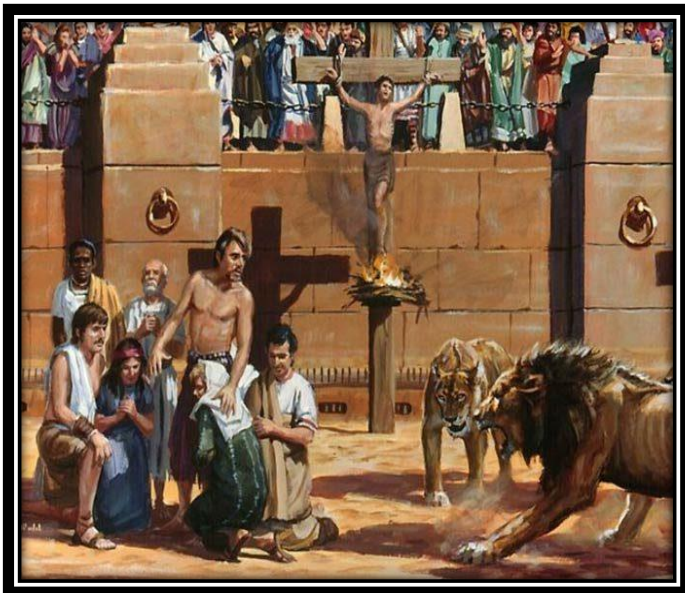


A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING



Roman Catholic tradition has spent generations exploring the notion of Christian suffering. This concept was especially important to the Roman church that suffered ongoing persecution. As believers they frequently faced death because they refused to offer worship to Caesar. In response to the persecution, a theology of suffering emerged that emphasised our response to misery and how God will even use tragedy to bring Him glory, if we endure it with the right attitude. While we can never entirely avoid human suffering, how we endure it can bring glory to Christ, if our anguish highlights our faith and manifests the fruit of the Spirit to those around us. Crowds were deeply moved with the dignity displayed by dying believers, even as they were fed to hungry lions in the Roman Colosseum. The horrific suffering of the Roman Christians was transformed into a

radical kind of evangelism, as they died with hope and even fearlessness. Pagans looked on in disbelief at the resounding bravery of many Christians because most "normal" people tend to die with fear and panic. But during the 250 years of Roman persecution, Christianity spread rapidly because of the amazing example of Christ followers who brutally died with faith and self respect.



¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ¹² So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

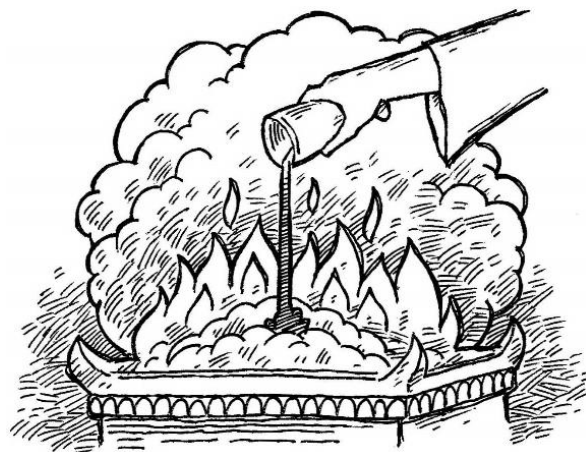
Sometimes we think that if someone is really spiritual or really used of God they will live in a constant state of "victory" that means life will always be easy. Understanding what Paul wrote here not only tells us that God's servants may experience death-like suffering, but

HOW COULD PAUL BE

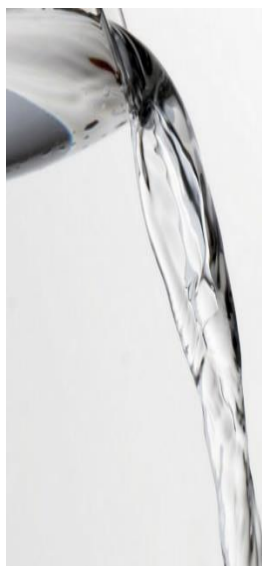
POURED OUT AS

that God has a good and glorious purpose in allowing it.²⁹

Paul always understood that his life was destined to be “poured out” for the sake of the Gospel. While some Corinthian believers saw their ministry as a means of being recognized and wanted greater authority with increased acknowledgement, Paul saw his ministry as a call to suffering and shame. The original apostles of Christ were “sent” to die for the sake of the cross. This is specifically what Yahshua illustrated when He demanded that His followers be willing to pick up their cross and follow Him! Ironically, Paul saw the brokenness of his own life and the continuing suffering he endured as a blessing because his personal pain brought many to Christ. If Paul were not willing to risk his life in the first place, the Corinthian church would never have been planted and the Gospel would not have reached the city. They were spiritually alive, because Paul was willing to count the cost, pay the price and live the life! Furthermore, Paul’s suffering was significantly increased by the rejection of the Corinthian



church, as they questioned his credentials to be their founding apostle, because they despised his lifestyle and his unpretentious personality.



If I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.
Philippians 2:17

13 But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” 14 We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you.

The apostle Paul was not crushed because of the rejection he suffered, even after giving his all for the salvation of the Corinthian church. His reward did not come from the recognition and appreciation of mere humans. Paul lived his life constantly mindful of the resurrection and the knowledge of the “judgment seat of Christ.” He knew he would answer to Christ for how he lived and would receive his just reward for faithful service to the King. On that day, his service to Christ would be recognized eternally and the fruit of

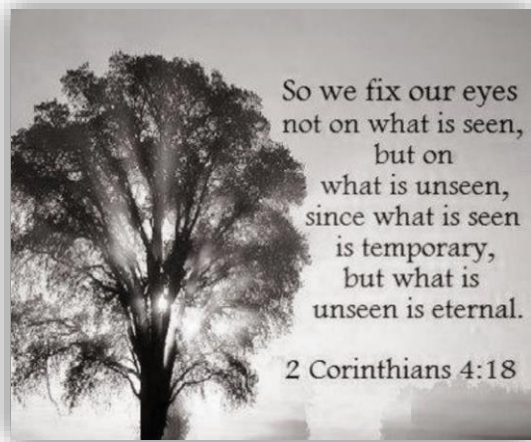
²⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4

A DRINK OFFERING?

his sacrifice and suffering would be the millions of souls that were positively influenced by the life he lived, with endurance and faith.

15 All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. 16 That is why we never give up.

Paul did not sink into a pit of despair because of his "thorn in the flesh" but saw it as a blessing. His sustained suffering caused him to depend faithfully on the grace of God and not on his own ability and consistency. God truly caused "all things" to work together for good, even his painful persecution. He was a channel of Christ's overflowing grace to be poured out upon the people whom he served.



Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. 17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Paul constantly encouraged his disciples to live in both the "now and not yet" at the same time. The life he presently lived was an investment into the future age, still to come. Eventually, the temporal would be consumed by the eternal because physical things are passing, but eternal things will

endure forever. The central expression of this hope is deeply connected to the physical body. We are presently living in a dying body. This is not what Yahweh intended for His creation, but it was a consequence of the fall of Adam. Nevertheless, we have an amazing once in a lifetime opportunity, to transform our physical suffering into eternal glory if we endure despair with the right attitude. Paul was convinced that the suffering he endured in his temporary, dying "physical body" would be nothing compared to the glory he would receive in his eternal, "glorified body". He did not serve Christ for the reward he would receive but wanted to cast his crown before his Messiah, as the only Being worthy of worship.

Astonishingly, Yahweh will crown his faithful children with glory, so that we can joyfully give that glory back to Him. What Satan failed to do as the heavenly worship leader, humanity will do as the resurrected Sons of God.



The Age to come

Between the times
now/not yet

This present evil age

Coming

Return

What is seen is

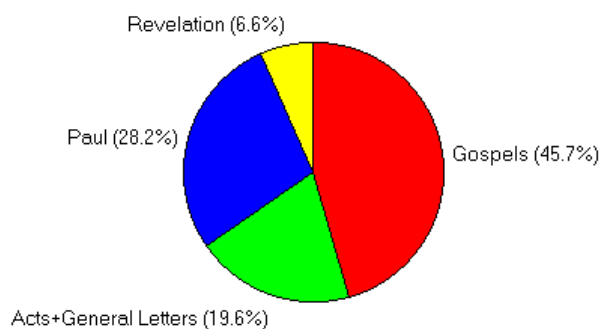
18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Paul meant this especially about his own life and ministry. In the world's eyes, his life was an incredible failure. At the height of a career that would reach much higher, he left it all for a life of hardship, suffering and persecution, with eventual martyrdom. Paul recognized that the world only sees the outward, not the unseen eternal things.³⁰

Let that sink in for a while. According to nearly everyone around him, Paul's life was a complete waste of his potential. Instead of pastoring a successful congregation, he was always moving from city to city trying to start new churches and being persecuted at every turn. To make matters worse, Paul was warned not to go to Jerusalem but still decided to go anyway.

10 Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. 11 He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. (Acts 21)

After spending a long time in prison just writing letters, Paul was eventually executed. What did he accomplish in his life that was laced with suffering? Today we are still reading Paul's letters because he wrote approximately 30% of the New Testament. His ministry is still impacting everyone who presently reads the Bible. Movies were made about his life and Biblical scholars still argue passionately about his brilliant theological perspectives. This was a life well lived.



Concluding this chapter, Paul reminds the reader about the power of perspective. Theologically, the world we live in is not as real as the realm we do not see with our physical eyes. What we presently experience is only temporary, but what we have not yet experienced is eternal. We are called

³⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4

but what is unseen



Living in the 'now but not yet'

as believers to live in the "now" with our minds focused on the "not yet" so that our perspective will reflect the mindset of Christ.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrew 12:1-2)

Just as Christ focused on the infinite as He journeyed towards the cross, we need to fix our gaze on eternity and keep our eyes on the prize. Christ reminded His beloved disciples that we cannot keep anything on earth, and we cannot lose anything in heaven. Therefore, it's foolish to invest in what we cannot keep at the expense of what we cannot lose.

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. (Matthew 16)ESV



Like Yahshua, Paul also had some revolutionary ideas about what really matters in this life. In the end, what really matters is our service for Christ! Money, accomplishments, possessions and even family will not matter in eternity. This life is our one and only shot to do something of eternal significance with our life.

But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

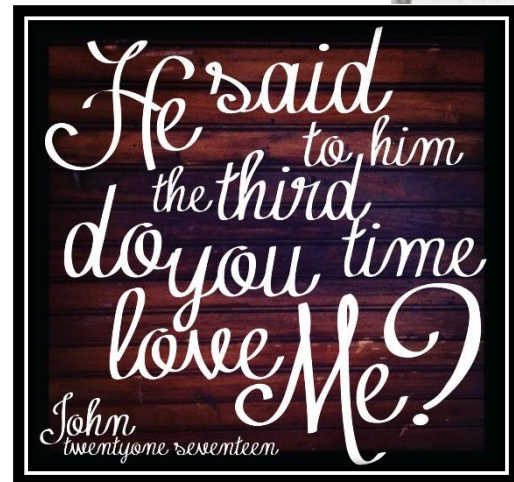
ONLY WHAT YOU DO FOR CHRIST WILL LAST.

CONTEXT MATTERS

Building on everything stated in the afore mentioned chapters, Paul highlighted that he faced death daily as an apostle of Christ. While we all face death daily, for Paul it was his graphic reality. He was not only hunted in the physical world but aggressively pursued in the spiritual realm as well. This forced him to have a worldview that easily embraced death as a means of being free from the concerns of this life.

21 For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22 But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. 23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.(Philippians 1)

The apostle Peter also needed to confront his fear of death if he wanted to fulfill his mission as a disciple of Christ. Peter promised he would be faithful to the Lord unto death. But when he was confronted with the reality of dying on a cross, he disassociated himself from Yahshua and denied Him openly. After publicly denying Christ three times, Peter was restored to his leadership position with three corresponding questions about his professed love for Him. After Yahshua forgave and restored Peter back into fulltime ministry as a leader of the Jerusalem church, he gave him better news. He would also be given another opportunity to keep his promise to die for the Messiah!

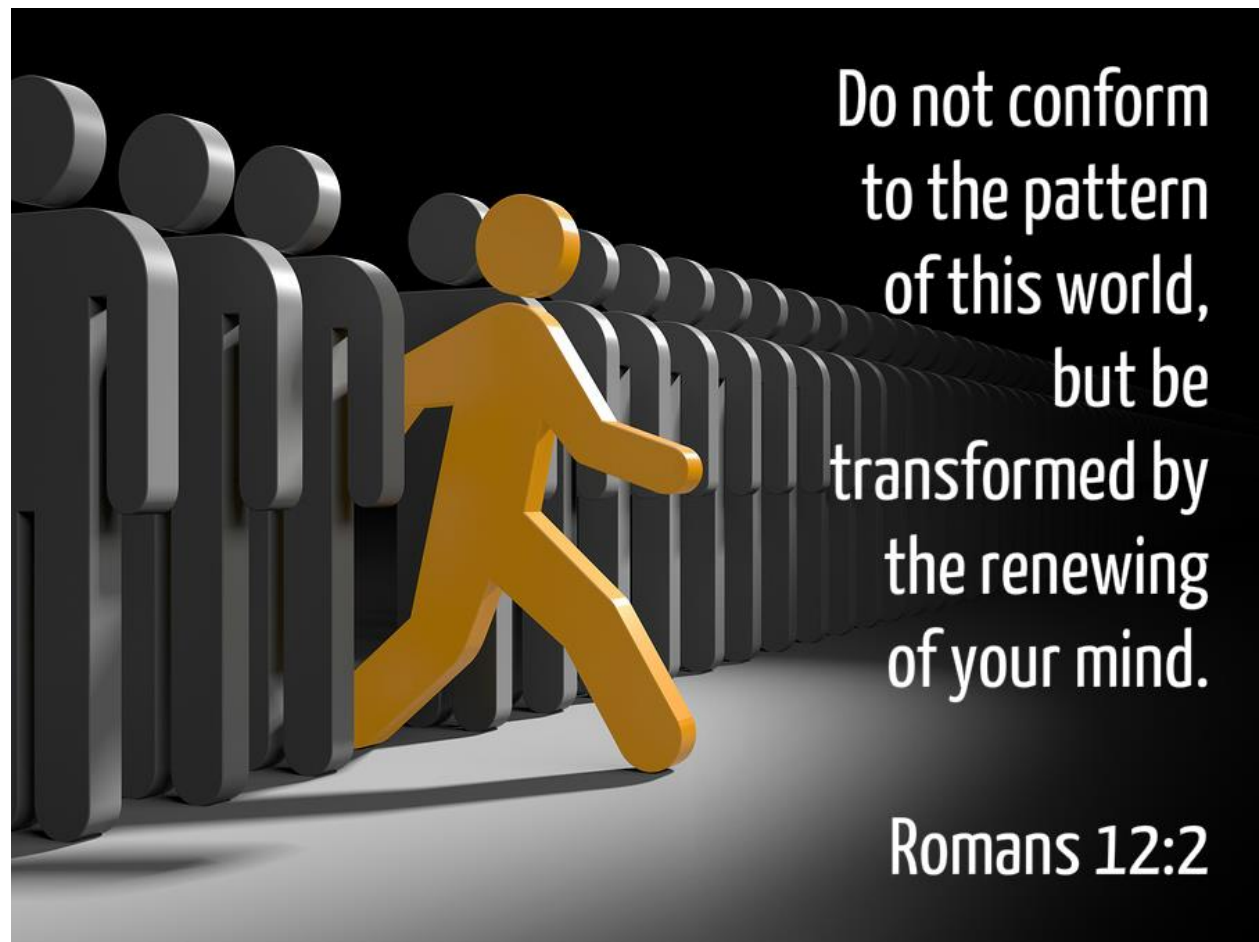


18 "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." 19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me." (John 21)

Considering all the original apostles, except John, died as martyrs for the Gospel of the Kingdom, it was necessary for them to have a radically different understanding of death and dying from the understanding of the unsaved people of the world. Unredeemed humanity fears death because it forces them into the unknown. Yet, as redeemed believers in the risen Messiah, we have already passed through death into life because of the

resurrection of Christ. Peter and Paul both faced death bravely and victoriously because their minds were not conformed to the patterns of this world, but were transformed by a radically new way of believing.

12 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12)



Do not conform
to the pattern
of this world,
but be
transformed by
the renewing
of your mind.

Romans 12:2

As a living sacrifice, the purpose of the believer is to die everyday as we continue to live daily. In essence, it is as though we are already dead because we died with Christ and the life we live now is for His glory and not our own. Moreover, because we are already dead in the sight of God, physical death should not be a fearful experience for the mature believer. We should be thrilled to see Yahshua and living in excited anticipation to receive our new body, to house our redeemed soul and spirit.

YOU FOLLOW ME!

John 21:22

YOU FOLLOW ME!

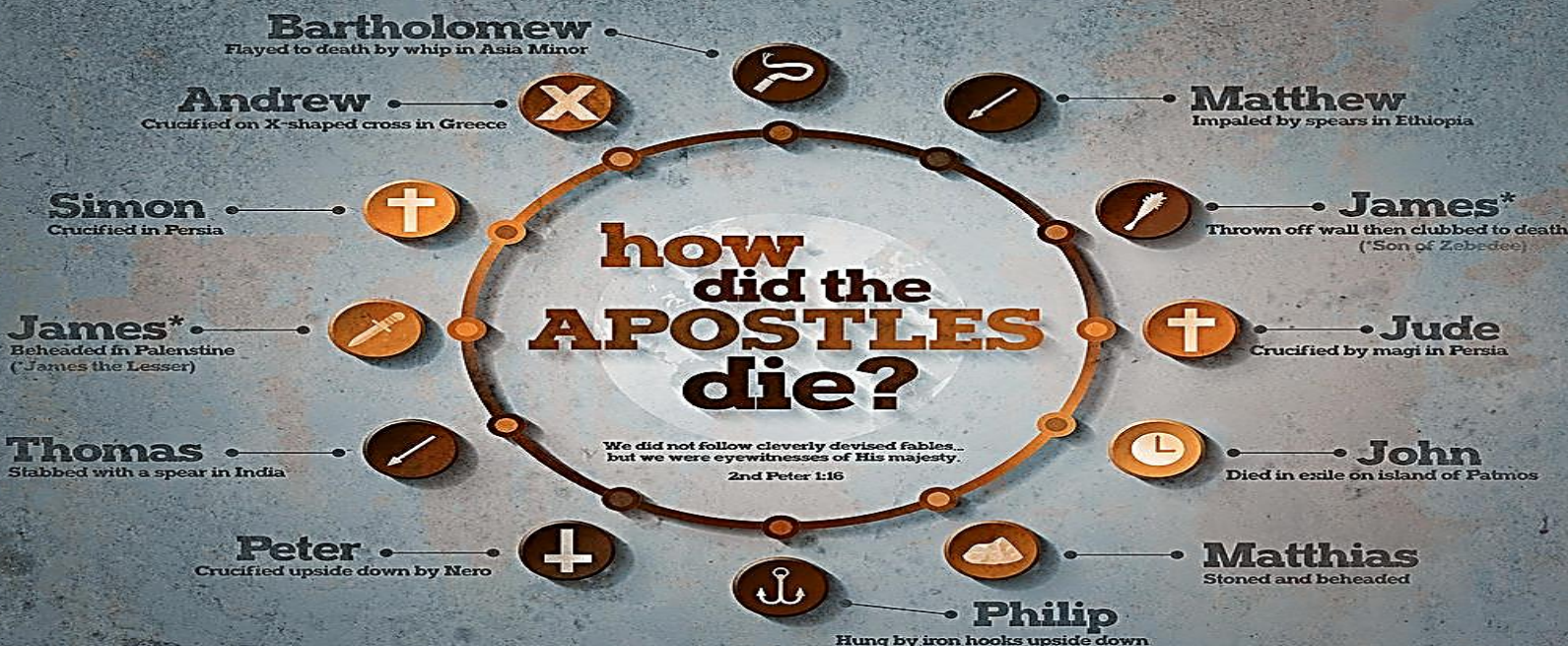
John 21:22

As believers we are supposed to be longing for the promise of the new eternal body which will free us from the bondage of sin and death. We will never feel at home in this body of death. We will continue to have yearnings that fight against our new nature and desires that war with the essence of who we really are, as children of God. For Christians, death is simply a graduation into a better reality and promotion into the fullness of our salvation. Therefore, the early followers of Yahshua lived with a strange anticipation of death that seemed insane to their pagan society. Believers were often joyful when facing martyrdom and did not aggressively resist their fate like others.

Interestingly, the tradition of the early church contends that the Apostle Peter celebrated another chance to die for Christ and even went a step above the norm. Tradition recounts that Peter requested to die in the worst conceivable way. He wished to be crucified upside down, which placed a tremendous amount of pressure on his feet and even more internal stress on his lungs. In this position, his death would have been relatively quick but excruciatingly painful. Regardless of the temporary suffering, Peter saw this final act as a demonstration of faithfulness to Christ as well as a powerful witness to others who would also die for their confession of faith. Peter wanted future believers to see the powerlessness of death over those who die trusting in the finished work of Christ. He wanted to finish his race well, knowing that the end is just the beginning for those assured of eternal life.



