

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

The Corinthian church was a divided church...on many issues...including the God-given anointing of the apostle Paul

There was a group of people who received his apostleship and were loyal to him and his teaching...

There was another group that opposed Paul, his anointing, and his teaching...the gospel of grace
These false teachers refuted his apostleship...calling him a self-appointed apostle

And they worked very hard to undermine

- his position
- his influence
- his teaching ministry

When such an attack happens, it hurts the person being undermined...pretend as we may to the contrary

words cannot break bones...but they can break hearts

So this second letter from Paul comes from an aching heart

Of all of Paul's letters/epistles, this is his most personal letter...where he shares his

- Persecutions
- Weaknesses
- Struggles
- Love for the ministry
- Heart

- v1a an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God:
an appropriate opening to those who are challenging
- his office...given to him by God, not by man or by self
 - his anointing...poured out from God
 - his message...God's grace (Gal 1:10-16)

Paul did not choose to be Jesus' apostle – he had chosen to be Jesus' persecutor!
The Lord chose Paul
changed
commissioned

It was the will of men, blinded by pride and ambition, to remove Paul...
...it was the will of God to anoint...and establish...Paul

Ch 11:12-15 (NASB)

But what I am doing, I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their deeds.

(God defends His anointed).

Ch 11:22-28 if not the will of God...who could endure this?

The false teachers certainly would not

Ch 4:8-9

What happened to Paul in Corinth happens all the time...even to this day
Those who, with a self-generated "calling", desire position and influence
attack God's chosen servant and God's message

Attacks take the form of

- back-stabbing
- gossip/slander
- false accusations
- ridicule
- manipulation
- direct confrontation

We see it happen all the time in

- the Pastorate
- Youth ministry
- Worship ministry
- Women's ministry
- Men's ministry

the anointing of leadership does not come from man...it comes from God

Eph 4:11-15

The Lord chooses His ministers (pastors, Youth, Women's, Worship)
changes
commissions

when man, by his will and his desire for position and influence, injects himself into that selection and sending process, the unity of the Body is attacked and divisions ensue

The Lord tells us to mark those that cause division and elevate themselves by undermining others

Rom 16:17-18

Prov 6:16-19

The onus is upon every believer:

- To search the Scriptures to see if a teaching is true (Acts 17:11)
- To identify false teachers by inspecting their fruit (Matt 7:15-16a)
- To mark those false teachers

If a believer finds himself/herself in a place where he/she cannot abide with the leadership God has raised up, the believer should

- Quietly leave that fellowship
- Not fester in discontentment and opposition...and become a source of division

v1b Timothy:

Paul wrote the Corinthian church a letter (1 Cor), had it delivered by Timothy... who then returned to Paul

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in Ephesus, where he intended to stay until Pentecost
But the problems he hung around for erupted into a life-threatening situation and Paul had to flee

he went first to Troas and then to Philippi

Paul is in Philippi as he writes this letter...about 6 months after the first letter

All the saints:

this letter is addressed to the church at Corinth and to all believers in the southern part of Greece

v2

Grace and peace:

the Siamese twins of Paul's letters

always find them in this order: grace comes first...then comes peace

man must experience the grace of God before he can experience the peace of God
only when we know God's grace can we know

Rom 5:1-5

Phil 4:6-7

God selected and sent Paul to reveal to us the depths of His grace and how "the
just shall live by faith...saved by grace thru faith...how a holy, pure, and
just God can hang out with us helpless and hopeless sinners

Ch 5:17-19

Ch 12:9 My grace is sufficient for you

from God our Father:

Let's consider the 2 sides of the same coin

1. To the Hebrew mind...Father = the Genesis, the Source, of everything
By grace we can cry, "Abba, Father...Daddy!"
Speaks of a warm, loving, nurturing, protective, intimate relationship...
not a distant, overbearing, gotta-walk-on-eggshells-around-him
kind of a relationship
Our Father is not angry and looking for any excuse to spank us...
He cooing and coddling us like we do our babies
2. Also part and parcel of a relationship with a Father: obedience
a lesson we REALLY learn when we become parents...
I love my children and desire the very best for them...their health, safety,
prosperity, etc
I have been given by God the role of authority in my family...and the
accountability to go with it
I request but two simple things from my children – to respect that
authority and to submit to it...
no arguments or rebellion or challenges to my authority...
just obedience...based on trust
(not always on understanding or agreement)
I don't care what friends and other kids are allowed to do
and I really don't like challenges to my authority being a spectator sport

those challenging Paul's calling are in rebellion against God the Father

God is our Father...we are His children

He loves us more than we love our children...