The Apostle Peter crucified upside down Rome, AD 69



Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. The tension between the “now and the not yet” is essential in understanding the Scriptures. The fullness of our redemption is presently now, but still not yet simultaneously. What does this mean to you?
2. The people of Malta came to the same conclusion as some members of the Corinthian church when they wrongly assumed Paul was cursed. Would we come to a different conclusion if Paul was a modern-day missionary?
3. Paul said we must share in the suffering of Christ so that the life of Christ may be seen. Have you ever heard this preached before?
4. How was Paul’s temporary suffering transformed into eternal glory?
5. How did Paul’s theological understanding of suffering help him from emotionally despairing even in the light of his tragic, yet victorious life?
6. Paul lived with the understanding that time was short, and he needed to serve Christ now! What did he mean when he said that those with wives should not only focus on their marriage? Was Paul against marriage?
7. Marriage and family are good things, but are they necessarily God things? Does it matter if we confuse good things with God things?
8. Would you desire to live an amazingly influential life for the cause of Christ if it required great suffering? What if that suffering also included your family as well? Would that change your answer?



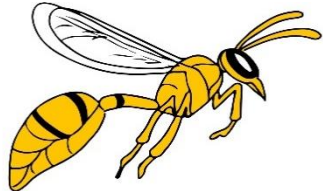


5 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.

As noted, suffering is an authentic experience for everyone living in this fallen world for both believers and nonbelievers. However, believers can face suffering with hope because we have the assurance that it is only temporary and will soon pass away. Even if we manage to avoid persecution our entire life, our physical body will eventually breakdown and we will eventually die of old age. Consequently, Paul compares his present “body” to a tent. Building on this illustration, a tent is normally considered a temporary accommodation when camping or traveling. A tent would not normally be considered a permanent home because of its fragile and transient nature. Likewise, our present bodies are also very fragile and only intended to be a temporary shelter for our soul and spirit as we journey along life’s rocky road.

While we may long for our heavenly mansions, our new bodies are our heavenly “house” where we will live forever. In eternity, having a huge house for our immortal bodies will be quite pointless. We only need a permanent house right now because our physical bodies are fragile and need protection from bad weather, external danger, and infectious disease. However, in eternity all danger will cease to exist, and we will be threatened by nothing.





² We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. ³ For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies.

The Greek philosophers believed that a disembodied spirit was the highest level of existence. They thought of the body as a prison for the soul and saw no advantage in being resurrected in another physical body. To God, the body itself is not a negative. The problem isn't in the body itself but in these sin-corrupted, fallen bodies that we live in. Jesus approved the essential goodness of the body by becoming a man. If there was something inherently evil in the body, Jesus could never have added humanity to His deity.³¹



According to popular culture, heaven will be a boring place where we spend eternity in the sky sitting on clouds and playing harps. This is pure foolishness. We were created as physical beings for the earth. Hence, our new bodies will be heavenly in the sense of being eternal but will also be very physical. We are not destined to live in heaven, but the plan of Yahweh was always to bring heaven down to earth and live among His people. Our new bodies will be exactly like the resurrected body Yahshua now inhabits.

⁴ While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us.

There is a cultural understanding which assumes that after human beings die, they become spirits without bodies and exist in the spiritual world afterwards. This is not a biblical perspective. As children of Adam, we were created to be a spirit, with a soul who lives in a physical body. We are not hoping to escape the suffering of our physical body to become disembodied spirits like Casper the friendly Ghost. We are longing for another body like the one we presently have, without the consequences of sin and death.



Our sinful bodies are just clothing. Our new bodies are compared to clean clothing suitable for the presence of Yahweh. If Adam walked in a covering of glory that protected him in Eden, our new bodies will carry a much greater glory than Adam enjoyed because we will be just like Christ, except that we will never become God.



³¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

To be absent from

Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

Some people wrongly assume that their mother gave them life. In reality, we were all born dead and into a body of death. From the moment of birth, we were ushered into a dying body. Our new eternal bodies will be filled with life because the Spirit of Yahweh lives in us forever. If the Spirit of God lives in us, death can never have dominion over life.

¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. (Romans 8)

The presence of the Spirit currently living in our dying physical bodies, can be seen as a down payment to our resurrection. We know that we will have a new body after we depart from this dying shell, because Yahweh has guaranteed it with the deposit of the Holy Spirit. Because the Spirit lives within us, we cannot remain dead; but will escape death and enter into the fullest expression of life we will ever experienced.

For we live
by
Faith
not by
Sight.
2 Cor 5:7

⁶ So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. ⁷ For we live by believing and not by seeing.

It will always be frustrating for the believer to live in this physical body because we will always be longing for something better. We were created for Eden and long to be free of the curse of sin. Deep inside our spirit, we know that we should not be experiencing loss, sickness and especially the separation of death. This is because we were never designed to live in a body of death. We know we were created for something better than the life we are presently living. This world is not our home.

¹⁴ For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. (Hebrews 13)

So how do we know we will have something in the future, that we can't see in the present? Paul declares that we can see our new bodies by faith. When we learn to see through the eyes of faith, we know without a doubt that

present with the Lord.

the body is to be

Yahweh cannot lie, and His Word must come to pass. This is the evidence we have that we will receive what God promised us.

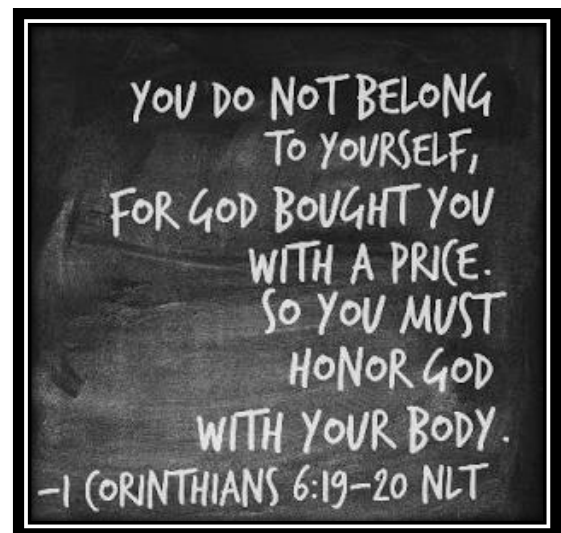
11 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. (Hebrews 11)

8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

Because Paul is confident (in part, based on the guarantee of the Holy Spirit) of his eternal destiny, he is not afraid of the world beyond. In fact, he would be well pleased to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.³²

9 So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him.

Since what we do right now has eternal consequences, our goal must be to please God. We must consider that as far as we know, there are some opportunities for pleasing God that we will only have, while we are present in these mortal bodies. When we get to heaven, there will be no more need for faith, no more need for endurance through trials, no more need for courage and boldness in telling others about Jesus. Now, while we are present in these bodies, is our only opportunity in all eternity to please God in these areas.³³



Regardless of who we are, the goal of our existence is the same. We exist to please Yahweh our creator. Only in this temporary reality, will we be able to serve Christ and have the extraordinary privilege to also suffer for Him. In our eternal reality we will enjoy His presence forever. In eternity we will reap the rewards of our temporary service to the King. Perhaps there are beings in the angelic realm who are jealous of our ability to serve the King of Glory in the battlefield of life and even to suffer for Him, to bring fame to His incomparable Name.



³² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

³³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

We need to “run with endurance the race which is set before us” —

Heb. 12:1.

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:10

10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

Contemporary western theology has little to say about the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul, however, was obsessed by the fact that he would one day make an account to Christ for the life he lived. Our present life will determine our future rewards. Many people assume the race is over when they receive salvation. Foolishly, they mistake the starting line, for the finishing line. Salvation is the word for the entire process in the eyes of Yahweh who lives outside of space and time. Justification is the start of the race. Sanctification is the race, and glorification is the end of the race. Upon the completion of the race the believer stands before Christ to be evaluated in respect to their performance.

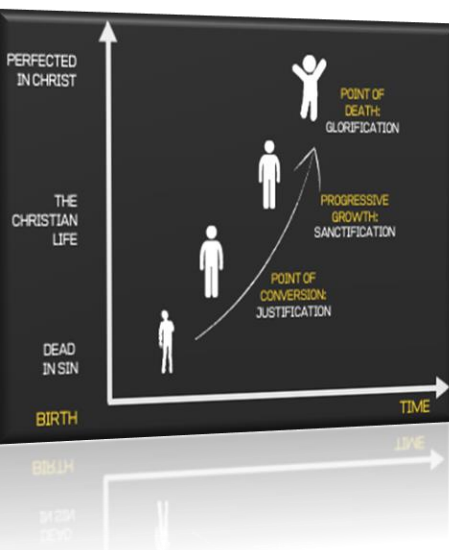
3 PHASES OF SALVATION

JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION	GLORIFICATION
Past	Present	Future
I was Saved from the Penalty of sin	I am being Saved from the Power of sin	I will be Saved from the Presence of sin
I was born again	I am being transformed	I am made whole

The judgment seat of Christ called the "bema seat", which is also translated "court or tribunal", will be a place of evaluation and rewards. At the "bema seat" athletes were given rewards for their outstanding performances similar to our contemporary gold, silver, and bronze medals. Likewise, our service to the King in this physical body will be evaluated and rewarded at that time. This will not be a judgment of condemnation or shame, but rewards will be given for outstanding performances. Athletes who fail to win a medal are not being punished for their poor performance. They still competed but did not finish among the extraordinary competitors who deserve higher recognition.

Likewise, believers who ran hard for Christ on the earth will be recognized and rewarded for their extraordinary effort and endurance. On the other

Know
-the-
Truth



hand, believers who were casual with their salvation will not be punished but will receive what they deserve in judgment. There will be weeping and moaning among certain believers when they realize they wasted their precious life on things that had no eternal significance after seeing the eternal value of a life dedicated to the service of King Yahshua.

Paul was constantly concerned about finishing the race well. In athletic terms, its possible to run a great race but be disqualified from winning a prize because of a foolish mistake like stepping out of bounds. According to his understanding of the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul was not obsessed with keeping his salvation, but winning a prize. He wanted desperately to please Yahshua and lived in fear of hurting his relationship with Him. This is the clearest expression of the “fear of the Lord” that we should have as believers. We should all fear grieving the Spirit and causing distance in our intimacy with Christ.



24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9)

The Judgment Seat of Christ also reminds us that we should be careful about the standards by which we judge other people, especially fellow believers. Paul specifically commands his audience in Rome not to be harsh with other believers. This is directly tied to warnings given in the Gospels about judging our brothers and sisters strictly, while casually excusing ourselves for our transgressions.

We need to “run with endurance the race which is set before us” —

Heb. 12:1.

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

¹⁰ So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Romans 14:10)

Knowing that we will be judged greatly changes our religious tendency to judge others harshly for their mistakes. Moreover, we only see things through our natural perspective. Yahweh, however, will judge both actions and motive simultaneously. His judgment will be perfectly fair because only He is perfectly righteous.

We Are God's Ambassadors

¹¹ Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others.

Paul had a fearful responsibility and so do we. Being secure in our salvation does not automatically mean we have nothing to be concerned about as believers. We have been given the responsibility to make disciples, and this does not necessarily translate to only serving at our church. First, we will all stand before Christ to be evaluated on the quality of our service in this present life and we should be "fearful" of disappointing Him. In addition, we should have a "fearful" concern over the eternal destiny of everyone else. Because of these two central concerns, we must be motivated to persuade, influence and guide others to Christ.



The percentage of evangelicals that have never been told about the 1.6 billion unevangelized people in the world

This should be the heart of everyone who presents the Gospel, whether it is in a pulpit or anywhere else. We intend to persuade men. We are not simply casting out ideas without caring how men respond to them. We should be like Paul, who passionately desired that men and women come to Jesus. We must intend in our hearts and our words to persuade men.³⁴

God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. ¹² Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason

IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY

³⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

Romans 10:13-15

YOU MUST

to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart.

Paul made a striking point here. You can have a spectacular ministry filled with signs and wonders, while having insincere motives in our service of God. This will all be revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul realized that others claimed to have more successful and fruitful ministries than he did. He was also well aware of the fact that other Christian leaders constantly undermined his credentials to be called a true apostle. Many question his validity as their spiritual leader. Nevertheless, Paul indicated that his sincerity and success were the evidence of his anointing to lead the Corinthians. This was demonstrated by his lifestyle of service and humility which clearly reflected the ministry of Christ.

¹³ If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit.

The Corinthian Christians probably thought Paul was crazy because he seemed content to live a life of pain, trials, and discomfort if it brought glory to God. In being accused of being beside himself, Paul is in good company. Jesus was also accused of being out of His mind.³⁵

¹⁴ Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

Building on his previous point, Paul said everyone who truly knows Christ understands that we need to die to ourselves in order to live. Those who will be great in the Kingdom of God will be the least and willingly occupy the position of the servant. Sadly, there were other Christian leaders who did not follow the example of Christ and looked at their position in the church as a means for upward mobility and worldly success. This is what Paul called selfish ambition which results in pride.

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

³⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5



⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.
⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form
⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.
(Philippians 12)

Humble yourself
or
GOD
will do it for you.

If Jesus died for us, it is only fitting that we live for Him. Jesus gave us new life, not to live for ourselves but to live for Him. The question is simple: Are you living for yourself, or are you living for Jesus? "He died for us that we might die to ourselves." (Calvin)³⁶

¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view.

At one point, Paul taught of Yahshua as a misguided heretic who were leading the people astray. Things radically changed when Yahshua revealed Himself as Yahweh Almighty, when Paul was on the road to Damascus. Likewise, we all needed to encounter Christ to also understand 'who' He really is.

How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Paul here teaches the great principle of regeneration. Jesus Christ changes those who come to Him by faith and who are in Christ. The saved are not "just forgiven." They are changed into a new creation.³⁷

**THEREFORE,
IF ANYONE IS
IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW
CREATION.**
2 Corinthians 5:17

³⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

³⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5





According to Paul, eternal life does not begin in eternity. Eternal life is a present reality for the New Creation. We are now the children of God waiting for the fullness of our finished salvation. Once again Paul was highlighting the tension between the “now and the not yet.” If you think of it like a pregnancy. The baby exists in the now and the not yet at the same time. When the baby is resting in the womb, the child is now here but not yet born. Moreover, when waiting for a bus to arrive, there is a time when the bus has already

arrived, but the doors have not yet opened. Both illustrations are useful in understanding the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was preached by Yahshua, but it also arrived on the day of Pentecost. Nevertheless, the Kingdom has come and is still coming because the doors have not yet opened, and we are not yet seated on the bus.



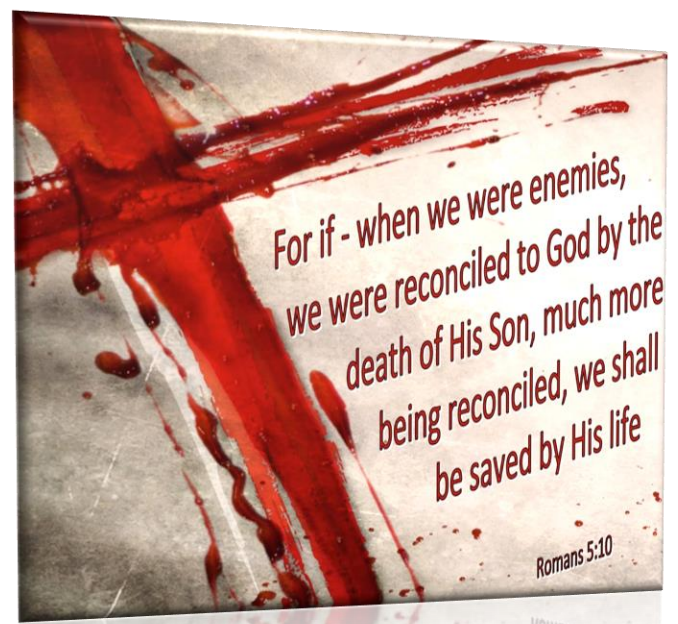
18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.

It is important to understand that we have been justified by Yahweh through the finished work of Yahshua on the cross. God brought us back to Himself, even though it was Adam who sinned and fractured our relationship with God.

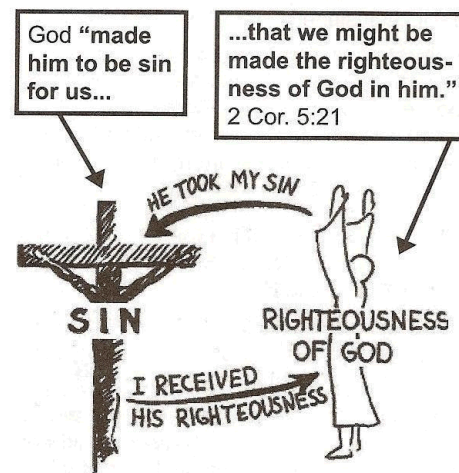
And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.

The task of preaching the Gospel falls squarely on the shoulders of everyone who has already been reconciled to Christ. The “Christlike” nature of the redeemed believer compels us to not sit idly by and watch the unsaved face eternal judgment.

19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them.



Theologically, the Father, Son and Spirit all worked in "trinity" to accomplish our redemption. By not counting our sin against us does not mean that Yahweh simply excused it. Our sin was placed squarely upon the "Lamb of God" who took it upon Himself and carried it away.



And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

There is so much to the idea of being ambassadors! An ambassador does not speak to please his audience, but the King who sent him. An ambassador does not speak on his own authority; his own opinions or demands mean little. He simply says what he has been commissioned to say. But an ambassador is more than a messenger; he is also a representative, and the honor and reputation of his country are in his hands.³⁸

As ambassadors we have been given a message. Our King wants us to tell the world to return to Him because His wrath has been poured out on Yahshua and only His grace

remains. However, humanity needs to freely accept the invitation to return to the King. Therefore, the message of the Gospel must be preached. People need to accept the message in order to be saved. Preaching the Gospel is a matter of great urgency, Paul even says he pleads with people to return to the Kingdom of God and accept the conditions of salvation.

²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul carefully chooses his words. He does not say Jesus was made to be a sinner. Jesus never became a sinner, but He did become sin for us. Even His becoming sin was a righteous act of love, not an act of sin.³⁹


³⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5

³⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5



Because Yahshua was made sin for us, we have been made righteous. On the cross there was an exchange of nature. Christ became what we were, so that we could become what He is.

The Divine Exchange	
<i>Jesus ...</i>	<i>So I could...</i>
Was punished	Be forgiven
Was wounded	Be healed
Was made sin with my sin	Be made righteous with His righteousness
Tasted death	Share His life
Was made a curse	Receive His blessing
Was made my poverty	Share His abundance
Bore my shame	Share His glory
Endured rejection	Have His acceptance with the Father
Was cut off	Be joined with the Father
Was my old person put to death	Be a new person in Christ



1. Jesus was punished that we might be forgiven
2. Jesus was wounded that we might be healed
3. Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness, that we might be made righteous with His righteousness
4. Jesus tasted death for us that we might share His life
5. Jesus was made a curse that we might receive the blessing
6. Jesus endured our poverty that we might share His abundance
7. Jesus bore our shame that we might share His glory
8. Jesus endured my rejection that I might have His acceptance with the Father
9. He was cut off that we might be joined to the Lord
10. Our Old Man was put to death in Him that the New Man might come to life in us

IT IS FINISHED.

Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Paul said believers are completely forgiven and have “no condemnation” in Christ in the Book of Romans, but also speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians. How do we reconcile these two verses?
2. What we do today matters for all of eternity. Do you believe this? How can this truth motivate us to represent Christ in this world?
3. Is being motivated to receive heavenly rewards a selfish thing?
4. Are you motivated to receive heavenly rewards even if it means suffering and sacrifice in this present time?
5. What does it mean that Yahshua was made to be sin, so that we can be made to be righteousness?
6. Do you believe you are presently as righteous as Yahshua before the Father, based on the finished work of the cross or is this still a future reality?
7. As an ambassador, we all represent Christ to the unsaved world. Do we believe this? How does it change our present priorities in life?
8. How can we be made righteousness if we still continue to sin? Do we lose our righteousness every time we miss the mark?



6 As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it. ² For God says,

**“At just the right time, I heard you.
On the day of salvation, I helped you.”**

Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.

As ambassadors we cooperate with the King, we serve to accomplish His will. Paul is concerned that the Corinthians have lost focus on what really matters. Sadly, the community is more concerned about church politics than winning souls to Christ. The door of salvation will only be open for a set period of time. Just like the door on Noah’s ark, it was Yahweh who closed it.



¹³ That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴ With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵ Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶ A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord closed the door behind them. (Genesis 7)

The door of salvation was opened by God and will also be closed by Him. After the door is closed the judgment will come. That is why Paul says salvation is now. The message of the Gospel is too important to ignore for even one day.

Paul wants to give the Corinthian Christians a sense of urgency. God has an acceptable time for us to work with His grace. He has a day of salvation that will not last forever. This is no time for Christian lives to be consumed with ease and comfort and self-focus. It is time to get busy for the Lord and to be workers together with Him.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 6



WELCOME TO THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

Paul's Hardships

³ We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. ⁴ In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God.

Paul did what he could to be blameless before the Corinthians. He did not take a salary, even though he was entitled to it. He allowed other gifted teachers like Apollos to have the limelight. Nevertheless, people were still offended. Regardless of what a minister does, there will always be a select few who find fault. Paul was definitely not saying that he had no hecklers. He had many critics, especially among the Corinthian church. Yet, he lived in a way to minimise the power of his opponents by doing what was humanly possible to live transparently, and represent Christ well.

We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind.

The key to running a long-distance race is both patience and endurance. You need to be patiently waiting for your opportunity to pull away from the crowd and you need to make sure you have enough endurance to cross the finish line.



In relation to the Corinthian church, Paul says that the life he lived demonstrated his commitment to them as their spiritual leader. He had exhibited both patience and endurance in his rocky relationship with the church. He also has no intention of giving up, because he intends to see fruit from among them in eternity.

⁵ We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. ⁶ We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love.

What was the immediate reward for Paul's service to Christ and to the churches he planted? Persecution, suffering, and rejection are all first and foremost on his list. Unlike the false teachers who serve Christ for what they can gain, Paul continues to be faithful despite the tremendous torment. Like Christ, he is motivated by love. Agape love is willing to suffer for the benefits of the one who is beloved. Likewise, Paul is telling the Corinthians that he

*Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.*
Romans 12:12

loves them by the suffering he endures for their sake and not by poetically empty words alone.



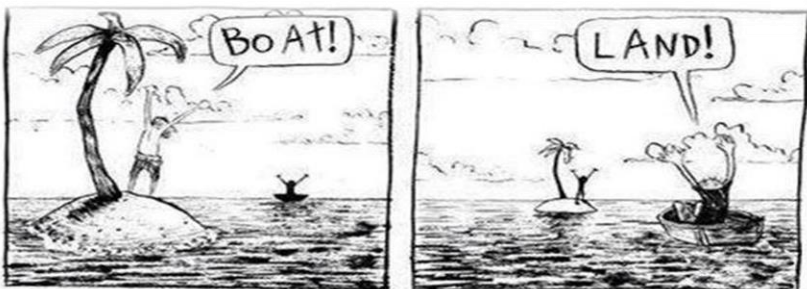
⁷ We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. ⁸ We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors.

Describing the good fight of faith, Paul uses the familiar imagery of a Roman soldier on the battlefield. This was the same illustration used in his description of the "Armor of God" when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians. Paul was skillful in using both the sword (Word) and shield (Faith) as deadly spiritual weapons. He said he has always been a faithful soldier of Christ, who always preached sound doctrine, even when he was disrespected and despised in the process.

⁹ We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. ¹⁰ Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

The service of Christ is a contradiction in itself. Yahshua said, if you wanted to lead, you had to be willing to serve. To live, you had to be willing to die. To win, you had to be willing to lose. The Kingdom of God inherently opposes the desires of the flesh and the world. Hence, Paul declares in the eyes of the world we are ignored, but God knows who we are. In the eyes of humanity, we are supposed to be sad, but in our hearts, we are filled with joy. In the eyes of our society, we may be poor, but in eternity we are rich beyond description. Everything depends on the perspective from which you see things.

¹¹ Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. ¹² There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. ¹³ I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us!



Some of the Corinthians were still offended at Paul because many felt he was too hard on them in his first letter and in his corresponding visit that caused much controversy. Like children,

Perspective...

BE TRANSFORMED

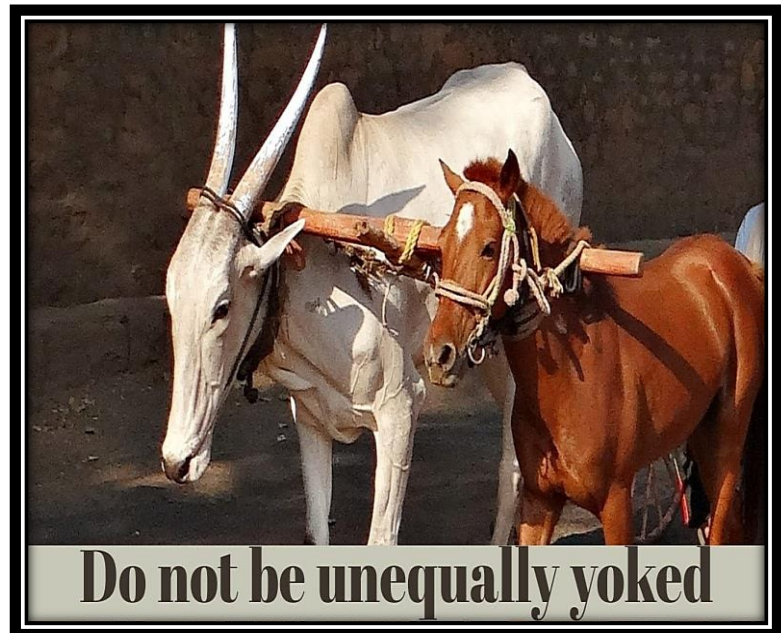
they were trying to punish him by withholding affection and giving him the silent treatment. In response, he said he was only hard on them because he is a good spiritual father and wanted them to mature in their faith.

The Temple of the Living God

14 Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16 And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said:

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

17 Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things,



and I will welcome you. 18 And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

In the context of what Paul said, he was not talking specifically about marriage, although these principles can still be applied. He was particularly addressing the mindset of the Corinthian church and how they persistently thought, acted and functioned like common unbelievers. This proved they were still married to

DO NOT CONFORM ANY LONGER
TO THE PATTERN
OF THIS WORLD,
BUT BE
TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.

— ROMANS 12:2

the world, and lived like “worldly” people. Their stubborn resentment and unforgiveness towards Paul proved that they were spiritually immature and remained under the influence of their demonically inspired culture. They were “teamed up” with unbelievers because they overtly agreed with their “way of thinking” and covertly disagreed with the teachings of Scripture, especially in the area of holding offence and harboring unforgiveness.

7 Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

Connected with the previous chapter, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from the ungodly influences that caused them to be married to worldly thinking.

This work of cleansing is really God’s work in us and not our work...But there is another aspect of cleansing that God looks for us to do with the participation of our own will and effort; not that it is our work apart from God, but it is a work that awaits our will and effort: let us cleanse ourselves. This aspect of cleansing is mostly connected with intimacy with God and usefulness for service.⁴¹

2 Please open your hearts to us.

The Corinthian Christians wrongly believed many bad things about Paul — that God wasn’t using him, that he didn’t have the kind of image, authority, or power an apostle should have — but their problem was not an information problem. Their problem was with their hearts. Their hearts had been open to the world but not to Paul. In the “unequally yoked” passage, Paul told them to close their hearts to the world.⁴²

The Corinthians did not like what Paul represented. He radically embraced humility and suffering as a normative expression of Christian service. They vigorously rejected this biblically based “truth” and opted for a version of false teaching which asserted that believers with enough faith, should never suffer loss and endure pain in this world. Although they obviously believed in Christ, they still wanted what all the unbelieving people of the world desired.

⁴¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7

⁴² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7

**Wrong Thinking Leads To
Wrong Living**



DEADLY DOCTRINES

They expected a comfortable, happy life, free from persecution and hardship. Sadly, they even gathered false teachers in Corinth and paid them well for their false teaching.

We have not done wrong to anyone, nor led anyone astray, nor taken advantage of anyone.

One of the underlying themes in Paul's letter is that of honesty. Once again, he openly states that he did not take advantage of anyone. Another translation uses the word "cheated". Obviously, some members of the Corinthian church questioned Paul's motive in collecting an offering for Jerusalem, assuming he was a crook, and will spend the money on himself. This is still more evidence of their worldly thinking. They naturally assumed Paul had selfish motives because they had selfish motives. They saw in others, what they found in themselves. It is commonly said, "they just want your money in church". This is evidence of corrupt thinking, manifesting in corrupt speaking, coming from a corrupt heart.

³ I'm not saying this to condemn you. I said before that you are in our hearts, and we live or die together with you. ⁴ I have the highest confidence in you, and I take great pride in you. You have greatly encouraged me and made me happy despite all our troubles.

Paul previously rebuked the Corinthian church quite harshly, for their prideful spirit of rebellion and lawlessness. Nevertheless, he was deeply concerned about how his correction was received. He was not looking to express condemnation, because he believed there was no condemnation for those in Christ. Moreover, in this letter he is not trying to make them feel guilty. He wanted them to change the way they think, which will affect the way they live.

Paul's Joy at the Church's Repentance

⁵ When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside. ⁶ But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.



No condemnation
now and in
Christ Jesus

Although Paul faced much persecution in Macedonia, he was always thinking of the Corinthian church and the harsh correction he laid upon them. It was not until the arrival of Titus with news about the situation in Corinth that Paul found comfort. Titus encouraged him with good news concerning the church and how most believers openly received his stern correction. Interestingly, even the apostle Paul struggled with insecurity at times and feared he would be completely rejected by the leaders of the congregation and abandoned as their spiritual father.

⁷ His presence was a joy, but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you. When he told us how much you long to see me, and how sorry you are for what happened, and how loyal you are to me, I was filled with joy!

When Paul understood he was received and appreciated by the majority of the Corinthian community, he was filled with joy and encouraged in his faith.

⁸ I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while.

There was a "severe letter" written by Paul when he was very angry about something. Even though we have a copy of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians recorded in Scripture, the "severe letter" letter was likely destroyed by members of the Corinthian church. It was a harsh rebuke where Paul said some things that would not have been received very well.

⁹ Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways.

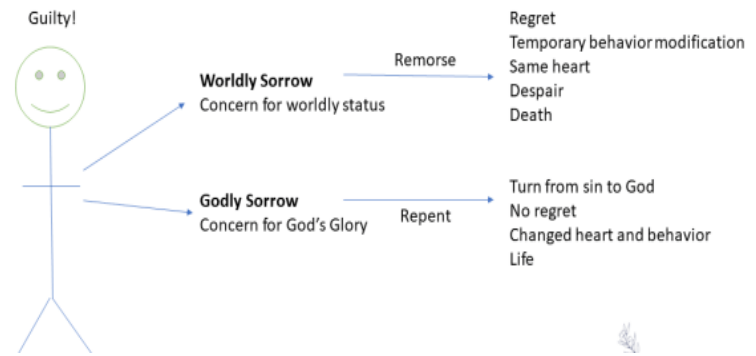
Here Paul showed his vulnerability to the church. After sending the severe letter, he second guessed himself assuming that his rebuke may have been excessive. However, he is now glad he did the difficult thing because many Corinthians received his scolding with humility and expressed authentic repentance to God. Notice, repentance is not the act of feeling bad about something. Real repentance is a change of thinking that leads to a change in behaviour. Paul is relieved and overjoyed that authentic repentance has caused the church to change the way they were behaving. This is the only evidence of genuine biblical repentance.

It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way.

Repentance
is a change
OF  MIND
and
Heart 

REPENTANCE

HAVING A
CHANGE OF MIND



Paul makes a clear separation between sorrow and repentance. They are not the same things! One can be sorry for their sin without repenting from their sin. Sorrow describes a feeling, but repentance describes a change in both the mind and in the life.⁴³

10 For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation.

Sorrow is not a terrible thing if it leads to changed behaviour. While there is no condemnation for the believer, there are many moments of conviction which should lead to repentance. Sorrow rooted in conviction is a powerful force for change.

As believers, we repented once resulting in justification. Our progressive repentance from sin, leads to a deeper walk of sanctification. As we continue in the journey of sanctification, our assurance is increased as we long for the day of glorification. This is the past, present, and future tense of salvation. Salvation is expressed in the beginning, the middle and the end simultaneously.



JUSTIFICATION
the declaration of holiness



SANCTIFICATION
the process of holiness

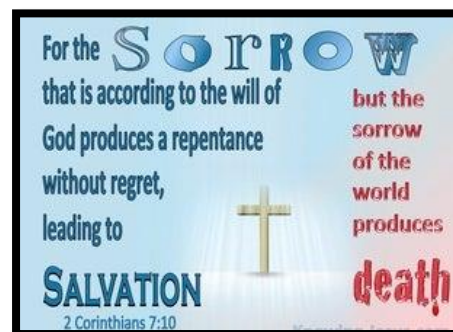


GLORIFICATION
the completion of holiness

There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

There is another kind of sorrow that does not lead to life but instead, results in death. Sometimes people are sorry for what they did based on the outcome of their actions, or simply because they have been exposed. They are sorry for the results of their sin but not for committing the sin itself. This is the worldly sorrow expressed by someone who was caught cheating on his wife and is extremely sorrowful over the consequences of his actions. Worldly regret does not understand that we have primarily sinned against God first, and people second. Hence, our greatest debt is owed to our Creator, and our repentance must be directed towards God first, and people afterwards. Its clearly possible for people to be sorry for the consequences

⁴³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7



repentance

of their actions and never consider God at all. Such sorrow does not lead to spiritual life, but instead manifests in spiritual death.

Judas illustrated the classic example of worldly repentance. He was deeply sorry for what he did and condemned by his actions. Condemnation leads to despair and hopelessness, which manifested in suicide. On the other hand, Peter also denied and betrayed Christ in a similar manner, but his repentance was rooted in conviction leading to restoration.

11 Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right.



Many people are sorry for their actions. However, being sorry for getting caught does not mean that you will not do the same thing again. Except, the next time you do it, you will be more careful not to be exposed. Paul assures the Corinthians that he sees the evidence of their authentic repentance by their actions and not their words.

It's the **Goodness of God** that leads us to **repentance**

Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, therefore, is a sorrow that leads to a change of purpose, of intention, and of action. It is not the sorrow of idle tears; it is not crying by your bedside because once again you have failed; nor is it vain regret, wishing things had never happened, wishing you could live the moments again. No, it is not that. It is a change of purpose and intentions, a change of direction and action." (Redpath)⁴⁴

12 My purpose, then, was not to write about who did the wrong or who was wronged. I wrote to you so that in the sight of God you could see for yourselves how loyal you are to us. 13 We have been greatly encouraged by this. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was about the way all of you welcomed him and set his mind at ease.

⁴⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7



repentance

repentance

Paul reminds the church that his motivation in writing the harsh letter of rebuke was not only to punish the transgressor or to defend the rights of the transgressed, but it was also to mature the congregation and bring them closer to God. He was primarily concerned about their spiritual growth and motivated to help them run well as a community and finish the race strongly.

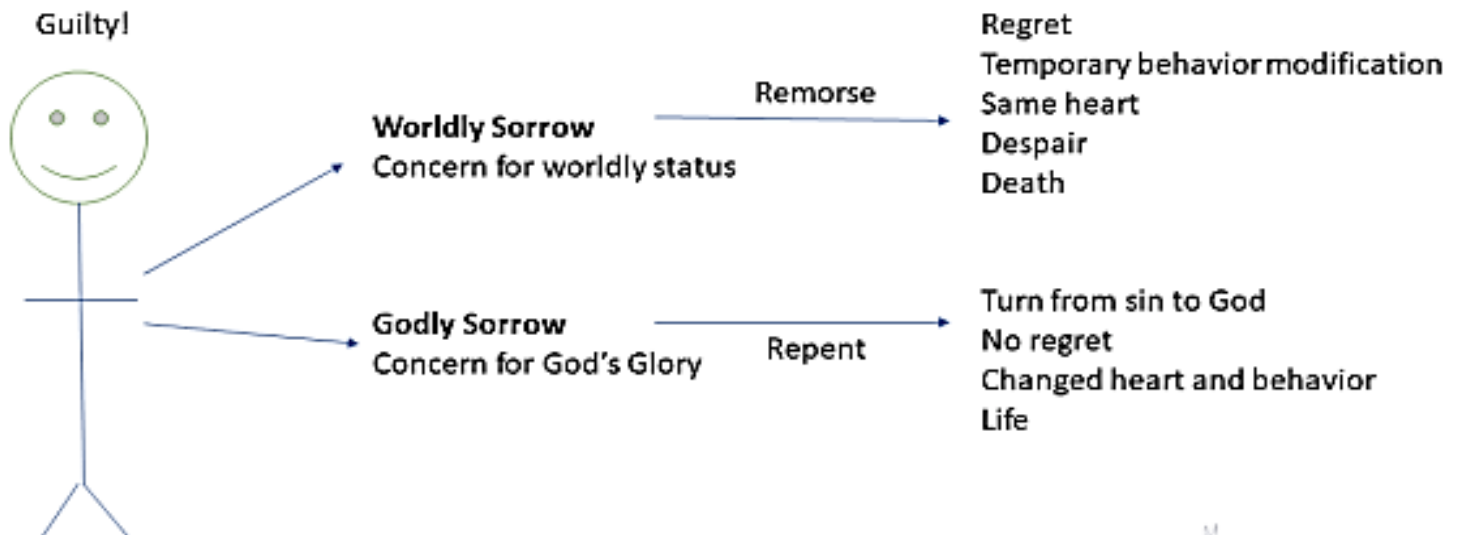
14 I had told him how proud I was of you—and you didn't disappoint me. I have always told you the truth, and now my boasting to Titus has also proved true! 15 Now he cares for you more than ever when he remembers the way all of you obeyed him and welcomed him with such fear and deep respect. 16 I am very happy now because I have complete confidence in you.

In conclusion of this chapter, Paul also highlights how the Godly character of the Corinthian church has also motivated Titus. Their maturity has caused Titus to be more deeply committed to them because of the love and respect they showed to him as a young pastor.

Probably Titus saw a lot of ugliness among the Corinthian Christians, and from this he may have had a "chip on his shoulder" against them. So Paul wants them to know that after he saw and reported their repentance, Titus loved them more than ever.⁴⁵

Worldly vs Godly Repentance

2 Cor 7:9-10



⁴⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7

Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Paul asserts that his suffering for the sake of the Gospel was evidence of his love for the Corinthians. Can anyone give an example where you have suffered personal loss for the sake of Christ?
2. When we invite people to follow Christ, should we tell them from the start that Christianity demands a commitment to suffer persecution and endure hardship?
3. What does it mean to you to be unequally yoked to unbelievers in the area of your thinking?
4. Can believers in Christ be unequally yoked according to Paul's definition?
5. Paul shows his devotion and love to the Corinthians by his willingness to administer church discipline and preach an unpopular message. Are these character traits still desirable in our contemporary Christian leaders?
6. Discuss the difference between worldly and Godly repentance and how one leads to life while the other leads to death.
7. Paul was called to speak the truth in love. Can we still be loving even when what we say will hurt people's feeling?
8. If God is all powerful and all loving, why would He expect His beloved children to endure pain and suffering in this fallen world?



CALLED TO

A Call to Generous Giving

8 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. ² They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

Shifting his attention to a “love offering” he was collecting for the church in Jerusalem, Paul reminded the wealthy Corinthians that the poorer churches in Macedonia have demonstrated sacrificial giving in their response to his fund-raising efforts.

³ For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will.

Paul knew that the Macedonians gave in two ways. First, they gave according to their ability, even though their gift wasn't very much. It was not a “large” gift in a total dollar sense. Secondly, since their heart was freely willing to give, and they gave in proportion to the little they did have, they gave beyond their ability.⁴⁶

This verse simply restates what Yahshua said concerning the giving of the poor widow. God is highly uninterested in the amount of the gift but looks carefully at the attitude and the sacrifice involved in the giving. Likewise, the Macedonians did not have much to give, but gave sacrificially from the little they had. Moreover, they gave cheerfully. This was perhaps the most important thing of all.

⁴ They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. ⁵ They even did more than we had

⁴⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8



GENEROSITY

hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

As belief in the Messiah spread, the Jews and the Gentiles struggled to maintain a rocky relationship. At first, the Jewish Christ followers flourished as they worshiped in the Temple and from house to house. Astonishingly, they shared everything in common, and the unity in the community prospered them greatly. However, after the coldblooded murder of Stephen at the hands of the Pharisees, the political atmosphere changed, and the persecution greatly increased. This new wave of violence finally drove the believers out of the Temple and into a house church community. As the persecution intensified, their social and economic isolation increased as well. Sadly, poverty and hardship soon became hallmarks of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and many migrated to other cities to avoid the ongoing persecution among the Jews.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (Acts 2)

Regrettably, many Jewish believers would not accept the fact that Gentiles were coming into the family of Yahweh without being converted first into Jews. Moreover, the devout Jewish believers, who were deeply connected to circumcision, wanted to maintain their sacred traditions at the expense of unity and fellowship among all believers. In response to the growing animosity, Paul saw the tragic situation in Jerusalem as an opportunity for healing and reconciliation. The Gentile believers owed the Jewish people a great debt because the believers in Jerusalem were the primary missionaries who “reluctantly” introduced the Gospel to the Gentile regions. Paul assumed if he could bring a substantial offering to the elders in Jerusalem, it would clearly demonstrate the unity of the global Christian community and reduce the hostility between Jewish and Gentile believers.

⁶ So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. ⁷ Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.



SACRIFICIAL GIVING

SACRIFICIAL GIVING

Is Paul being sarcastic here? Probably. If the Corinthian Christians did indeed abound in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in... love for Paul, they had just started to do these things. But the Corinthian Christians probably thought of themselves as abounding in all those things. So it is as if Paul is saying, "Very well, I'll take your word for it. You do abound in all these things. So now, abound in this grace also."⁴⁷

Strangely enough, poor people are often extraordinarily gifted in generosity because they intimately understand the plight of poverty. The impoverished churches in Macedonia responded to Paul's collection in an extraordinary way. They were generous beyond imagination considering their limited resources. On the other hand, the Corinthians were excessively blessed with resources to the point that their affluence caused them internal contention. They had an excess of food, spiritual giftings, and talented teachers, compared to the struggling Macedonian congregations. Here Paul challenges them to exceed the generosity of the underprivileged Macedonian churches, because the more resources a congregation has, is the more that will be required of them to authentically give sacrificially.