Do we obey Him more than our children obey us?

Lord Jesus Christ: Lord: His title, His position, His office

Jesus: His name

Christ: His mission

God the Son has redeemed us from death...He has purchased us...He is our Lord...His will be done

v3 Blessed be God...of all comfort:

Blessed *be* = "to be well spoken of

from which we get "eulogy"...words spoken by a close relative that spent a lot of time with that person and can speak of personal things the eulogy speaks of who the person was...loving husband and father... not what he did...top notch accountant

when we study the Bible, we learn Who God is...the deep things of God... what He does are the shallow things

He does what He does so that we can know Who He is

e.g. He transcends the circumstances of our life

the Father gives to His children

1. His only begotten Son

To make right all things that are wrong

2. mercies (plural!)

Lam 3:22-27

Every morning, He does not give us what we deserve!

3. ALL comfort

Comfort = "that which comes alongside"

Is an inward thing, a peace that goes beyond understanding

Note:

- Not occasion comfort
- Or only some kinds of comfort
- but ALL comfort

Paul had just experienced some very frightening experiences in his flight from

Ephesus...but in these afflictions he experienced the comfort of God

we think of Paul as a super-saint...but he was prone to discouragement and fear...

as was Elijah...just as we are

the Lord always stood by Paul and encouraged him...He stands by us also

if you are in the midst of a difficult situation, KNOW that:

- God is the God of all comfort
- He WILL stand by you to encourage you

Every time you have been hurting, the subsequent comforting came from God...yet another good and perfect gift from our Father of Lights

God the Father holds ALL comfort...

"Southern Comfort" is a lie! Comfort is not found in a bottle...or in a powder...or anything else that messes with your mind

Comfort in that "perfect storm" is not found in...

- stock portfolios
- beautiful houses
- real fast cars
- a career
- Abs of steel

Comfort can be found only in our loving Father

Remember, Moses was sent to comfort God's people by *I AM*, the God Who is what we need in this moment

Jesus does not deliver us from the circumstances of life...but thru them

If you are in the worst storm of your life...and Jesus is in the boat with you...then you are in the midst of God's will for you...and there is no better place!

Jesus is bigger than the biggest storm...you will not drown

He promised to never leave us nor forsake us

He takes us thru things we cannot go thru alone

So, we should speak well of God in all circumstances

- Health
- Financial
- Relational

Phil 4:11-13

Sometimes a person reacts to the circumstances in his/her life by getting angry with God...the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort

It is

- Self-centered
- Arrogant
- Childish

to get mad at God...

it's WRONG, it's not OK!

I just shudder when I hear that from someone!

v4

all our tribulation:

We don't like tribulations...tribulations feel like walking thru chin-deep, stinky
Jell-O

- we hate being in it
- we labor...to go virtually nowhere
- we feel like it will never end

tribulations come from

- the enemy...who must first get God's permission
- our own pride and stupidity
- our waywardness from the Lord
- many unidentifiable things...there is no telling where it comes from!

tribulation: from the Gr. Word for the part of the harvesting sled that was dragged
over the harvest to separate the grain from the chaff
thru the heavy weight God is doing a good work

God uses tribulation to separate in our hearts and minds the things that really
matter from the things that don't matter at all...the chaff from the grain
e.g. on September 11, all the fluff in our life kinda blew away and we
were clearly focused on things that really matter

But notice...it says we are comforted in "all" our tribulations
there is never a tribulation that is not accompanied with comfort from
God!

Just knowing that...we should not be so stressed by the circumstances in
our lives!

when we understand...with our mind, not our feelings...that God is working in all
the circumstances in our lives...and He always comforts us, we are able to
say James 1:2-4

that we may be able to comfort:

Why am I in this trial?

- To share in the suffering of Jesus Christ...in order to be a useful
instrument of comfort to another later...
- To increase my faith now

The cycle of "suffering...comfort...suffering...comfort..." is to
build us up...not wear us down

I can comfort because Jesus has comforted me...because He suffered

Heb 4:15-16

Heb 2:18

When we see a brother or sister hurting, we can come alongside and say, “I know how you feel! Because I’ve been there! But let me tell you what the Lord did for me...”

This is not cheap advice, this is real comfort...from heart...to heart

there is a purpose for this trial – for me AND for a brother/sister in Christ
this trial is not an accident, it is not a coincidence...God is working

“God does not comfort us to make us comfortable...but to make us comforters”

J Henry Jowett

God uses the difficult and painful circumstances of our life to equip us to comfort others who are...or will be...in the very same place we are

God is not punishing me for something I have done...He is equipping me for something He has yet to do

e.g. after a particularly difficult trial with the teenagers, I said to Cindy Walsh:
Enjoy your small children now...and when they become teenagers, we will be there for you!

On the flip side, that means...someone has already gone thru this storm before me and God will bring him alongside to comfort me!

1 Cor 10:13

what kind of comforter do I need?

- Strong person?
- Weak person?

I need a weak person to comfort me...one who is

- humble
- meek and lowly of heart
- gracious
- insufficient
- Spirit-filled and Spirit-led

I certainly do not need a strong person...who is

- proud
- condemning
- judgmental
- self-sufficient
- filled with himself and led by the flesh

in tribulation we learn the deep things of God...Who He is...thru the things that He does

v5 sufferings...abound...consolation also abound:

Jesus suffered when He came...more than we know

He was also comforted by the Father

Matt 4:11 after temptation by satan

Matt 14:23 after John the Baptist (cousin) beheaded...and...being
moved with compassion for the suffering
multitude...feeding of the 5000

Mark 14:34-36 in His will...there is peace

Luke 22:29 in His promises...before the time of greatest distress

Luke 22:40-46 in the Garden...in the midst of His greatest distress

by accepting Jesus as our Lord, we accept His suffering...

sufferings are not electives, they are required courses

1 Peter 2:19-21

1 Peter 3:14-18

1 Peter 4:19

but...by accepting Jesus as our Lord, we also receive His comfort

John 14:1-3, 16-18, 26-27 before His greatest distress, He comforts us
comfortless = "orphans, fatherless"

comfort is based in a relationship...not a religion...

a relationship with our Abba, Father...Daddy

Did/do you have a warm, nurturing, protective, secure relationship with
your earthly father? This is indescribably better

Did/do you not have such a relationship with your earthly father? You do
or you can with your Heavenly Father...it's more than what your
hurting heart longs for

this wonderful, beautiful relationship with our Abba Father is
possible...only by a relationship with His Son

John 14:6

we will share in the Lord's suffering...we will share in the Father's comfort

John 16:33

John 17:9-17, 26

For every suffering there is a companion consolation...

For every heartbreak there is a healing salve...

In times of distress, God the Holy Spirit, Who also desires a relationship with us,
brings ministering passages of the Word of God to mind, consoling and
strengthening us

(Requisite: you put the Word into your mind by reading it....time....)

Q: How much comfort does the Father give us?

Maybe enough for 1 hour of peace, maybe 2 hours...maybe enough for the whole day...at the most

Ch 4:16

Why such small portions when we want the suffering to go away...and stay away?

If He gave more than what we need today, we would just go away and who knows when we would come back

the Father wants us, His children, to come before Him every day...all day

- meditate on the Word...daily
- pray...without ceasing...pouring out your heart
- be still and know that He is the Lord...every day

v6 we be afflicted:

my suffering is your comfort...it helps you to endure the same suffering

my comfort is your comfort...the Father's comfort is contagious!

Just as our kids pass the common cold to each other, God's kids pass His comfort to each other

and in the continuum (v4, been there...am there...will be there), your suffering is my comfort...it helps me to endure the same suffering

and your comfort is my comfort...because the Father's comfort is contagious!

Wanda: Friday morning Monica was dealing with something...and your call was EXACTLY what she needed

so, regardless of...suffering or comfort...mine or yours...God's comfort abounds

radical truths:

- We learn more in our afflictions than we do in our blessings
- the things that happen to me are for the benefit of others

God allows difficult circumstances to happen in our lives in order to show Himself mighty on our behalf...that we might experience His presence and abounding comfort and love

If, in our suffering, we are	self-centered,	we will be	miserable
	God-centered		comforted

Note: "salvation" is not in the justification and regeneration sense but in the sanctification sense

v7 our hope is steadfast:
because

- of Who God is (v3)
- we know all who share in the suffering also share in the comfort

When we abide in Jesus Christ, there is no suffering without comfort

Heb 6:17-20

Rom 8:15-18

v8 have you ignorant:

because they were ignorant...