There is a well-known illustration in Mark 12 that gives the reader great insight into God's perspective on generous giving. Astonishingly, Yahshua turns our traditional understanding of generosity upside down and aggressively undermines the prideful assumptions of the affluent religious elite.

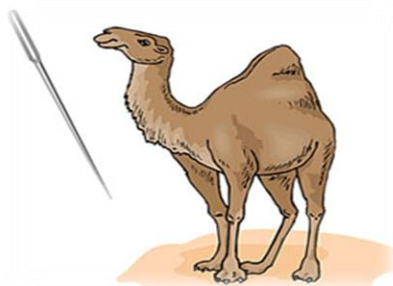


⁴¹ Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴² Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

⁴³ Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. ⁴⁴ For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on." (Mark 12)

First of all, Yahshua highlights that Yahweh knows everything, even the hidden motives of the heart. While many people gave out of their abundance, Christ noticed the genuine humility of a poor woman who gave with a pure motivation. She was not giving to draw attention to herself, but to express her sincere gratitude to God for keeping her in the midst of her

⁴⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8



poverty and suffering. Her outstanding gratitude was clearly expressed in the overwhelming sacrifice connected to her giving. Yahshua mentioned that she gave “everything” she had, and trusted God for her provision that day. This clearly proved that she was not an idol worshipper because the most common expression of idolatry is the love of money.



Secondly, the illustration drives home a powerful point that may cause many to stumble. Yahweh does not evaluate generosity the way society does! In our culture, we are astonished by “large amounts” when it comes to giving. When we hear of a popular philanthropist donating \$100,000,000, we are dumbfounded by the amount. However, Christ was more interested in the percentage of the giving above the total. There are many people who could easily give \$100,000,000 out of their abundance and never come close to the point of financial sacrifice. On the other hand, another individual can give only \$100 sacrificially, out of the abundance of their lack, and attract the attention of God. Constantly the Scripture reminds us that Yahweh evaluates the heart in relation to our inner motives, while humanity only sees what’s on the surface of our actions. God is not overly impressed by the amount we give, especially when it’s given out of a lavish surplus. Likewise, nobody would be impressed if someone gave a beggar a quarter on the Subway. A quarter means nothing to the average person and we don’t need to think twice to give it. Why should it be any different if a rich man gives \$1,000,000? To some a million dollars has the same value as a quarter to another person. Likewise, when the Scribes and Pharisees trumpeted their giving publicly, by focusing on the amount, Christ was uninterested until He saw the amazing generosity of the poor widow.

Thirdly, this poor widow gave in faith. She had no other plan, aside from God’s provision. While some would try to establish a principle which assumes God would provide for this woman instantly in response to her faith, this is not implied by the text. The woman gave everything she had on that specific day, and trusted God for what she would eat in the future. Did God provide her a meal, or did she go to bed hungry that night? We will never know what happened, until we meet her in eternity. Regardless of the outcome, Yahshua was moved by her faith, and it was eternally recorded and rewarded in her heavenly account. Many false teachers like to make up spiritual formulas where we can pressure God into doing our will by the power of our giving. This is misguided at best and straight up witchcraft at worst. Principles are not procedures, when it comes to generosity.

38 Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” (Luke 6)

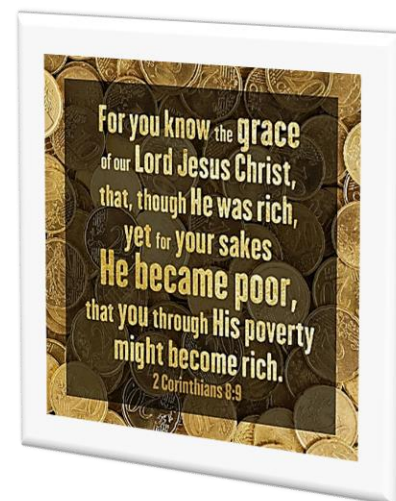
Christ established principles of giving, not methods of manipulation to be weaponized against God. Yahweh does not owe us anything but gives generously out of His nature. As children of God, He also expects that we should give generously out of our nature, just as our Heavenly Father gives to us.

8 I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. 9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

When was Jesus rich? Before He added humanity to His deity and walked this earth. Here, Paul subtly, but definitely, points to the deity of Jesus. There is no way Paul could write though He was rich if Jesus began His existence in Mary’s womb. Notice that it says that Jesus became poor when He was rich. Just as Jesus added humanity but never lost His deity, so He also “added” poverty but never “lost” His riches. “For He assumed poverty, yet did not lose His riches. Inwardly He was rich, outwardly poor. His deity was hidden in His riches, His manhood apparent in His poverty.” (Hughes)⁴⁸

While some may believe Paul’s afore mentioned statement to be manipulative, he considered it factual. The poor churches were very generous and gave sacrificially, so how much more should the rich churches give above and beyond the poor churches? Moreover, in relation to what Yahshua has given us all, how can financial giving be considered excessive, when compared to the flesh and blood sacrifice of Christ? Paul is obviously placed more pressure on the rich because of their monetary abundance, but this is to be expected because the more you have, the harder it is to give sacrificially. Christ’s Words are true and will not come back void.

⁴⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8





25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" (Mark 10)

If you have \$100 and give \$10, this takes very little faith and sacrifice, because \$10 can do very little aside from buying a snack. If, however, you have \$1000 and give \$100, the pressure is increasing because \$100 can purchase something of real value. Moreover, if you have \$10,000 and give \$1000, the pressure is not decreased because you have more to keep. It's actually greatly increased because we tend to focus more on the loss of what we are giving, over the abundance of what we have. This is specifically why rich people, in proportion, are more greedy than poor people, and why money and wealth are actually a stumbling block when it comes to spiritual prosperity in the Kingdom of God.

10 Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. 11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have.



Getting to the point, Paul bluntly demands that the Corinthians put their money where their mouth is and follow through with their commitments. Many believers fall back on the idea that God evaluates the heart, and not our actions. This is obviously true, but God also knows that faith without corresponding works is dead. The Corinthians wanted to be generous givers in their hearts, so Paul demanded that they prove it with their pocketbooks. He understood that the easiest way to physically evaluate the spirituality of an individual is by examining their generosity when it comes to their resources. Talk is cheap and good intentions, without corresponding actions, is spiritual fluff.

12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

Attitude is more important than amount when it comes to giving to God, so whatever we give should be given with a good mindset. On the other hand, we are also called to give in proportion to what we have. Yahshua gave everything to purchase your salvation, so your giving should reflect His generosity. Your salvation was expensive; therefore, your lifestyle of giving should be costly as well.

TALK
IS
CHEAP

Attitude

is everything

Paul is not advising people to write cheques by faith. This is another invention of prosperity witchcraft and the perversion of faith-based principles rooted in the Old Testament. He wants the Corinthians to evaluate their resources and give sacrificially based on what they presently have to give. Each person's response should be individually based on their resources and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

¹³ Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality.

As mentioned, the church in Jerusalem lived as a collective in the beginning, especially because they all assumed Christ would return in their lifetime. They were not overly concerned about saving for the future or college education funds because they had an immediate urgency because of their eschatology. Paul was not asking the Corinthians to sell their houses and give away everything they had. The Corinthians had an abundance, while the Jerusalem believers were in lack. Paul implied there should be a sense of equality among the believers.

This should be a familiar lesson to the Corinthian church. Paul addressed this in 1 Corinthians when he mentioned that their communion celebration had become disrespectful of the body of Christ. Some members of the church had too much to eat, while others had nothing at all. This was what Paul meant when he rebuked them for "not discerning the body and blood of Christ". In Christ, we are all brothers and sisters connected to the same spiritual body. Therefore, we should have a radical sense of responsibility for one another because this is what a loving family does. Paul is simply asking a rich and prosperous church to exercise authentic love for their underprivileged brothers in Jerusalem, just as their brothers in Jerusalem exercised love for them, by sending missionaries all over the known world.

Eschatology is a big word that means "last things" or the "end times".

"Escha" is the Greek word that is translated as "last" like the last thing that happens in a sequence of events and "ology" means the study of something. Therefore, "eschatology" is the biblical study of the "last events" before the coming of Christ. Obviously, if you really believed Yahshua was coming in the next 10 years, it would greatly impact how you spend your time. Eschatology presents a problem for all serious biblical Christians. On the one hand, we are encouraged to live like Yahshua could come at anytime and not to be caught by surprise.



39 "Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would not permit his house to be broken into. **40** You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected." (Luke 12)

On the other hand, we are also warned not to obsess about knowing exactly when Christ will return, but to understand that His Second Coming will be unexpected to the world around us.

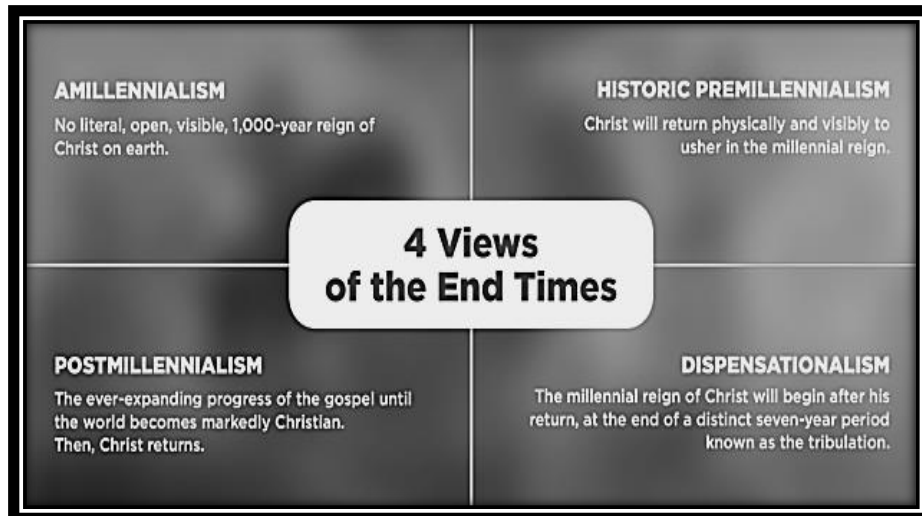
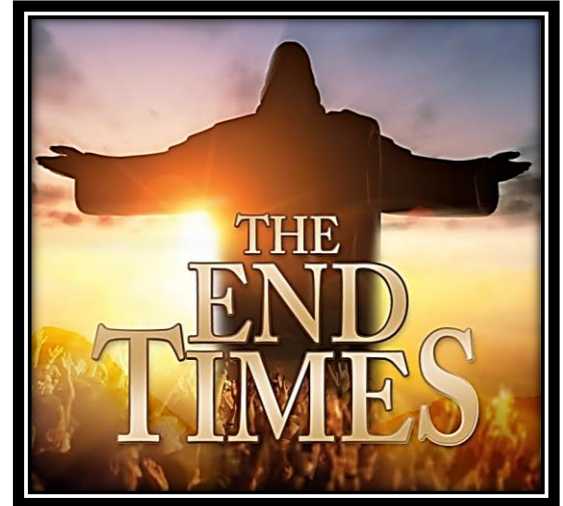
36 "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. **38** In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. **39** People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. (Matthew 24)

The early church had an immediate urgency because they wrongfully assumed that Christ would return in their lifetime. The Apostle John especially expected Christ to return before he died of old age. Likewise, our

present-day eschatology effects our worldview, and our worldview influences the way we live. As believers, the most biblical approach to life is to live like Christ could come at any moment, while simultaneously making plans for the future. This will cause tremendous tension in our lives, because we are commanded by Christ not to store up things on earth, but to heavily invest in the

Kingdom yet to come. Each believer needs to work this out for themselves, knowing that we will all stand before Christ to give an account as to how we spent our time and resources.



I've Never Seen the

¹⁴ Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.

Equality is a difficult concept to embrace when you are the one with abundance. Nevertheless, as believers we are the family of God. Paul was deeply disturbed by the inequality demonstrated in the Corinthian church, especially how they practiced the communion supper. The fact that some "feasted" while others "fasted" proved that the church did not have a revelation of the "Body of Christ". They assumed the bread and wine had a sacred significance, and they were correct in their assumption. But the sacredness of the community was the "reality of the ritual", fully expressed. Building on this example, Paul expands it to include all believers in different parts of the world. We are one single body of believers on the earth. When one part suffers, we should all suffer. When believers in one part of the world suffer poverty and persecution, rich and comfortable Christians are obligated to aid them in a time of need. This spiritual principle once activated, will provide a covering of blessing over the resources of the generous giver, and return supernatural provision in their time of need.

¹⁵ As the Scriptures say,

"Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough."

Paul is quoting a passage from Exodus concerning manna from heaven. Likewise, everything we have in this life comes from God and is like manna. If you object to this statement, because you assume you worked hard for everything you have, you are prideful. Perhaps you should try going to work without the air God gives you to breathe, and the heart that He alone keeps beating.

"All that we have is manna... And just as manna, which was hoarded to excess out of greed or lack of faith, immediately putrefied, so we should have no doubt that riches which are heaped up at the



Righteous Forsaken

expense of our brethren are accursed and will soon perish and their owner will be ruined with them.”
(Calvin)⁴⁹

The idea of giving out of abundance is clearly established in the Scripture. We are not called to hoard up resources, nor are we specifically called to live in abject poverty. We are supposed to be grateful to have enough, while having extra to give. For Paul, contentment was a by-product of spiritual wealth.

6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6)

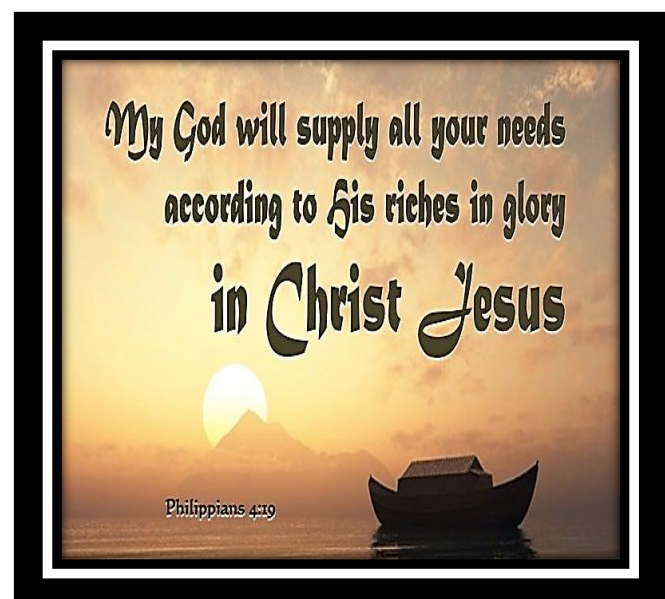
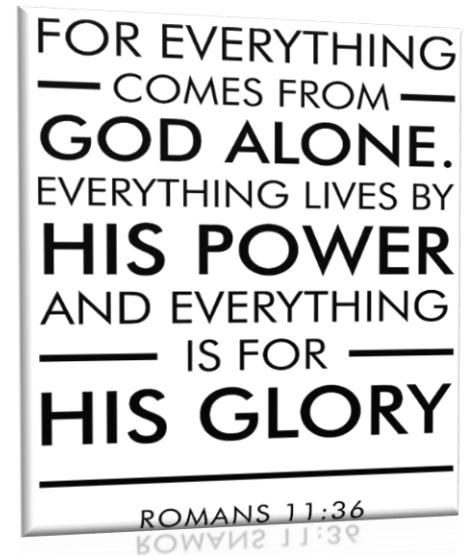
On the other hand, the desire for wealth leads to a life of destruction and spiritual poverty. According to Paul, the flow of wealth is extremely important. We are called to give generously in times of abundance and receive gratefully in time of need, knowing that God is the ultimate source of our provision.

***Send your grain across the seas,
and in time, profits will flow back to you.***
(Ecclesiastes 11)

When we live a generous lifestyle, we are planting seeds of blessing that Yahweh promises to remember in the future. Our provision is ultimately His responsibility, and we need to live in assurance of our Father's goodness with faith.

***25 Once I was young, and now I am old.
Yet I have never seen the godly***

⁴⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8



talk is cheap

abandoned

or their children begging for bread.

²⁶ The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing. (Psalm 37)

Titus and His Companions

¹⁶ But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. ¹⁷ Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. ¹⁸ We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. ¹⁹ He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem—a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help.

Although it makes for interesting discussion among Bible scholars, nobody knows for sure who this person is. Some of the candidates have been Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and a variety of others, but no one really knows. We can confidently say that it doesn't really matter, otherwise, God would have made it clear.⁵⁰

²⁰ We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. ²¹ We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.

Paul was incredibly careful to have accountability when it came to dealing with money. He knew there would always be critics, regardless of what he did. There were some people in the Corinthian community, who always despise his lifestyle and leadership. Hence, he is careful to send Titus back with his letter along with another well known leader among the churches so that he could not be accused of raising money for himself.

Christ sent out His disciples in pairs for the purpose of transparency, accountability, and support. This was a timeless principle that Paul adopted in his ministry. He never wanted anyone left with the moneybag without accountability. This principle was further reinforced by the example of Judas. He was given authority over ministry finances without proper supervision. The absence of checks and balances resulted in his own destruction. Paul was protecting himself and his beloved disciples from temptation and false

⁵⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8

accusations by keeping everything transparent and open for public evaluation.

²² We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. ²³ If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honor to Christ. ²⁴ So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.



The concluding idea is clear. Paul asks them to now come through and give like the good givers he has claimed they are. ⁵¹This statement is a little loaded. The Corinthians have a reputation of prideful boasting. Now Paul implies “put your money where your mouth is”. By indicating that all the churches are watching, Paul is suggesting that they now have a real means to demonstrate their spirituality in a measurable manner, instead of loudly praying in tongues. The Corinthians loved excessive demonstrations of the charismatic gifts, especially speaking in tongues. However, giving is one of the most concrete ways of expressing devotion that is obvious to everyone. Speaking in tongues is a cheap expression of spirituality, but the giving of time and resources is always costly and takes great sacrifice.



⁵¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8



1. Paul compared the generous giving of the poor Macedonian churches with the stingy giving of the rich Corinthians. Is it true that poor people in general are more generous than rich people?
2. Scripture identifies the "love of wealth" as an evil influence when it becomes an object of our devotion. How can we have wealth and not be enslaved to it?
3. In a society that idolizes wealth and power, Yahshua said these two things can hinder us from entering the Kingdom of God. What did He mean?
4. Is it really harder for a rich man to experience salvation?
5. Paul wrote "But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction." Does this mean its better to be poor?
6. Paul implied there should be a sense of financial equality among all believers. Was this a particular principle for a specific time?
7. Could we apply this today in our contemporary churches?
8. According to Paul, we are not called to hoard up resources, nor are we specifically called to live in abject poverty. Is this a biblical principle or just Paul's opinion?

The Collection for Christians in Jerusalem

9 I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. ² For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving. ³ But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected.

Paul was an extremely educated individual and was a powerful teacher of the Jewish law. This made him an expert in applying guilt when he needed to accomplish his agenda. Obviously, he is confident the Corinthians will keep their vows, but adds a touch of shame to compel them along the way.

Here, Paul may be showing his sarcasm again. The basic idea is, "I don't even need to write this, reminding you about the collection, because you are already ready and willing to give." Of course, if the Corinthian Christians were really as ready and willing as Paul seems to indicate, he really wouldn't need to write this at all.⁵²

I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you. ⁴ We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! ⁵ So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready.

Paul wanted the offering to be taken up before he arrived. He had no intention of begging the church for money like a shameless television evangelist. He trusted the Corinthians to do what they promised based on their own integrity. The lighthearted sarcasm continues with still another slight jab. The Corinthians will be embarrassed if the Macedonians realize they were all talk and no action.

But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly.

⁵² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9

Don't give to get. Give to inspire others to give.

Paul imagined that giving be an expression of generosity, and not a matter of grudging obligation. God Himself never gives out of an attitude of resentful duty, and neither should we. To be generous, in the Biblical sense of the word, has more to do with our attitude in giving than with the amount that we give, so God wants a willing attitude from givers.⁵³



Giving because of manipulation will accomplish the goals of the fundraiser but will not be a blessing to the giver. Anything done for God with a wrong motivation is called "dead works" in the Scripture and will be burned up in judgment. Attitude is everything in the Kingdom of God. Paul wants the giving of the Corinthian church to be done orderly and with the right heart attitude. Giving as a result of coercion, manipulation or excessive guilt will not be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

⁶ Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

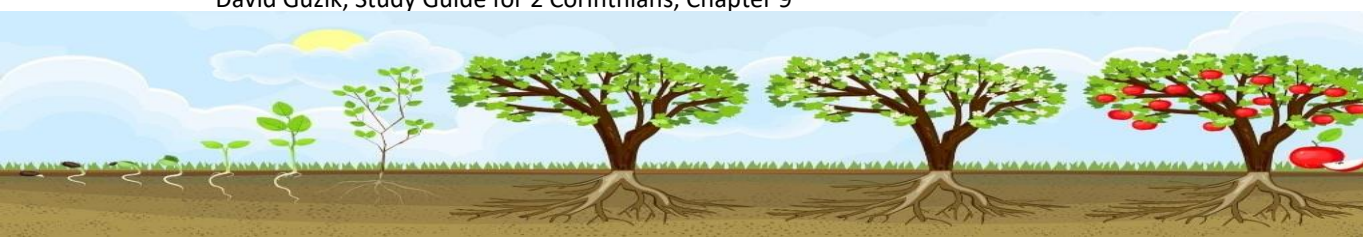
There is a spiritual law in Genesis that encompasses the concept of seed, time, and harvest. This principle is activated with faith and trust. It is a rule, but not a mathematical formula. The overall principle asserts that generosity attracts blessings to the cheerful giver. How those blessings come, and what shape they take is ultimately up to Yahweh. This principle cannot be reduced to a magical formula that assumes if you give a car to a ministry, that God automatically owes you a better car. Or if you give \$100, God necessarily owes you \$1000. This kind of thinking motivates selfish giving with the intention of getting. This is not the kind of generosity Paul is encouraging. Such concepts are rooted in paganism, where you must appease the gods with an offering, and compel them to pay you back with a blessing.