...of the intense difficulties Paul encountered and endured to get to them.

“You have no idea what it took to come here to you!”

Acts 19 “no small stir” (i.e. riot) in Ephesus with the “local union”
of Diana idol makers

Paul characterizes his trauma as

- Out of measure:
Heavier than could be weighed
- Above strength:
Beyond his power and ability
- Despaired even of life:
Paul just wanted to give up and die

Ever been there? Suffering and despairing to the point of just wanting to die?

It is not wrong to despair...

- Why do we lose our babies or why can we not get pregnant when the vile and ungodly have abortion after abortion?
- Why do I struggle financially every day while evil prospers?
- Why? Why? Why? To the point of complete weariness

It is not wrong to despair...it is wrong to contemplate suicide

1. suicide is a deception from the pit of hell

despair is an internal pain...so killing the external body to kill an internal pain...will not kill the pain...the pain continues
suicide does not solve the problem, it only makes the problem worse and more widespread (to others)...it is a deception

2. your life is not yours to take

1 Cor 6:19-20

in times of despair, do not concentrate on what you don't know (Why?).

instead, concentrate on what you do know (Who!)

v3

Rom 8:31-39

give the pain and the despair to Jesus...He wants to take it!

1 Peter 5:7

v9-10 sentence of death:

the “bounty” on his head posted by his opponents – he was Israel’s Most Wanted
but Paul trusted in God...

trust not in ourselves but in God:

God alone can rescue us from the sufferings and despairs of this life...

Dan 3:16-18

Ps 37:3-5

We need to keep His perspective

Phil 3:7-11

Why do we have troubles in this life?

- to teach us to pray...to draw us closer to our Father
- to teach us to rely on Him rather than ourselves
- to equip us to help others
you can only help someone if “you’ve been there”

v11 helping together by prayer:

the most effective way to help someone else...is to pray for them
so many people were praying for Paul...effectively!

James 5:16b

desperate men pray desperate prayers...lazy men pray lazy prayers
be desperate in your prayer life!

there is incredible power in prayer...God’s power

we enter into the spiritual realm when we pray...the realm so much more
powerful than the realm of space and time we inhabit

we participate in the glorious work of God via prayer...

help someone else...go to the prayer meetings!

v12a our rejoicing is this:

from wishing he were to dead...to rejoicing!

The “hinge” is prayer

We can rejoice anytime...regardless of our circumstances

1 Thes 5:16-17 rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing

v12b the testimony of our conscience:

Paul was accused of being insincere, self-serving, two-faced, double-talking
but he is at ease about how he conducted himself in their midst

by the grace of God, Paul has ministered with sincerity of heart and purity of
spirit

“I have been led by the Spirit, I have sought the Lord’s will, not my own.”

1 Cor 2:1-5

conversation:

Paul’s lifestyle reflected his heart

- simple
- sincere
- gracious (by the grace of God)

the most rewarding life is the simple, honest, gracious life

complexity, dishonesty, phoniness, and unforgiveness bring painful and
unnecessary circumstances into our lives

v13 what we read or acknowledge:

“I did not have a hidden agenda, I was not disguising my thoughts...I spoke that
which was spoken to me by God. I am not writing anything you didn’t
hear me say.”

v14 we are your rejoicing...in the day:

The Corinthian church rejoices in Paul, that the Lord sent Paul to minister to them...and...this church is Paul's rejoicing!

Amazing! Paul really understands God's grace...and he has the Father's perspective

at the end of the day, on the Day of the Lord, all that matters is

- your relationship with Jesus
- your loved ones relationship with Jesus

things are meaningless and worthless...but spending eternity with your kids...parents...brothers and sisters...

I have an idea what Paul is saying – you all are my rejoicing

v15-16 into...out of Macedonia:

Paul's made plans to go to Corinth both coming and going...but the Lord changed those plans

His critics used this to slander Paul as untrustworthy

v17-18 lightness:

“fickleness, frivolous”

James 1:8

“Do I seem double-minded to you? My doctrine never vacillated, my conduct was never unseemly....the timing of when I came to you belongs to God...He makes my final itinerary.”

v19-20 in him was yea:

there is no “if” or “maybe” or “sometimes”, no shadow of turning with Jesus.