Sowing and reaping is a general principle about generosity. We should not attempt to manipulate this principle for our own advantage, but to joyfully trust God and believe in His love for His children.

⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person

⁵³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9



GOD LOVES A

who gives cheerfully.” ⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. ⁹ As the Scriptures say,

“They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.”

Instead of giving in a grudging way or out of necessity, God wants us to give cheerfully. The ancient Greek word for cheerful (hilaros, used only here in the New Testament) is the root for our English word hilarious. God wants us to give happily because that is how God Himself gives.⁵⁴

The evidence of a truly wealthy person is not demonstrated by what they have, but what they have to give. In the end, everything on this dying planet will be burned up in judgment. Only what is transferred into Kingdom accounts will survive the coming judgment. Investing in the lives of the poor and needy believers is a means of storing up wealth in eternity.

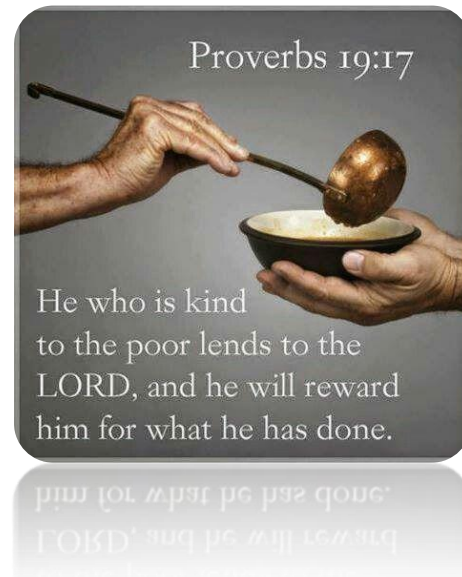
¹⁹ “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. (Matthew 6)

¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

Amazingly, Paul assures the Corinthians that Yahweh is both the source of their supply and reward. God gave us the ability to receive the blessing to generate biblical wealth and wrote the instructions we need to transform temporary resources into eternal treasure. All temporary resources will be lost in judgment, but our eternal fortune will never be lost, stolen, or misplaced. You can’t keep what you have on earth or lose what you have in heaven.

¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them,

⁵⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9



CHEERFUL GIVER

they will thank God. ¹² So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.

First, on the most practical level, the giving of the Corinthian Christians will supply the needs of the Jerusalem saints. This is a good thing in and of itself, but their giving did far more than that. Secondly, their gifts also caused thanksgiving to God. They were giving more than money for food; they were giving people a reason to thank God.⁵⁵

Generosity once received by the poor believers will increase their praise and worship to God. Notice, the object of adoration is God and never the giver. If the giver is praised, the reward has already been received. While many believers assume that Yahweh promises to drip money from heaven in their time of need, most of the generosity we will receive from God comes from the hands of another person. This radically reduces our tendency towards pride.

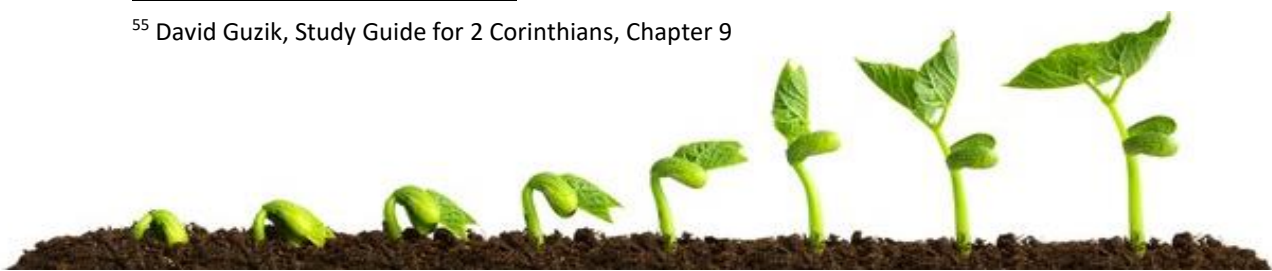
6 "Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ² When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³ But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. (Matthew 6)

When our generosity causes others to worship God, we have translated a worthless temporary blessing into something of eternal value. The powerful act of radical giving increases the faith of the suffering and disadvantaged Christians, as well as bringing glory to the God of all Creation.

¹³ As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. ¹⁴ And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. ¹⁵ Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

All of God's children have something to give. While wealthy believers have resources, poor believers can offer up prayer on behalf of those who have

⁵⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9



been generous. In the cycle of sowing and reaping, the entire church is blessed, and all glory is received by the Father.

There is a surprising shift in the urgency and the tone in which Paul writes, as the new chapter begins. The previous chapter ends with him writing in a playfully sarcastic manner which was likely intended to be slightly humorous. As he shifts his attention to the re-emerging problem of false teaching among the Corinthian church, Paul becomes as serious as cancer.

CONTEXT MATTERS

Paul hated all false teaching in general but had a specific loathing for the instruction of the Judaizers. Sarcastically, he wrote that since these Jewish teachers were so obsessed with cutting the foreskin off from a man's penis, they should cut off their entire penis, to fulfill their obsessive compulsion.

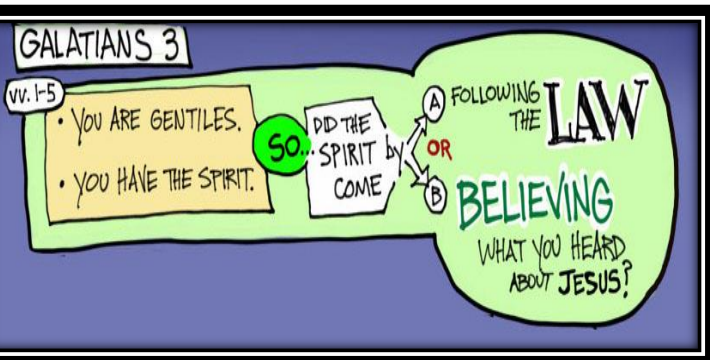
12 I just wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves. (Galatians 5)

This statement was intended to be humorous on a certain level, but deadly serious on another. Tolerating the teachings of the Judaizers was extremely dangerous to the Corinthians because their love of legalism and Jewish rituals eroded the freedom Christ that died on the cross to achieve. Legalism to Paul was a lethal poison slowly seeping back into the church under the influence of Jewish ritualism. Jewish believers wanted to maintain their traditions as an expression of their faith and identity. This was not a major issue if they kept it to themselves. However, there were traveling teachers that made Gentile believers question the validity of their salvation, even after they had received the Holy Spirit with the external evidence of prophetic speech. The false teachers told weak hearted believers, that they needed to be

You Foolish Galatians! Who Has Bewitched You? Before Your Very Eyes Jesus Christ Was Clearly Portrayed As Crucified.

Galatians 3-1

circumcised to be saved. Consequently, they questioned their redemption and the validity of the message of the Gospel which is salvation by faith and not by works.



Paul Defends His Authority

10 Now I, Paul, appeal to you with the gentleness and kindness of Christ—though I realize you think I am timid in person and bold only when I write from far away.

**HIS BARK IS WORSE
THAN HIS BITE!**



Here, Paul reveals a matter of great contention between him and the Corinthian Christians. They said that Paul seemed reserved in person but very bold in his letters. The Corinthians criticized him as if he was a cowardly dog that barked loudly, but only at a distance. They accused him of backing down in any face-to-face confrontation.

Like many worldly people, they mistook Paul's kindness for weakness. By assuming "his bark was bigger than his bite" they were making a tragic mistake. Paul was not timid when he prophesied that blindness would suddenly come upon a powerful sorcerer for resisting the preaching of the Gospel.

⁹ Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. ¹⁰ Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. (Acts 13)

Historically, Paul was described as a physically small man in the writing of the early church fathers, but he was filled with the "Holy Ghost and fire", as the old time Pentecostals liked to say. He was a hard and relentless man, with the suffering of Yahshua painfully carved into his back. He was not a man to be played with, especially by those who underrated the power of his dedication and the radical commitment he demonstrated to Biblical truth.

² Well, I am begging you now so that when I come I won't have to be bold with those who think we act from human motives.

**From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear
in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus**

Galatians 6:17

As mentioned, Paul had his critics, especially among the Corinthian church. Some people said Paul was too timid to be taken seriously and was only good at writing letters because he was known to be a poor public speaker. His slight appearance and outstanding gentleness made him an easy target for those who intended to gather disciples to themselves for personal interest and self-promotion. Many Corinthians wanted to identify with an apostle that met the Greco-Roman expectation of what a good leader was supposed to look like. Paul did not look like a Greek god, nor did he speak with the eloquence of a pompous philosopher or the persuasion of a pretentious politician. But he was willing to aggressively stand for truth to the point of death. Indirectly, Paul is made a lightly veiled threat to his critics who claimed he was weak hearted. He advised that they respect the gentleness of his plea before they personally experienced the wrath of his unrestrained righteous anger.



It's clear to see that the Corinthian church was still very divided into factions. Some supported the apostolic authority of Paul, while others rejected it. Some said Paul had bad motives, while others adored him. In this last section of the letter, Paul wants to unite the church by defending his claim to be their founding apostle and rally them to stand against the false teaching/false teachers currently circulating among their community.

Our modern culture has become accustomed to weak hearted Christian leaders who express love in an unbalanced manner. God is love, but He is also justice. It becomes problematic when we emphasize one aspect of His divine nature and intentionally de-emphasize another. The unfortunate numerical domination of women in the modern church, encouraged by the absence of strong godly men, has caused the feminization of many ministries, where the natural masculinity of a male leader is culturally viewed as unloving and even harsh. Speaking truth in a society that has increasingly defends "tolerance" as the highest moral virtue has become socially uncomfortable and culturally unacceptable. As believers we are called to speak truth in a loving way, but this does not minimize our mandate to begin with the truth. Christ was the perfect representation of both truth and love physically embodied. He did not only speak about truth and love, but He was also the perfect manifestation of truth and love incarcerated in the flesh.

GOD IS GOD IS GOD IS
 love just truth



Ironically, Yahshua was the most loving person who ever lived, and all Christian leaders, both male and female, should strive to be as loving as Christ. This is Biblically undeniable. Nevertheless, that same Yahshua also beat people in the Temple with a whip! When Yahweh gets annoyed, He expresses His "righteous anger" in vengeful wrath. People who minimize this aspect of Yahweh's character are trying to create a god in their own image. We don't need to apologize for aspects of the God's nature that our society finds culturally unacceptable. Our contemporary culture will be burned in the fire of judgment, but Yahweh will forever remain "I AM".



There are many dogmatically minded believers who also have an exaggerated understanding of the apostle Paul. They only see him as an anointed theologian, who knew he was writing Scripture every time he picked up a pen. This is basic nonsense. Paul was an ordinary man who gave himself in an extraordinary way to the service of Christ. He had no idea he was writing much of the New Testament when he penned his letters. He expressed raw emotions from time to time. He also masterfully used sarcasm, mockery, and irony as an expression of his dry humor. If contemporary pastors spoke to their congregation similarly to the way Paul did, the elder board would be flooded with complaints!

Moreover, in most churches, a spiritual leader with Paul's reputation of being cast into prison, stoned to death, and constantly beaten by the Roman authorities, would never get hired as a senior pastor. Perhaps he would only get employment as a youth pastor? We need to make sure we don't idolize Paul to where we fail to understand that he would also be despised and rejected in our own modern church. His teachings were harsh on idolatry, even when we call it "family values". He could not understand weak hearted believers who refuse to stand and even suffer, for what they believe. He would be regarded as being unloving, aggressive, and harsh in our contemporary "fainthearted" church culture, because we are very similar to the prideful, spoiled Corinthians. We also like to excuse false teachers, accept open sin, avoid suffering and rejection, just like they did. We would be offended by the boldness of Paul's letters, because he was not a politician and was not looking to get re-elected. He was not interested in being popular by human standards, but wanted desperately to please Yahshua.

³ We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do.

Paul reminds his Corinthian critics that they are on the same team and cannot function in division. As believers, we have powerful weapons intended for spiritual warfare, but not to fight among ourselves. Mere humans constantly fight among themselves for power and prestige because they are blinded by Satan. As believers, we see what the unsaved person can't. We know that we are primarily battling organized "spiritual wickedness" which intends to destroy believers.

¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6)

The enemy of our soul wants us to believe that other Christians are our adversaries, so we misdirect our efforts into fighting with one another. This is a tragic waste of time and energy. Our greatest battlefield is in our minds. We all have deeply rooted patterns of negative thinking the Scripture calls "strongholds". As we knock down rebellious reasoning, destroy dangerous arguments and incarcerate rebellious imaginations, we are pulling down the power of the unseen rulers in our own minds. As we become free in our own thinking, we are able to clearly see the diabolical forces who operate within our culture, to increase evil in our world.

Because we are not mindful of the spiritual world, we are often manipulated into ongoing conflicts that are both unprofitable and pointless. This is what Paul saw when he evaluated the division among the Corinthian congregation. If Satan keeps the church divided and our leaders struggling with one another for power and prestige, we are helpless even though we have incredibly effective weapons.

⁴ We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons,

As believers, we have powerful spiritual weapons which give us tremendous authority. However, when we fail to walk in love, we inadvertently make ourselves vulnerable to diabolically driven attacks. Christians should be desperately afraid of strife and division in our lives. Strife, contention, and division gives the devil a legal "foothold" which opens us up to a demonic assault. Strife gives the devil



STRONGHOLDS:



- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Drunkenness | Sexual Sin |
| Drugs | Pride |
| Unforgiveness | Bitterness |
| Anger | Callousness |
| Anxiety | Depression |
| Lying | Manipulation |
| Laziness | Bitterness |
| Arrogance | Religion |

the legal “foothold” from which he can build a powerful “stronghold” in our thinking.

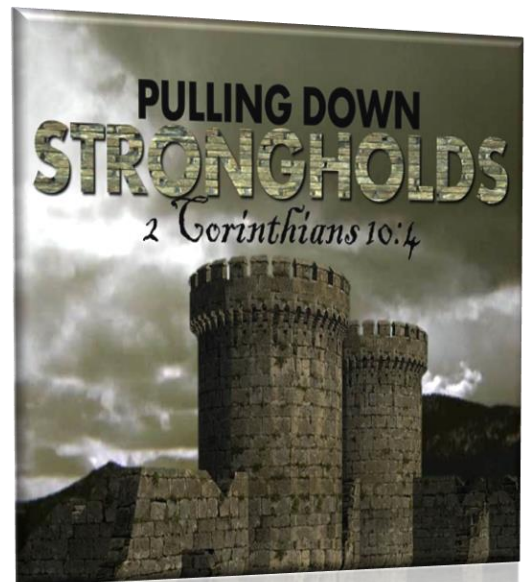
Worldly thinking employs “weaponized words” which are rooted in human reasoning, vain philosophies, and psychological manipulation. This is how false teachers gather disciples to themselves. They say all the things the people want to hear.

Just because a preacher has an amazing speaking gift and leaves you filled with inspiration; does not mean you have heard the Word of God. If the Holy Spirit is not involved, whatever happens is “fleshly” and will be considered “dead works” on the Day of Judgment. As believers, we can use worldly methods like guilt and manipulation to raise money or we can trust the Spirit to lead people to give. We can attract people to church by giving away free stuff or we can preach the Word and let it transform their heart. Religion, philosophy, and psychology are nothing, but cheap imitations used to simulate the power of the Spirit. Many things in church can be accomplished without the power of God, but it will mean nothing in the end. Without the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, lasting transformation is humanly impossible.

to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.

This reliance on carnal methods and the habit of carnal thinking is a true stronghold. It stubbornly sets down deep roots in the heart and mind, and it colors all of our actions and thinking. It is hard to let go of the thinking that values the things and ways of this world, but God’s power really can break down these strongholds.⁵⁶

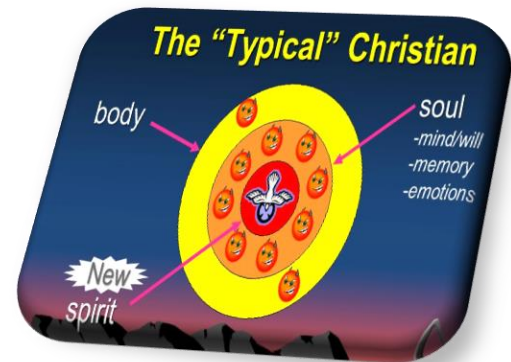
The Word of God must transform our thinking by changing our believing. When we really believe something, it automatically rewires the way we think. The Corinthians were still worldly and immature believers who could not understand



⁵⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10

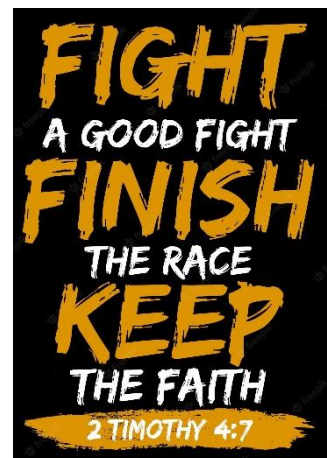
spiritual truth. Therefore, they enthusiastically attracted the instruction of the false teachers because they employed worldly methods, to achieve worldly desires. Everyone wants success, prosperity, a great family, and social prestige. Many elements of false teaching promise these things without any demands for denial of self, suffering for righteousness and picking up the cross. Paul wanted to lead the Corinthian congregation into a deeper revelation of the Word of God, but they were still too immature to listen to "sound doctrine" because they were still religiously prideful and divided as a community.

11 There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen. **12** You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. **13** For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. **14** Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong. (Hebrew 5)



While false teaching appeals to the flesh and promises the believer a life filled with pleasure without the experience of pain, Paul suggested the opposite. He spoke about embracing life's pain and suffering, the way Christ did, in order to transform it into something meaningful and ultimately beautiful. This kind of thinking will be diametrically opposed by our "Adamic" human nature and aggressively argued against by our innate human reasoning. This is precisely where the greatest amount of our spiritual warfare will occur. Spiritual warfare has much more to do with changing our thinking, than fighting demons. When we control our thinking and discipline our emotions, demons have little to work with because we will starve them to death. We are called to primarily fight for faith and deny the flesh, as the greatest expression of spiritual warfare possible.

5 We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.



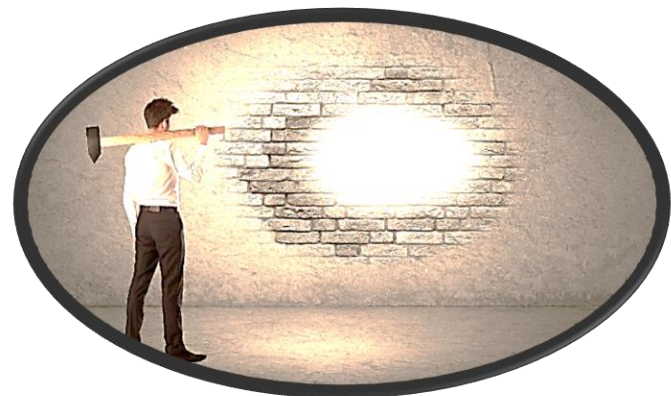
*Carnal and worldly ways of thinking and doing arguments against the mind and methods of God. They want to debate God, saying they have a better way. They exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. They think of themselves as smarter, more sophisticated, more effective, more powerful than God's ways. Carnal, worldly minds think they know more than God does!*⁵⁷

As noted, pride and rebellion are deeply rooted in the Adamic mindset. They are enemies to the knowledge of God and refuse to obey Christ. It's clearly possible to be a "born again" child of God, while still having ways of thinking that oppose the desires of the Spirit and that contradict the Word of God. Over time, the way we were accustomed to thinking (before becoming a New Creation) formed deeply rooted "strongholds" that became entrenched in our mind, will and emotions (Soul). These mental fortresses must be dismantled and destroyed, brick by brick if we will ever take the high ground (The Promised Land) of our thinking. This is what the Word of God does as we grow in faith and obedience. Over time, it slowly breaks down the walls of our wrong thinking, so the light of truth fills the dark places of our soul. As we mature in faith, our soul and spirit unite as one, to dominate and control our rebellious flesh.

⁶ And after you have become fully obedient, we will punish everyone who remains disobedient.

*Paul was ready to confront the Corinthian Christians and to pull down the strongholds among them if they would not do it themselves...Paul sees no point in coming to confront disobedience until those who have obeyed Jesus have made up their mind to do so. He will give time for those who want to renounce carnal weapons to do so. Then he will come to punish the disobedience of those who will not renounce those carnal weapons.*⁵⁸

Paul gave them a choice. They could do it the easy way or the hard way. They could either become fully obedient and repent of their worldly thinking or they would be painfully rebuked once again when he arrived in person. Notice, Paul is not timid when exercising his "apostolic authority" and will surely punish those who continue



⁵⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10

⁵⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10

to promote rebellion and encourage false teaching in the church.

⁷ Look at the obvious facts. Those who say they belong to Christ must recognize that we belong to Christ as much as they do.

As previously discussed, there were those among the Corinthians who claimed great spiritual authority as they actively minimized the authority of Paul as their founding apostle. In response, Paul said its obvious that they all serve the same Lord.

⁸ I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But our authority builds you up; it doesn't tear you down. So I will not be ashamed of using my authority.

It seems that Paul is uncomfortable writing about his own authority. This is because he is a humble, godly man. He uses boast here in an exaggerated, almost sarcastic sense to show he would prefer not to talk about his own authority; it feels like "boasting" to him. Paul realizes how much better it would be if the Corinthian Christians would just recognize his authority so that he wouldn't have to boast somewhat more about it.⁵⁹

While others questioned his authority as a real apostle, Paul reminded his critics that he saw Yahshua personally and was directly instructed by the Lord to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. This was his claim to authentic apostleship, and he would defend it rigorously until the end of his life. Unfortunately, Paul was constantly forced to defend his credentials to be counted among the original apostles because it was commonly understood that the first apostles physically interacted with Yahshua face to face.

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. ¹² I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.

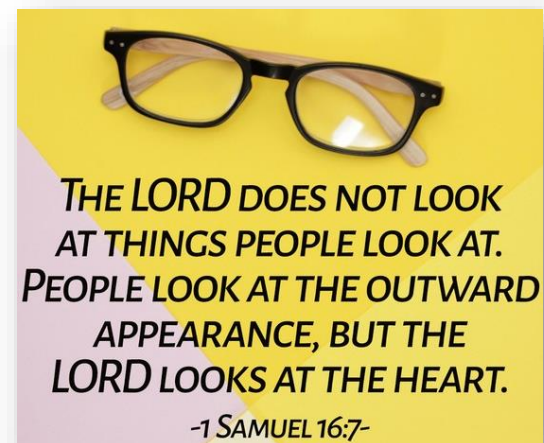
⁵⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10

When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being. ¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus. (Galatians 1)



⁹ I'm not trying to frighten you by my letters. ¹⁰ For some say, "Paul's letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!"

Returning to the original point of contention, Paul is being publicly disrespected in the Corinthian church by a group of believers, possibly motivated by false teachers, who rejected his apostolic authority because of his gentle nature and frail outward appearance. According to Paul, their thinking was "worldly" because they only evaluated things by a superficial assessment of his outward appearance. God however, judges individuals according to the motives of their heart. It's hard to understand how anyone could consider a man with Paul's accomplishments as being weak and feeble spiritual leader. This is a stunning example of the danger of religious pride and the spiritual blindness it causes, even among believers.



From what we know of Paul's ministry in the book of Acts, it seems hard to understand why anyone would say of him, "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." But Paul may have been quite ill during his time with the Corinthian Christians, and his condition may have made him appear this way.⁶⁰

¹¹ Those people should realize that our actions when we arrive in person will be as forceful as what we say in our letters from far away.

Because there were those among the community that constantly disrespected the authority of Paul, he warned them that he was coming soon. In a shrouded threat, he challenged those who

⁶⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10



STAY IN YOUR LANE!

openly said he was weak and feeble, to confront him personally when he arrived!

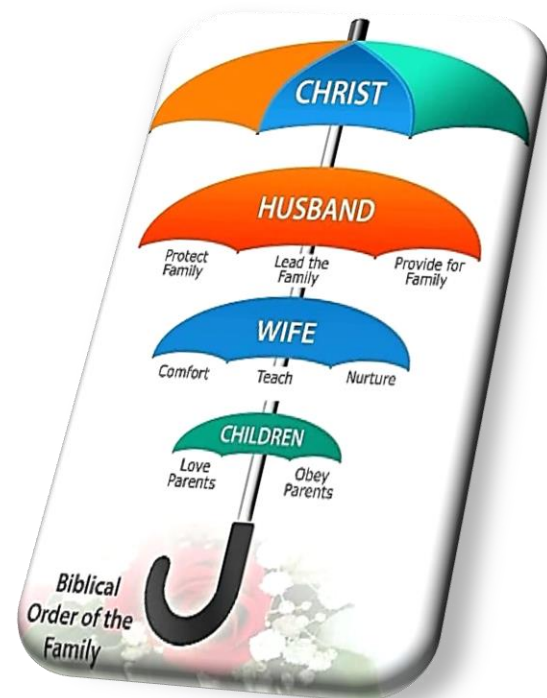
Paul writes to his despisers with perfect clarity. "If you want the 'tough' Paul, you will get him. I will come to you with all the authority I have shown in my letters." If the Corinthian Christians knew how serious Paul was, they would have received this as a solemn warning. ⁶¹

12 Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!

The reader can feel the temperature rising, as the hostility begins to build in Paul's writing. He said it was easy for some members of the Corinthian church to compare themselves with other carnal believers. Contrasted against other "weakhearted" Christians, it was easy to feel spiritual amongst a group of religious weaklings. Because the standards of the Corinthian church were so low, its no wonder the powerless false teachers seemed to have spiritual authority in the eyes of such pathetically immature believers.

13 We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you. 14 We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.

Here Paul highlights the idea that authority has boundaries. For example, a father has spiritual authority over his daughter until she is married. When she becomes the wife of another man, the authority of the new husband overshadows the former authority of the father. Moreover, Christ is the rightful authority over the husband, who is the rightful authority over the wife, who is the rightful authority over the children, who is the rightful authority over the cat.



⁶¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10

STAY IN YOUR LANE!



However, once a couple is married, if the father of the bride, still tries to circumvent the rightful authority of her husband, the father of the bride must be sternly put in his place. (This also applies to mothers in law as well) In this example, the continued influence of the father's authority is spiritually illegal, because it undermines the authority structure of Yahweh in this new family.

Paul is clearly exercising his rightful spiritual authority as the "father" of the church he established. He is telling the false teachers to "stay in their lane"! Like a runner in a footrace, we all need to stay in our spiritual lane or be disqualified for being out of bounds. Similarly, the false teachers are spiritually out of bounds. They have no rightful authority to turn Paul's disciples against him, because he is the God ordained father/apostle of the Corinthian church.



Moreover, Paul makes a subtle point that is worth noting. If these super teachers are so anointed, why don't they go start their own churches in other unreached cities? Why are they constantly trying to "eat Paul's food", in a church that has already been established? Ironically, while these traveling teachers accused Paul of being a weak and timid man, they were too spiritually inadequate to plant their own churches, and too timid to suffer the persecution and hostility that comes hand in hand with church planting. Like leeches, false teachers are parasites who are attracted to the ministries that other faithful missionaries have built, only to undermine their authority instead of supporting it.

¹⁵ Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended. ¹⁶ Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else's territory. ¹⁷ As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord."

This situation was not new for Paul. It happened in other cities as well. He was plagued by false teachers who followed him around to steal his disciples after he moved on to another mission project. Paul would go to a city where the Gospel was not yet preached and started a new church from nothing. He would sometimes spend years working among the new believers, developing

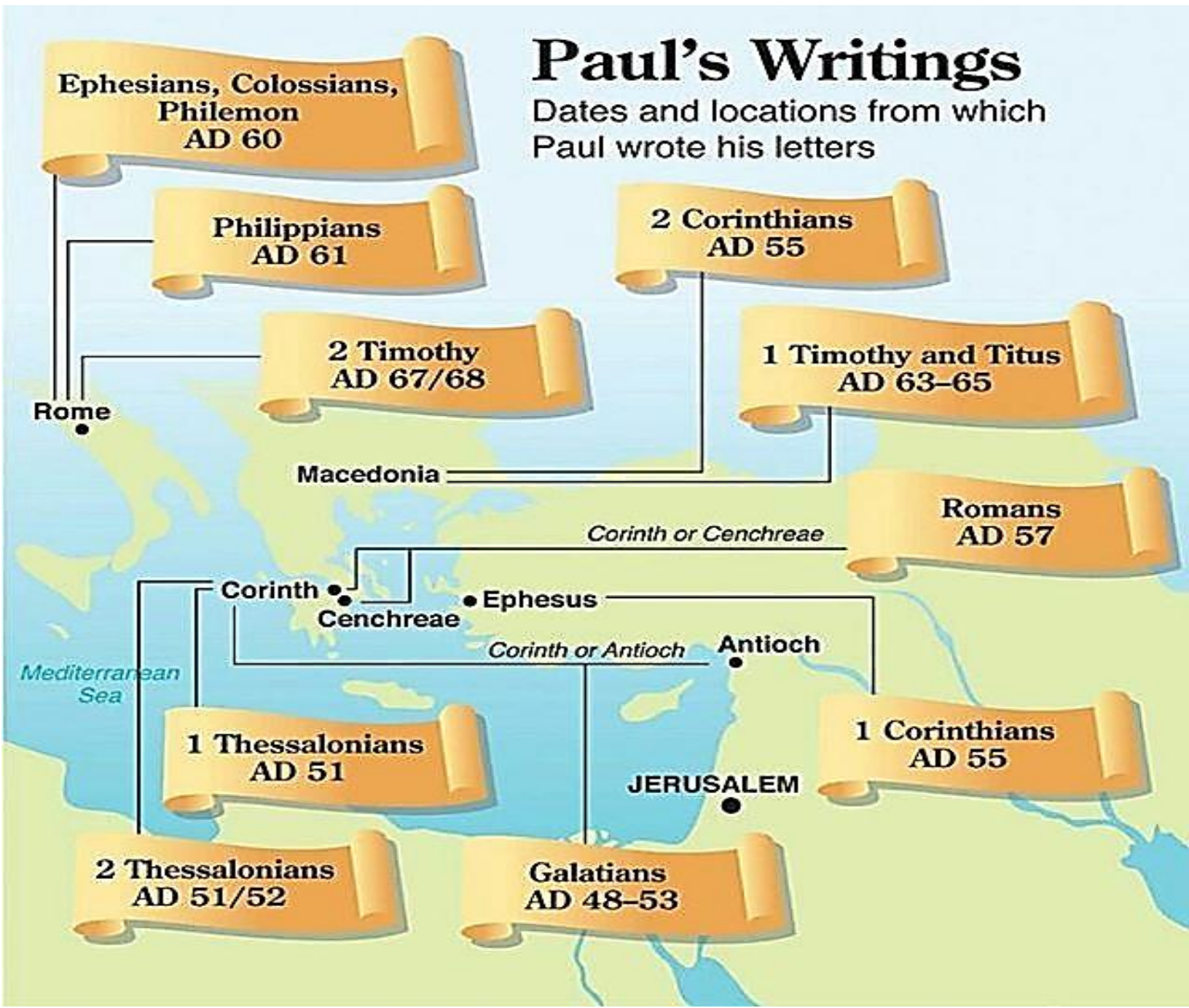




elders, and raising up young pastors. When the church was established, Paul moved on to another missionary assignment. After the demanding work was completed, these traveling teachers, who were sometimes called “Judaizers”, would show up to parasitically insert themselves in the work Paul had already established.

On the other hand, Paul had no desire to visit churches started by other missionaries, but always wanted to preach the Gospel where the Good News was not yet declared. Paul refused to build on another man's foundation because he saw himself as a frontline Apostle.

18 When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.



Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Sowing and reaping is a biblical principle that promises extraordinary blessing in the "now and not yet". In light of this, is it wrong to give generously with the anticipation of a future reward?
2. Is Paul promising financial prosperity to the person who gives a lot? Why or why not?
3. There is a great difference between Biblical principles and Biblical promises. What are some of the differences?
4. People said Paul was weak and his speeches were worthless. How could he still love a congregation that treated him with such disrespect?
5. Most of the Spiritual Warfare we will ever experience is in our minds. Are you aware that "worldly thinking" is demonically inspired even when its not overly sinful?
6. If a believer has the same values and desires as their unbelieving friends, can we fairly say that this individual believer is "demonized"?
7. Does the value system of the world have a "stronghold" on the mind of such a believer?
8. Paul understood and exercised his apostolic authority over the Corinthian church. Does the office of apostle still exist today and how should we understand apostolic authority in our contemporary churches?



Paul and the False Apostles

11 I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. ² For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ.

¹² "Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped. ¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. ¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you. (Exodus 34)

Know
-the-
Truth

There is a godly jealousy that seeks to protect and shelter what is yours, from the destructive intentions of others. Yahweh has this jealousy for His people as well. In the context of the Promised

Land, Yahweh commanded the nation of Israel to be faithful to Him as their rightful husband and not have a form of figurative "sexual intercourse" with other gods of the heathen nations. The sacred pillars and Asherah poles were all fertility symbols that represented the male penis. The connection between sexuality and adultery is obvious in relation to the afore mentioned text. Like a human husband, Yahweh is angered when His people "cheat" on Him with other lovers. It makes Him jealous because He should be the focus of their intimate spiritual affection, and not another god.

This is what the apostle Paul calls "Godly jealousy". He is justified in his feelings of rejection and anger towards specific members of the Corinthian church because they have been totally disloyal to him as their founding apostle. In Paul's understanding, he was their spiritual father, because he brought them the Gospel that saved their souls. He is definitely not saying he should be compared to Yahweh, but in a spiritual sense, he was still the person used by Yahweh to win them to Christ. He was

...in the presence of a

Jealous
God



therefore hurt and insulted that the community he established, had so quickly rejected him and gone after the affection of the false teachers, who twisted the Scriptures and made promises, they could keep, in an effort to seduce Paul's disciples away from him.

According to Jewish tradition, the father of the bride would promise her to a worthy husband. During the time she was promised to her husband, she was already considered married, but the marriage was not yet consummated.

Remember also that the time of betrothal wasn't taken lightly in Paul's culture. If someone was unfaithful during the betrothal period, it was considered adultery, and a betrothal could only be broken by divorce.⁶²

This is yet another illustration of the "now and the not yet" of the Kingdom of God. We are already married to Christ because of our "betrothal" promise to be His Bride. In our culture, this can be compared to being "engaged" but this is still a shallow comparison to the Jewish concept. Spiritually we are already married to Yahshua, but we are still waiting for the consummation of our marriage covenant, when we receive our new eternal bodies and attend the marriage supper.

Accordingly, Mary was promised or engaged to Joseph and was considered his wife at the time she conceived by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Joseph considered divorcing her even though he had not had sexual intercourse with her as yet. Likewise, Paul presents himself as the father of the Corinthian church who engaged them to Christ. As their spiritual father, he had all authority to bind them to Christ in marriage.

Likewise, according to the ancient custom, it was the father's responsibility to present his daughter as a virgin to her husband, in marriage. Paul wanted the Corinthians to remain "pure" by staying committed to the integrity of the original message he preached and not become corrupted by religious Jewish legalism.

³ But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent.

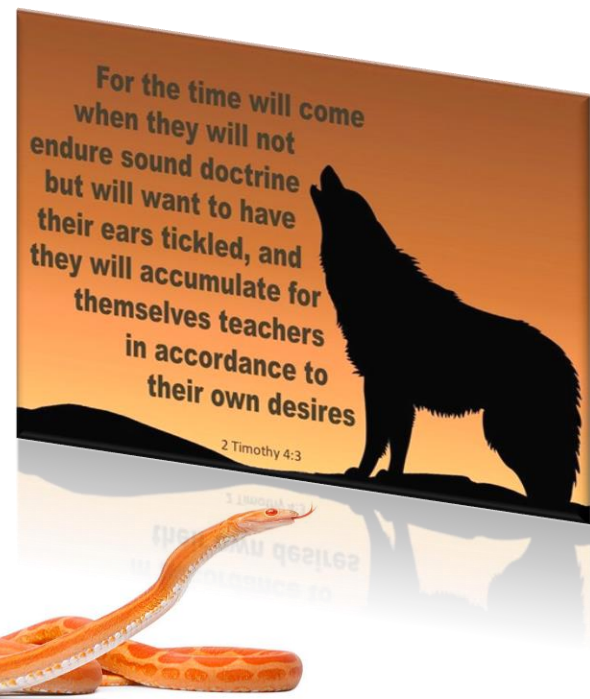
Paul was constantly tormented by a sect of Jewish believers who aggressively opposed the message of grace that he preached among the Gentiles. He unwaveringly resisted their doctrine because he believed it to

⁶² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

be deceptive and thus compares them to venomous snakes, seeking to destroy the innocence of his churches. In the case of the Corinthian church there is an added dimension to the teaching that makes it super dangerous. Paul said it had the ability to corrupt their devotion to Christ.

Paul understood that Satan's deception of Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-5) is a good example of Satan's deceptive tactics. His lie to Eve (You will not surely die) was surrounded by half-truths and enticing deception. The Corinthian Christians were challenged by the deception of "triumphalism" because it was wrapped in the truth of the triumphant life we can live in Jesus Christ.⁶³

Triumphalism is the false belief that assumes we can avoid all of life's trials and suffering, if we have enough faith. It assures the believer, that we can live a life without sickness, poverty, and loss if we continually say the right things as our confession of faith. While the New Covenant promises healing, provision, and authority over the demonic "snakes and serpents", it also promises persecution, hardships, suffering and trials. False teachers don't always promote things that are not true. Sometimes they just teach the truth in a way that excludes other things. Things that are also equally true as well. For example, if the Scripture promises both blessing and suffering for the believer in this life, you can't authentically say you are only anointed to teach on the blessings of God. Bible teachers are called to teach the entire Word of God, not only the popular parts what the people want to hear.



CONTEXT MATTERS

|| We need to read between the lines to see exactly what Paul is fighting in his contention with the rebellious faction of the Corinthian church and their favorite false teachers. First of all, there are some in the congregation who question his ability to lead because he appears to be physically weak. Similarly, to our contemporary church culture, the Corinthians also wanted a younger leader that looked more like a Greek god, youthful, strong, and physically attractive. Secondly, || there were other speakers like Apollos whom they felt represented the

⁶³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

church better than Paul, because they seem to have more ministerial success and financial prosperity. In short, a faction in the Corinthian church did not want to be associated with the way Paul taught the Gospel, because it was not as attractive as the way the false teachers presented it. Paul always warned his churches to beware of people with the ability to twist the Gospel to say something it never said in the first place.

25 "And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. 26 I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, 27 for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

28 "So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. 29 I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. 30 Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. 31 Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you. (Acts 20)

In another translation, the Scripture says: **for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27).** Paul claimed to teach the entire

Word of God, encompassing both the blessings and the curses, as outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy. This is the responsibility of a good Bible teacher. The

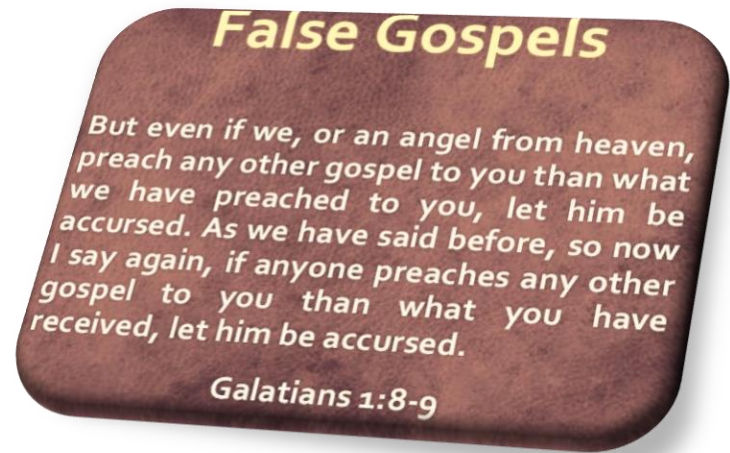
pastor of a church cannot just focus on a section of the Scripture he/she feels "anointed" to preach, or say "I am impressed" to only teach a "special revelation" to the body of Christ. Paul understood that false teachers liked to distort the entire truth, by selectively teaching aspects of the truth, that support conclusions that are not necessarily true. By preaching a limited Gospel, they were also presenting an edited version of Yahshua. They may have presented a Messiah who represented only love but was unconcerned with justice. Or they presented a Savior, who came to preach grace without mentioning the seriousness of the coming judgment. Furthermore, it appears



ANOTHER JESUS

that the Corinthians were specifically attracted to a false version of Yahshua that only preached blessings, without the need for suffering persecution.

The troublemakers among the Corinthian Christians who stirred up contention against Paul didn't only attack Paul; they also attacked the true Jesus by preaching another Jesus. Who was this "other Jesus?" Because of the way the Corinthian Christians despised Paul's image of weakness and unimpressive appearance, the "other Jesus" was probably one who knew no weakness, persecution, humiliation, suffering, or death. A "super Jesus" is another Jesus, not the real Jesus, and another Jesus cannot save.⁶⁴



4 You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

Its spiritually dangerous to believing in a different Gospel. A different Gospel will obviously present a different version of the true Messiah, other than Yahshua. Yahweh warned the people of Israel not to fabricate a god in their own image. If you place faith in a different Messiah than the one revealed in the Scripture, you are connecting yourself to another spirit other than the Holy Spirit. Paul was afraid that the Corinthian's desire to hear a more attractive Gospel would sooner or later lead them to believe in "another Messiah" unrelated to the Yahshua of the Scripture.