In Him are the promises of God...which are absolutely trustworthy...promises of

- Hope
- Joy
- Contentment
- Peace
- Comfort

v5...v7...v9...v10

v21 established us:
“God is the One who sent us to you, and established my ministry...He is the one who anointed me...He is the one who united us together in Jesus Christ”

Every calling comes from God...not men
The only credentials Paul needed are God’s credentials...
the only credentials we need are God’s credentials
if the calling is of God, God will empower the work...and it will be fruitful
if the calling is of men, men will power the work...and it will fail

v22 Sealed:
The Holy Spirit is God’s stamp of approval and ownership
Eph 1:13-14
What is the expiration date of the seal?
Eph 4:30
The Lord knows who are His
2 Tim 2:19

comfort and assurance in the seal of God is found in Rev 20:1-3
in 1000 years, Satan could not break God’s seal (same word)
So in 70 years (max), he cannot break God’s seal on me or you

We have a Guaranteed Arrival...
...and not a Guaranteed Late Arrival...but one right on time!

Earnest:
2 different meanings

- Down payment
ala earnest money put down when buying a house
a deposit of things yet to come...heavenly riches in Christ Jesus
- Engagement ring
We are engaged to Jesus, awaiting the wedding ring

He Who bought me has made a down payment on me...given me an engagement ring...and He will return to collect that which belongs to Him.

v23 to spare you:
Paul has desired to return from Corinth...but his plans have been changed several times by the Lord
even before he gets there, Paul can see the wisdom and timing in God’s plan regarding when he finally did make it Corinth...
...he will come when he has a soft heart toward them...not a mean spirit
“Be thankful the Lord kept me from coming to you when I wanted to!”

Upset by the timing of a desire you have? Wondering “When, when, when?”
By faith, see God’s wisdom in His timing

v24 by faith you stand:

“I am not your boss, I am your helper.
I say what I say...by faith
I do what I do...by faith
I go where I go...by faith
because my Master directs me”

We are not to lord over each other

Matt 20:25-28

1 Peter 5:1-5

Rev 2:15-16

Christianity is not a dictatorship...or a democracy...it is a theocracy...
That runs on faith and humility

I am not “the boss of you.”

I do not rule over you...

There is only One

- Shepherd
- Senior Pastor
- Holy Spirit

A relationship with Jesus has no middle men, no brokers

The basis of that relationship...is faith...personal faith

Can you see the wake of a 747? No.

Is it real? Absolutely...deadly real

Is Jesus Christ alive? Is Jesus Christ Lord? Absolutely...

Is He your Lord? He is the hinge between life and death...

I am not “the boss of you.”...I am your helper...by what I say and what I do

- Exhortation
- Encouragement
- Rebuke
- Correction

“You should be doing this”...or...“You should not be doing this”

because those things help or hurt your walk with Jesus Christ

But...I am not responsible for your relationship with Jesus...you are

- To study God’s Word
- To pray
- To fellowship
- To witness

My heart’s desire is that you are the best fed sheep, most fruitful sheep in
Ahwatukee...

...but you must eat, walk...by faith...being doers of the Word, not just hearers

2 Corinthians Chapter 2

v1-2 not come again to you in heaviness...I make you sorry:

Paul's first letter was harsh and corrective...because his beloved church was being torn apart by many problems
now he is writing this second letter to explain why he had not yet returned to them

"I decided that I would not come back to you when I was sad and bummed out.
I see no sense in me coming to you and bumming you out...because you are the ones that cheer me up."

there is an important relational truth here: emotions can be contagious.

- Sorrow can walk into a room...and make it glum.
Bummed out people...are bummers...
Who likes to be around them?
- Joy can walk into a room...and light it up
Friendly people...have friends (Prov 18:24)
We like to be around them

v3 I ought to rejoice:

Ch 1:14

Paul KNOWS they are his rejoicing...but right now he does not FEEL that way.
He hangs onto what he knows...and asks the Lord to deal with his emotions

We need to experience our emotions...God gave them to us.
But we are not to run on our emotions...we are called to control our emotions
We are not to make emotional decisions...but to make rational, Spirit-led
decisions...based on what we know

My joy is of you all:

I know what Paul is saying...you all are my and Monica's joy!
We love you guys...the Lord has richly blessed our lives with you!
We thank the Lord for all of you!

v4 out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote...with many tears:

1 Cor cost Paul a lot of tears!

In that letter and in this letter, Paul is expressing the heart of God...love
It has been said that Love is the Truth spoken with tears

When you share the truth of Jesus Christ with an unbeliever...are you
heart-broken...or are you angry with them?