⁶⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

WILL THE REAL JESUS PLEASE STAND UP

24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. 25 See, I have warned you about this ahead of time. (Matthew 24)

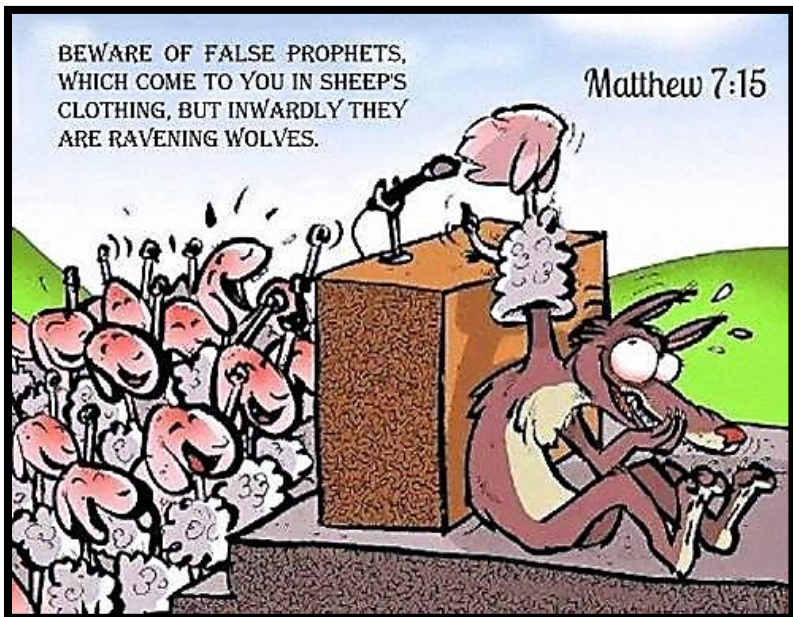
18 Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. 19 These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us. (1 John 2)



People assume that an antichrist is the opposite of what Yahshua represented, but this is not true. An antichrist is a counterfeit of the original. It's a version of the authentic Christ that looks the same on the surface but has been culturally modified or spiritually altered to be more appealing to our society. An antichrist can also be a version of Christ, who does not preach the reality of the cross. It is one thing to say Yahshua died on a cross for your sins while avoiding His teachings that command His disciples to deny themselves, repent and live a holy life. Accordingly, even another version of the authentic Yahshua can be considered an antichrist.

5 But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to these "super apostles" who teach such things. 6 I may be unskilled as a speaker, but I'm not lacking in knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every possible way.

Many Bible scholars who are uncomfortable with the obvious burning sarcasm of Paul, assumed he was speaking of other authentic apostles like Peter or perhaps even Apollos. This is evidently not the case. Paul would not accuse an authentic apostle of false teaching. According to the context, its far more likely that Paul is spitefully mocking the false teachers who were accepted among the



IN MONEY WE TRUST?

**THE ONLY
PEOPLE WHO
ARE MAD AT
YOU FOR
SPEAKING THE
TRUTH ARE
THOSE PEOPLE
WHO ARE
LIVING A LIE.**

**KEEP SPEAKING
THE TRUTH.**

Corinthian church. The Greek word used to describe them means “extra-super” which is essentially describing them as “superheroes”.

Paul, according to the standards of Greek rhetoric, was untrained in speech. In his day, the ability to speak in a polished, sophisticated, entertaining way was popular. Others (such as the most eminent apostles the Corinthian Christians loved so much) were able to speak in this manner, but Paul was either unable or unwilling to preach in this way. It didn't matter to Paul because he wasn't concerned with meeting people's standards for a “polished” or “entertaining” speaker; he was concerned with faithfully preaching the gospel.⁶⁵

The false teachers came with impressive credentials and claimed they were sent directly from the Jerusalem church headed by the “real apostles”. Mockingly, Paul laughs at the exaggerated nature of their claims. Moreover, many such teachers claimed to have knowledge of “hidden” revelations, entrusted to them from mysterious angelic beings, concerning the necessity of keeping the Hebrew rituals and traditions. Responding to the complaint that he was a boring speaker; Paul sarcastically said he may be boring, but at least what he teaches is the truth.

7 Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God's Good News to you without expecting anything in return?

In the culture of that day, if a public speaker didn't take money for his speaking he was often disregarded as a poor speaker, with worthless teaching. Many people thought of someone who charged no speaking fee as strictly an amateur. But Paul didn't care about the opinion of others when it came to his heart for preaching the gospel without being accused of doing it for money.⁶⁶



While Paul was in Corinth, he refused to take an offering. He did not exercise his apostolic authority in the way he carried himself, nor did he demand monetary support according to the traditions established from the Jerusalem church. He had a select few supporters who contributed to his ministry and when he was in need he fell back on his trade as a tent maker. On the other hand, the puffed up, traveling teachers were very demanding and came with all kinds of schemes and dreams to empty

⁶⁵ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

⁶⁶ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11



the people's pockets. They were relentless in their desire to fleece the flock of God, while living at a standard far above the average person.

⁸ I "robbed" other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost.

Paul's critics even questioned his financial integrity and wondered if the money he collected for Jerusalem would ever get to the people in need. Mockingly, Paul twisted the accusation and responded that he "robbed" others so that the Corinthians could receive the Gospel for free. This is another example of Paul's blistering sarcastic sense of humor and how he often employed satire to defend himself against his detractors.

⁹ And when I was with you and didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be.

Building on his original argument, Paul reminded the Corinthians that even when he was in desperate need of resources, he lived beyond reproach and refused to receive any financial support from them while he was in Corinth. Shockingly, he received financial support from the poorer churches in Macedonia, but refused it from the Corinthians because he understood their support came with strings attached. He would not take money from people only to be obligated to them for the rest of his life. He refused to place himself into economic bondage, even when other preachers made a common practice of accepting generous offerings from the Corinthian church.

¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this. ¹¹ Why? Because I don't love you? God knows that I do.

Finally, Paul declares that he will never stop reminding them that he served their church out of love and not from a desire to make money. His love for them motivated his behaviour to give sacrificially of his time and resources without charge.



There is another issue related to Paul's decision not to take support from the Corinthian church. Paul did not trust his relationship with the church. Many Christians assume "he who pays the piper calls the tune". In other words, that if you pay the money, you get to control the message. This is simply not true. The apostle Paul was a true man of God, and he committed his life to serve God directly. He could

THE MONEY COMETH ANOINTING

not allow the Corinthian leadership to pull his chain with their financial support every time his message was unpopular.

As long as religion remains on the earth, there will always be people using it to make money. Going all the way back to ancient Israel, Yahweh warned the priests who shepherded the flock of God not to exploit His people.

Know
-the-
Truth

34 Then this message came to me from the Lord: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: What sorrow awaits you, shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? ³ You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks

starve. ⁴ You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty. ⁵ So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal. (Ezekiel 34)

The "money hustle" was alive and well in the Old Covenant. Yahweh killed the two sons of the High Priest Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, for using their position as priests to sexually manipulate young women and publicly steal from the Temple offerings.

In the New Testament, things went from bad to worse. Paul said there were even false teachers, preaching a Gospel that denied the cross.

⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. (Philippians 3)

False teachers are empowered by carnal believers who can't stand to hear truth. In the end both will suffer for their denial of Scripture. Stunningly, Paul warns his disciples to beware of preachers who worship themselves and their carnal lust. Such men are motivated by the lust of the flesh, driven by unrestrained sexual appetites, the lust of the eyes propelled by greed and the pride of life, fed by the adoration of the crowds.

... a Bad Tree Cannot Bear Good Fruit...

- Jesus



¹² But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours.

Exposing the underlying drive of the false teachers, which were money, influence, and prestige, Paul questioned their commitment to the Corinthians when the money stopped flowing. The fact that Paul has always served for free, undercut the motives of those who do the work of the ministry with selfish ambition. Indirectly, Paul implied the moment the false teachers have nothing to gain from the Corinthian church, they will leave. This is the commonality all false teachers share. Because they are not motivated by love, the underlying inspiration of their ministry is selfishness. Hence, people will not suffer if selfish ambition, is their underlying motivation. This was the issue that confronted the original disciples of Christ. At first, they were all following Yahshua as a means and method to move up in life, because they wanted position and prestige in the coming Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God according to their understanding was supposed to be a restoration of the Throne of King David in Jerusalem, where all the nations of the world would submit to the authority of the Messiah. The disciples wrongfully assumed the Kingdom would be "fully" revealed in their lifetime, and their relationship with Yahshua would be their "golden ticket" to wealth, prestige, and power. When Christ becomes your means of upward mobility, your motives will always be compromised. Likewise, Paul knew by historical experience that those false teachers, like the worthless shepherds of ancient Israel, will abandon the sheep when their own comfort and security is jeopardized.

¹³ These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

The idea of wicked people using a "disguise" was clearly illustrated by Yahshua in His ministry to the people of Judah. He cautioned His followers not to look at the



outward manifestations of preaching or power to justify anyone's claim to be ordained by Yahweh.



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15 "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. **16** You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. **18** A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. **19** So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. **20** Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions. (Matthew 7)

Yahshua instructed His disciples to make a careful evaluation of the character and behaviour of the individual, and not their outward demonstration of spiritual gifts. As noted in 1 Corinthians, exercising spiritual gifts, even when followed by supernatural manifestations, is no indication of sanctification or maturity. Moreover, you can have extremely immature, "carnal" believers operating in elevated levels of faith and gifting. Additionally, there will always be "false believers" at work in the church, with the ability to gather huge crowds to themselves, by displaying extraordinary spiritual giftings. These "false believers" operate with the intent to kill steal and destroy.

Satan is an extremely beautiful being with the utmost level of charm and refinement. His level of wisdom is unsurpassed among the angelic creation, and he was commonly referred to as the illuminated one.

"You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty. **13** You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone— red carnelian, pale-green peridot, white moonstone, blue-green beryl, onyx, green jasper, blue lapis lazuli, turquoise, and emerald— all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you



on the day you were created.
14 I ordained and anointed you
as the mighty angelic guardian.
You had access to the holy mountain of God
and walked among the stones of fire.

15 "You were blameless in all you did
from the day you were created
until the day evil was found in you.
16 Your rich commerce led you to violence,
and you sinned.
So I banished you in disgrace
from the mountain of God.
I expelled you, O mighty guardian,
from your place among the stones of fire.
17 Your heart was filled with pride
because of all your beauty. Your wisdom was
corrupted by your love of splendor. So I threw
you to the ground and exposed you to the
curious gaze of kings. **18** You defiled your sanctuaries with your many sins
and your dishonest trade. So I brought fire out from within you, and it
consumed you I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who
were watching **19** All who knew you are appalled at your fate.
You have come to a terrible end, and you will exist no more." (Ezekiel 28)

**How you have fallen
from heaven Lucifer
son of the morning!**

Isaiah 14:12

Paul compared Satan to the false teachers, warning the Corinthians not to judge spiritual things from the perspective of common humans. Satan will be welcomed into most churches because he will come with a platform of unity, inclusion, and love, which once perverted, will become hostile to the authority of Yahweh. Likewise, as Yahweh judged Lucifer, who became Satan for his corrupted motivation, the false teachers will also be judged by God in the end. Nevertheless, they will damage and destroy as many of God's sheep as possible unless they are stopped by the legitimate shepherds who authentically love the sheep and are willing to die to defend them.



**THE TIME HAS ARRIVED WHERE PEOPLE
NO LONGER TOLERATE SOUND DOCTRINE**

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Group Discussion

Please
discuss

Questions To Ponder

1. Did Paul have a right to feel jealous towards the Corinthians and was his jealousy Biblically justified?
2. Why did Paul refuse to accept support from the Corinthian church and was he wise in his decision?
3. Paul was possibly the most gifted theological mind in church history, but conceded he was not a gifted speaker. How important is a gifted communicator in our modern church today?
4. Are gifted speakers overrated in our contemporary version of church or are they necessary in our Facebook and Instagram world?
5. Most believers assume an antichrist will be the opposite of the authentic Christ. But Scripture describes an antichrist as a counterfeit version of the real thing. How can we as a church recognize an antichrist?
6. Can we assume when the final antichrist is revealed that he will be an evil man preaching war and hate? Or will he come like an angel of light offering the world peace and prosperity?
7. Paul aggressively confronted those who preached another Gospel pointing to another Messiah. Have you ever been enticed by a false Gospel presenting another version of Yahshua? Please share your experience.
8. Was the Messiah you accepted early in your Christian experience you "golden ticket" to the good life?



Paul's Many Trials

16 Again I say, don't think that I am a fool to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. **17** Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool. **18** And since others boast about their human achievements, I will, too.



This is another sarcastic jab at some people in the Corinthian community. They are truly "fools" because they are easily impressed by foolish people who claim wonderful things about themselves and come with impressive resumes. People who need to boast about their accomplishments are insecure in themselves and always seeking the approval of others. Consequently, Paul condescends to the level of a "fool" to win the approval of his foolish Corinthian critics, who have mistakenly been enamoured by the self promoting claims of the false teachers. He asserts that if the false teachers want to compare ministry resumes before the Corinthian elder board, he will gladly accept the challenge!

19 After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools! **20** You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face. **21** I'm ashamed to say that we've been too "weak" to do that!

Would the Corinthian Christians even accept it if one strikes you on the face? They probably would because it wasn't uncommon for religious authorities in that day (outside of Jesus' true ministers) to command that those people they considered to be ungodly to actually be struck in the face (Acts 23:2, 1 Timothy 3:3)...Sadly, many people are more comfortable with authoritarian

I am the good
SHEPHERD

*The good
shepherd
lays down
his life for
the sheep.*

JOHN 10:11



"super apostles" than they are with the freedom that is open to them in Jesus.⁶⁷

Power was the only language universally understood in Roman society.⁶⁸

CONTEXT MATTERS

With the obvious cultural connection between power and authority, the leadership style of the false teachers was culturally accepted and easily promoted among the Corinthian elite.

This leadership style connected them to a "worldly" understanding of what power and prestige is supposed to represent. In stark opposition to this mindset, Yahshua

demonstrated a leadership style that demoted the proud and powerful, while promoting the humble and meek. This leadership style diametrically opposed the power hungry, religious spirit, motivating the Scribes and Pharisees who opposed the principles of servant leadership championed by Yahshua.

⁸ "Don't let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. ⁹ And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your Father. ¹⁰ And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23)

The false teachers who confronted Paul were trying to maintain the same religious hierarchy Yahshua died to destroy. The spirit of religion is hugely focused on prestige, prominence, and position, as hallmarks of power. This spirit actively opposed everything Paul represented as a leader and apostle. Hence, Paul was despised and rejected for the same reason the Jewish elite crucified Christ. Carnal people find security in abusive and abrasive leadership because its all they know and understand. Strikingly, some members of the Corinthian community responded positively to an overly aggressive leadership style and even liked to be slapped around by a religious leader. This kind of abusive leadership perhaps connected them to



⁶⁷ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

⁶⁸ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11



the “wrong thinking” they learned from their own abusive childhood, the lack of proper parenting and the violent nature of their society.

Christian leadership according to Paul, should reflect the nature of Christ and His love for the Church. Moreover, any gifting operating outside the confines of love is illegitimate and abusive when employed in Christian service. For Paul, love was the essential evidence of all gifting, and exercising any gifting without love was evidence of spiritual abuse.

13 *If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.*



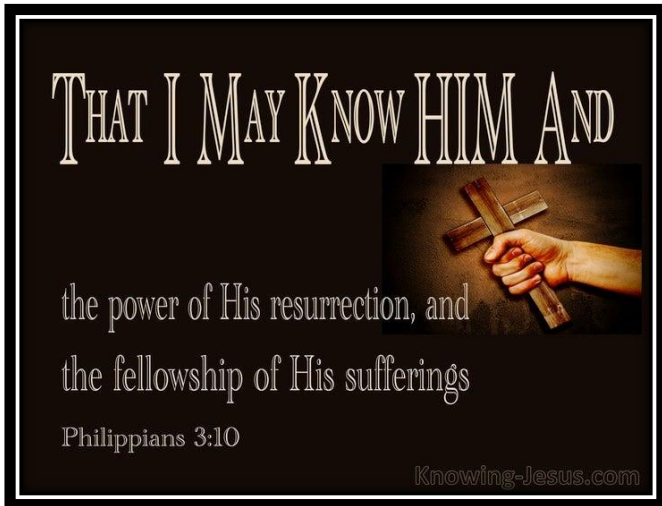
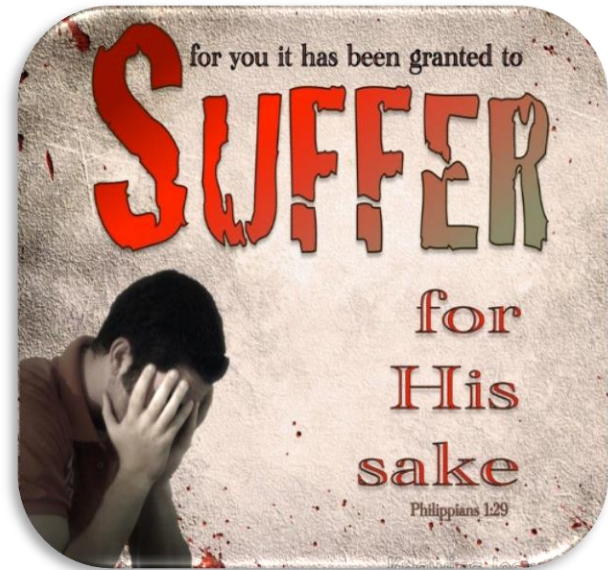
⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13)

But whatever they dare to boast about—I'm talking like a fool again—I dare to boast about it, too. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more!

Returning to the point of comparing resumes, recommendations, and references, Paul says bring it on! Questioning all the qualifications that these “supposed” teachers boasted about, Paul asserted that he outclassed them in every specific area. Additionally, he persistently highlighted the fact that these men do not start their own churches or do the backbreaking work of planting new faith communities in places unreached by the witness of Christ. They have never established a “new work” or grew a leadership team of elders to maintain the church. They have never shepherded any emerging churches. On the other hand, they have a parasitical nature, showing up

after churches are already established and flourishing, only to extract what resources they can by undermining the leadership of the true servants who did all the hard lifting.

Masterfully, confronting their distorted concept of weakness and strength, Paul added the strongest element to his resume, that the false teachers lack. Authentic spiritual strength is not demonstrated by flawless speaking, excessive education, and demeaning demonstrations of intimidating leadership. On the contrary, Christ like strength is demonstrated by a leader's ability to suffer loss and endure persecution for the sake of the Gospel. Suffering is what causes the false teachers to walk away and differentiates the spiritually weak, from the strong. While the false teachers often accused Paul of being a weak leader, he responded to their allegations by highlighting that weak leaders will not suffer for the sake of others.



I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. ²⁴ Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. ²⁶ I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have

faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. ²⁷ I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Most people attracted to Christian leadership are looking for a spotlight and a place to shine. Teachers want a pulpit to teach, and singers want a

WHEN I'M WEAK,

microphone to sing, but nobody wants to suffer loss for the cause of Christ! This was specifically what made both Judas and Peter deny Yahshua and walk off into the darkness. While the resumes of the false teachers were skillfully written on paper with cheap ink, Paul's resume was violently carved into his back with Roman whips, engraved by his blood and mixed relentless tears.

List Of Paul's Sufferings: **2 Corinthians 11:21-33**

- † Imprisoned & Flogged
- † Exposed to death
- † 5 x 39 lashes
- † 3 x beaten with rods
- † 1 x pelted with stones
- † 3 x shipwrecked
- † 1 x in open sea
- † Danger from rivers & bandits
- † Danger from Jews & Gentiles
- † Danger in the city, country & sea
- † Danger from false believers
- † Without sleep, food & clothes

But you, be
sober in all
things. Endure
hardship. Do
the work of an
evangelist.
Fulfill your
ministry.



2 Timothy
4:5

Defending his credentials to be their apostle, Paul did not overly highlight his educational accomplishments, although he had more education than all the false teachers combined. He did not highlight the amount of spiritual revelation he received directly from Yahshua, although he had more spiritual revelation than possibly any other "natural" person who ever lived. What Paul appealed to was something the false teachers could never emphasize. He suffered for Christ more than any of the apostles of his day and perhaps anyone in history. What the immature believers saw as his weakness was

I will show him
how much he
must suffer for
my name."

- Acts 9:16 NIV

actually evidence of his greatest strength. The very accusations they used to condemn Paul, was the same evidence he used to vindicate himself. This is the wisdom of Yahweh.

The Corinthians loved their False Teachers

Ironically, modern ministries are not attracted to pastors who are actually willing to suffer persecution, rejection, and hardship for the Gospel because following such a leader will attract misery to your congregation own life as well. Everyone who loves Christ, supposedly wants to live a meaningful life, but very few willingly choose to suffer loss, in the process.

²⁴ Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. ²⁵ Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. ²⁷ Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22)

In this last section of the chapter, we see the brilliance of Paul's ability to get to the heart of the matter. His Corinthian critics despised what Paul symbolized because he represented a life of suffering and persecution. Subconsciously, they assumed if they could distance themselves from Paul, they could also avoid the same suffering and persecution that constantly plagued him. While the false teachers said that faith in Christ guaranteed that a believer will not suffer, Paul doubled

down unapologetically by outlining his suffering as evidence of the fact that he was authentically called by Yahweh, to be an apostle of Christ. While the false teachers claimed that a "real apostle" would not suffer like Paul did, Paul responded by declaring that that the opposite was actually true. Because the bogus teachers refuse to suffer for the ministry Christ, it simply proved they were counterfeit, fair weather followers of Yahshua, unworthy of the leadership positions they held. All of the original apostles who walked with Yahshua were not fair-weather followers, but were appointed to a lifestyle of suffering, shame, and martyrdom. They all winningly accepted their destiny as they counted the cost, paid the price, and lived the life!

Have you counted the cost? Will you pay the price?

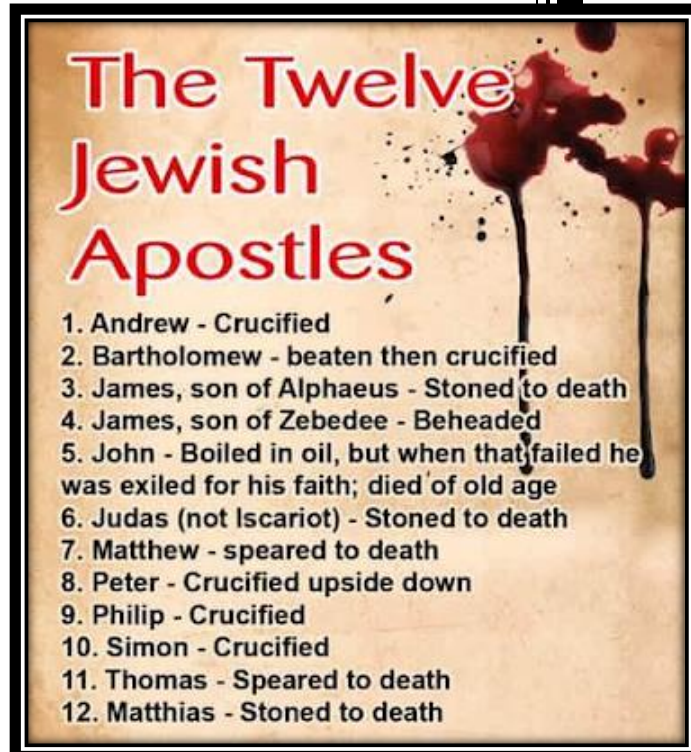
— WHAT HAPPENED TO THE — 12 DISCIPLES?

While many members the immature Corinthian church were ashamed of Paul's track record of persecution, he wore it like a badge of honor. Like the original 12 disciples who followed Yahshua, many Corinthians were attracted to the "power of the Gospel" for the wrong reasons. The original disciples initially followed the Messiah because they wrongly assumed the Kingdom of God would soon manifest and they wanted positions of power and influence by being close to the King. However, Yahshua understood the irony of being "lifted up" spiritually in the Kingdom of God. The closer the disciples were to Yahshua, was the closer they would be to the cross. To be "lifted up" in the Kingdom, means radically embracing death, so that the power of the resurrection would be seen in your life.

20 Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. 21 "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left." 22 But Jesus answered by saying to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" (Matthew 20)

Notice, both James and John asked to be seated next to Yahshua after He was glorified. Little did they know that He was about to be "exalted" by drinking the cup of wrath and suffering. He would be "lifted up" by hanging naked on a tree. Yahshua rightfully exclaimed "they did not know what they were asking for".

Likewise, the immature critics of Paul had believed the deceptive promises of the fake preachers, who asserted that faithful Christians should not suffer in this life, when the opposite was actually true. The Corinthians were trying to believe that faith places all Christ followers above the grasp of suffering and shame. But Paul's life and legacy proved them wrong. Instead of wrestling with what Paul was saying, and allowing their theology to evolve and mature, they childishly choose to reject the influence of Paul, and side with their fake false friends.



If I must boast, I will
boast of the things that
show my weakness

2 Corinthians
11:30

28 Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?

30 If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am.



The false apostles, those most eminent apostles, would never dream of boasting in such things. They thought any infirmity made one look weak and far from God. Despite that, Paul did not care if it looked foolish in the eyes of the world or those in the church who thought like the world. Paul lived with an eternal perspective, not a worldly perspective.⁶⁹

Sadly, we are not very different from the Corinthian believers. Our examples of faith are rich, successful, men who build large ministries. We don't see success in the missionary whose children died on the mission field or the testimony of the martyrs who paid the ultimate price for their faith. We would not willingly join with other believers in suffering or experience economic and emotional loss for the cause of Christ.

Moreover, we would also not want the apostle Paul to be our preaching pastor because he would ask things of us that would make our soul uncomfortable and endanger our family life. After all, God does not want you to get a divorce? Right?

31 God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying. 32 When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. 33 I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him.

In another example of Paul's ministry credentials, he highlights one of his many life-threatening encounters with death in connection to preaching the Gospel. On the contrary, a successful day of ministry for the "super teachers" ended with a cheering crowd and a generous offering, after a stirring speech. Paul compared their distinguished lifestyle to the undignified ways he narrowly escaped death.

⁶⁹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11

POWER *in weakness*

2 C O R I N T H I A N S

How many of the false teachers who mesmerized the Corinthian church could legitimately claim they had risked their life in the service of Christ? How many of the supposed "super teachers" had been beaten with whips or rods? Paul had been thrashed multiple times with both. How many times have they been shipwrecked or even left for dead after a public stoning?

For anyone who thinks they have sacrificed to serve the Lord, Paul's resume stands as the standard of authentic commitment to Yahshua. He still challenges anyone and everyone to present a witness equal to his own!

Christian Persecution today

EACH MONTH

www.opendoorsusa.com

322 CHRISTIANS ARE
KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



214 CHURCHES AND
CHRISTIAN **PROPERTIES**
ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF **VIOLENCE**
ARE COMMITTED AGAINST
CHRISTIANS (SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTIONS,
RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)



Question: If we encountered that level of persecution, would we be openly faithful?

Group Discussion

Please
discuss

Questions To Ponder

1. The Corinthian church had an appetite for abusive and aggressive leadership because this was the common expression of authority in Roman culture. Has the cultural pendulum swung the other way in our society where we champion weak and complacent spiritual leadership?
2. Would a strong and confident spiritual leader like Paul be celebrated in our cultural context? Why and why not?
3. We have a very distorted image of love in our society that has filtered into our churches. We are called to speak the truth in love. Can we still be loving even if our "truth" offends others?
4. Like Paul, do you authentically consider it a privilege to suffer for the cause of Christ, and would you willingly accept persecution and personal pain if it will lead many others to faith?
5. Many modern versions of the Gospel champion the assumption that believers are not supposed to face persecution and suffer for their faith. Can this assumption be justified by the teachings of the Scripture?
6. Paul highlights a resumé filled with beatings, shipwrecks, and persecution as evidence of his authenticity as an apostle. Is this a general principle that can still be applied today?
7. Should contemporary Christian leaders have an expectation that suffering awaits them in this call to ministry and do you expect to suffer persecution in the near future because of your faith in Christ?
8. Should Paul's theology of suffering be applied today or was it a mindset that applied specifically to his life and his time?





Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

12 This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago.

To add a few more nails to the coffin of the false teachers, Paul challenges them to go "pound for pound" in the area of spiritual revelation. While some of the false teachers claimed angelic visitations on their resume, Paul responded by saying he received his divine revelations directly from Yahshua at the Throne of Yahweh.

Approximately 14 years before writing 2 Corinthians, there was a record of Paul being stoned and left for dead at Lystra.



¹⁹ Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. (Acts 14)

Paul was passionately hated by many religious radicals who intended to defend orthodox

Judaism against the Gospel of Christ. He was considered a religious traitor, especially because he was also an educated Pharisee and a Hebrew scholar. Militant Pharisees followed him from city to city attempting to stop Paul from preaching in the local synagogues. When given the chance to stone him, it was unlikely they would have left until they were absolutely sure that he was dead. Jewish stoning usually involved smashing the skull with heavy rocks until the brains leaked out, especially when the victim was as hated as was the case with Paul. Many biblical scholars assume Paul was "dead" when he had his "out of body" experience and received "revelations" from the highest heaven. Scholars are divided over what specifically happened. Was Paul



dead and brought back to life by the prayer of the church, or was he almost dead when discovered? Regardless of what actually happened, Paul immediately returned to the city to complete the mission that he was assigned.

This is yet another example of Paul's "undying" devotion to the Gospel and to the Corinthians who accused him of being spiritually weak and physically frail. Who else would return to the same city, on the same day, after being brutally stoned to the point of death by a mob of religious radicals?

Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. ³ Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body.

Strangely, even Paul was uncertain if he was dead or alive during his heavenly encounter. Consequently, if Paul was unsure, it's pointless to scholastically debate the issue any further.

But I do know ⁴ that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell.

In response to the "hidden" knowledge the false teachers claim to have, Paul alleged that he had revelations he was not allowed to reveal to anyone. It's one thing to claim to have received a glorious revelation from the Holy Spirit. It's completely another thing, to testify that you have been in the physical presence of God's throne, and received spiritual insights directly from Yahweh.

⁵ That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it.

By not boasting foolishly, Paul highlighted his claim to be an authentic apostle of Yahshua. He excelled all his critics in Hebrew ancestry, academic education, commitment to Jewish legalism, planting churches, spiritual revelation, and in enduring suffering.

I will boast only about my weaknesses. ⁶ If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, ⁷ even

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO

BOAST IN THE LORD?

Instead of becoming proud like the false teachers, Paul said his spiritual experiences had made him more humble, because his amazing revelation came with remarkable suffering and persecution. He was not trying to elevate himself in the eyes of the church, but merely defended his authority to protect the Corinthians from being deceived.



So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

It seems that everyone could see the thorn in the flesh Paul suffered from — it was no secret. His heavenly vision was a secret until now, but everyone saw the thorn. Some among the Corinthian Christians probably thought less of Paul because of his thorn in the flesh, but they knew nothing of the amazing spiritual experience that lay behind it.⁷⁰

The Greek word “thorn” is better translated as a “tent peg” in his flesh. There is endless scholastic debate over the nature of Paul’s affliction. Some scholars associate it with a chronic eye disease, that disfigured his appearance. It can also be assumed that the reason the Scripture does not specifically tell us what Paul’s affliction was, is because we are not supposed to know. Where the Scripture is silent, we should remain silent as well. Nevertheless, Paul explicitly tells us it was a messenger of Satan. The messenger also had a specific purpose. The assignment of the messenger was obviously to hound, hinder and harass Paul everywhere he went. While the apparent manifestation of this relentless obstruction was to prevent Paul from completing his designated assignment, what resulted from the constant resistance was a deeper humility and stronger dependence on the grace of God.

²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. (Genesis 50:20)

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8)

⁷⁰ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12

⁸ Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul’s attitude was transformed over a long period of time because he saw a greater purpose in his suffering and affliction. Although life would be easier without the constant opposition of the diabolical messenger, his character would not have been as developed without it. Eventually, Paul saw his temporary curse, as an eternal blessing, if he remained faithful to the course and finished the race well. Strikingly, he went as far as to say he took pleasure in his persecution, because it increased the power of his witness and amplified the impact of his testimony.

Think about this man Paul. Was he a weak or strong man? The man who traveled the ancient world spreading the gospel of Jesus despite the fiercest persecutions, who endured shipwrecks and imprisonment, who preached to kings and slaves, who established strong churches and trained up their leaders was not a weak man. In light of his life and accomplishments, we would say that Paul was a very strong man. But he was only strong because he knew his weaknesses and looked outside himself for the strength of God’s grace. If we want lives of such strength, we also must understand and admit our weakness and look to God alone for the grace that will strengthen us for any task. ⁷¹

Paul’s Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹ You have made me act like a fool. You ought to be writing commendations for me, for I am not at all inferior to these “super apostles,” even though I am nothing at all.

After highlighting his humility, because of the resistance he constantly endured at the hands of this evil messenger, Paul abruptly stated he

⁷¹ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12



is not inferior, but obviously superior, to all the false teachers who claim great things about themselves.

12 When I was with you, I certainly gave you proof that I am an apostle. For I patiently did many signs and wonders and miracles among you. 13 The only thing I failed to do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong!

In yet another example of his burning sarcasm, Paul reminded the Corinthians of his long list of signs and wonders he performed among them when he planted the church in their city. Moreover, he did the same miracles everywhere he ministered, but did not demand an offering as payment for the supernatural manifestation of the Spirit.

14 Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have—I want you. After all, children don't provide for their parents. Rather, parents provide for their children. 15 I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.

Unlike the wicked shepherds, Paul is “pouring out” his life in the service of the disciples he established among the Gentiles. He wanted nothing from the Corinthians aside from the love and respect a good father deserved. He did not want their money. He wanted their loyalty.

16 Some of you admit I was not a burden to you. But others still think I was sneaky and took advantage of you by trickery. 17 But how? Did any of the men I sent to you take advantage of you? 18 When I urged Titus to visit you and sent our other brother with him, did Titus take advantage of you? No! For we have the same spirit and walk in each other's steps, doing things the same way.

19 Perhaps you think we're saying these things just to defend ourselves. No, we tell you this as Christ's servants, and with God as our witness. Everything we do, dear friends, is to strengthen you. 20 For I am afraid that when I come I won't like what I find, and you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior. 21 Yes, I am afraid that when I come again, God will humble me in your presence. And I will be grieved because many of you have not given up your old sins. You have not repented of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure.

If the Corinthian Christians were mired in their worldliness when Paul came the third time, he would be angry, and he would be firm. But he would also be humbled, and he would also mourn. As much as anything, the worldliness of the Corinthian Christians grieved Paul and made him mourn for many.⁷²

Paul's Final Advice

13 This is the third time I am coming to visit you (and as the Scriptures say, "The facts of every case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses").

On his first visit to Corinth, Paul founded the church and stayed a year and six months (Acts 18:11). His second visit was a brief, painful visit in between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Now he is prepared to come for a third time.⁷³

² I have already warned those who had been sinning when I was there on my second visit. Now I again warn them and all others, just as I did before, that next time I will not spare them.

It's unclear what Paul specifically meant by this threat, but he hoped to find the church in repentance when he arrived. Nevertheless, this was still a bone chilling warning.

³ I will give you all the proof you want that Christ speaks through me. Christ is not weak when he deals with you; he is powerful among you.

In another stunning warning, Paul said to those who demanded that he demonstrate more power, that he will personally show them what they are looking for when he arrives, if he finds they have not repented. We have no idea what Paul meant by this statement; however, it is a threat of some sort that should have been taken very seriously.

⁴ Although he was crucified in weakness, he now lives by the power of God. We, too, are weak, just as Christ was, but when

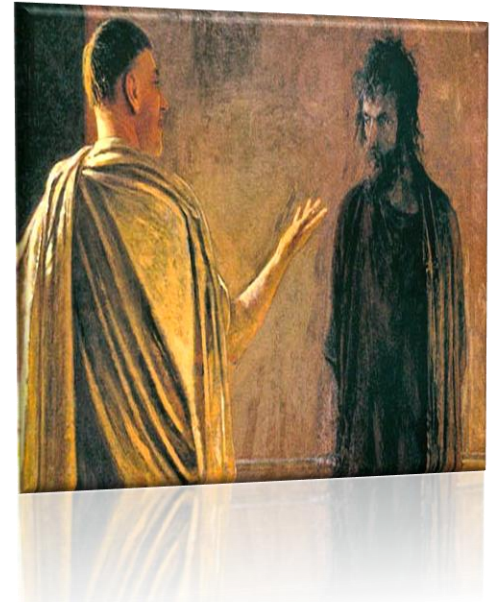


⁷² David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12

⁷³ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12

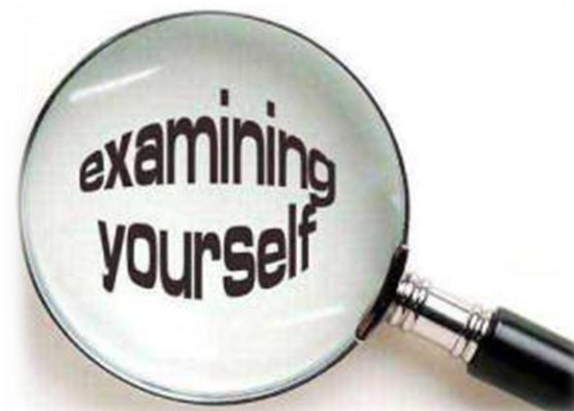
we deal with you we will be alive with him and will have God's power.

Pontius Pilate wrongfully assumed that he was in the position of power when he encountered Yahshua. The opposite was true. Likewise, some among the Corinthian church made the same mistake. Yahshua was never in a position of weakness, but demonstrated God's undying love for humanity. Stubborn humans often confuse kindness for weakness. Nevertheless, the resurrected Messiah will never be seen as weak again. He came as a lamb but will return as a conquering lion.



Building on this illustration, Paul makes the most striking threat of all. He, like Yahshua, is coming again to the Corinthian church in wrath and judgment for the rebellious. He will consume them like a lion devouring its prey. While this kind of communication is not very pastoral, it was very effective in striking fear into the hearts of some members of this religious and rebellious congregation.

⁵ Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith. ⁶ As you test yourselves, I hope you will recognize that we have not failed the test of apostolic authority.



We are rightly concerned that every believer has the assurance of salvation and knows how to endure the attacks that come in this area from Satan. At the same time we also understand that there are some who assume or presume they are Christians when they are not.⁷⁴

On the one hand, Paul does not want genuine believers to doubt the reality of their salvation. On the other hand, there are individuals among the Corinthian church, who are religious, but lost. They were never saved in the

⁷⁴ David Guzik, Study Guide for 2 Corinthians, Chapter 13

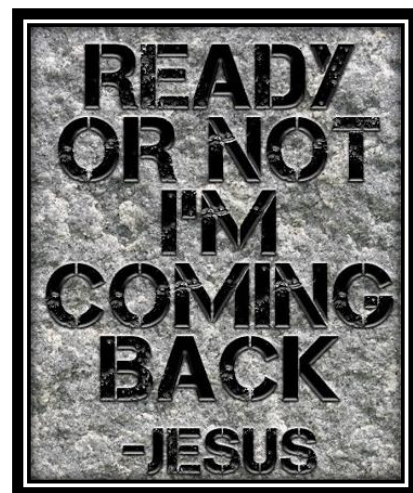
Religious, But Lost

first place. Paul did not want those people to be deceived and wanted them to come to authentic salvation.

7 We pray to God that you will not do what is wrong by refusing our correction. I hope we won't need to demonstrate our authority when we arrive. Do the right thing before we come—even if that makes it look like we have failed to demonstrate our authority. 8 For we cannot oppose the truth, but must always stand for the truth. 9 We are glad to seem weak if it helps show that you are actually strong. We pray that you will become mature.

10 I am writing this to you before I come, hoping that I won't need to deal severely with you when I do come. For I want to use the authority the Lord has given me to strengthen you, not to tear you down.

In his final warning, he gave the Corinthians the same choice we all have. Paul did not give a day or hour, but simply said that he was coming again, so they needed to get right and get ready. They could have received his warning, repented and would have been ready for his arrival. Or they could have rejected his warning, continued in their rebellion and be surprised on the day when he suddenly returned. The choice was theirs, and the choice is ours. Yahshua is coming as a Saviour to some and a Judge to others. The choice is up to us. Do we want to embrace the face of grace or the burning eyes of fiery judgment? We are all making our own personal choice, by the life we live.



Paul's Final Greetings

11 Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

12 Greet each other with a sacred kiss. 13 All of God's people here send you their greetings.

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



Group Discussion



Questions To Ponder

1. Paul prayed three times for the “thorn” to be removed, but the answer was not what he wanted. How should a believer respond when God says no even when we are exercising our faith?
2. Eventually Paul understood that his “thorn” was a blessing instead of a curse because his perspective changed. Has your perspective towards suffering also changed in light of Paul’s revelation?
3. When believers expect trials, persecution and suffering to be part of the price of following Yahshua, they are more prepared for the storms of life. Do you have a “theology of suffering” that will help you “endure to the end” regardless of what you must endure?
4. Paul instructed the Corinthians to examine themselves to determine if they were really believers. How can we examine ourselves in a similar way?
5. Some people have been instructed never to question their salvation. Is this advice biblical?
6. There is an underlying principle of “spiritual authority” that continues throughout the Scripture. Has our understanding of spiritual authority changed in our modern culture?
7. Yahweh hated rebellion and disorder among his people in the Old Testament. Likewise, Paul resisted rebellion and disorder in Corinth. While our contemporary culture tolerates and even celebrates lawlessness, how should we maintain spiritual order in our church.
8. Towards the end of his letter Paul seems to be openly threatening the rebellious members of the Corinthian church who still resist his claim to apostolic authority. Can any spiritual leader make a similar claim to apostolic authority today?