“I did not write what I wrote in the first letter to lay a guilt trip on you...or to bum
you out.

I wrote it because I love you...and you needed correction.

I love you too much to just turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to issues that
had sabotaged your walk with the Lord.”

God loves us...do we realize how much our Father loves us?

sign in Doctor's office: “When it's your child, every detail counts.”

How much more so in our Heavenly Father's heart when it comes to us,
His children?!

And because He loves us, God disciplines His children...

but not like we discipline ours

God is pure, selfless love...longsuffering and kind...merciful...gracious

His discipline is born in love...not malice or anger.

His heart breaks over the rebellion of His kids

How God deals with us needs to govern how we deal with others

Rom 6:13-19 (e.g. tongue...James 3:2-10)

- Condemnation, judgment, arrogance, and self-righteousness are methods of the devil...
- forgiveness, restoration, comfort, love, grace, and meekness are the methods of God

Note: I wrote

the hard part about letters is that the tone of voice cannot be heard
most of communication is non-verbal...tone of voice...facial
expression...body language

so a letter is a very limited form of communication

e.g. my letter to Chris was so deeply misunderstood she did not speak to
me for 2 years...she could not see my tears or hear my anguish

here, Paul is very careful to communicate the tone of his heart as he wrote the first
letter...a heart filled with love and aching because they were going astray

if you write a “heavy” letter, take great pains to describe the tone of your heart
right up front

v5-8 sufficient to such a man is this punishment:
the Corinthian church obeyed Paul's instructions regarding the man brazenly
fornicating with his father's wife (1 Cor 5:1-5)...so that he would come to
realize the gravity and magnitude of his sin
casting him out of their fellowship was the loving thing to do, since it let the Lord
deal with him to bring him to a broken and contrite heart, crying out for
God's cleansing touch

Ps 51:1-17

in the 6 months since, the Lord DID deal with him and he has come back
repenting.

And now it is time to forgive him...and restore him
This was the whole purpose of the discipline

The purpose of church discipline (Matt 18:15-20)

repentance

forgiveness (all active words...words that have feet!)

restoration

once discipline is given and repentance secured, it is time to:

- Forgive
Ps 103:1-14 a breathtaking gift!
Matt 6:14-15 not an option, a command
Eph 4:31-32
- restore (help carry the load)
Gal 6:1-2
Col 3:12-13
- comfort
spiritual...emotional
Ps 32:1-5
- and in all things...love (another active word...not a feeling)
John 13:34-35
Who is blessed when forgiveness is freely given?
The offender...and the offended.
Offenses bring sorrow...the cure for sorrow is love...God's
forgiving love

forgiveness...restoration...comfort...love
this is the heart of God

v9 I might know the proof:

"Part of the reason I wrote the first letter was to see if you would be obedient to
the Lord...if you would love as you have been loved
(1 Cor 6:9-11).

You obeyed my instruction for "tough love"...now I am awaiting to see if you
will also obey my instructions of "comforting, restoring love."

v10-11 I forgive also...in the person of Christ:
forgiveness is the issue...

the Church is usually on the 2 ends of the spectrum

1. lenient and tolerant of sin
 quenching the Spirit by compromising with sin, rather than
 confronting and separating it
2. condemnation, judgment, and self-righteousness
 ostracizing “sinners” rather than restoring them in meekness

neither are the heart of God

the heart of God is to restore the sinner, to reconcile the offender...
it requires forgiveness...

why must I forgive my spouse...child...brother/sister...enemy?

1. The bottom line...God forgave me
 The forgiveness of God Almighty is behind the death and
 resurrection of Jesus Christ...God’s plan of salvation and
 redemption...and an essential part of a walk with the Lord

consider the Parable of Wicked Servant (Matt 18:21-35)

but first, let’s be sure to get the Context

1. Greatest in the kingdom (v1-5) v4
 The humility of a child
2. Stumbling blocks from the kingdom (v6-10)
 Sin is very serious in God’s eyes
 Contrary to God’s desire/will
3. Shepherd’s heart (v11-14)
 that none be lost (2 Peter 3:9)
4. Church discipline (v15-20)
 For the backslider to return
 Note: context of v20 is discipline!
5. Forgiveness (v21-35)
 Requires humility
 (Point 1: greatest in the kingdom)
 Required because of sin
 (Point 2)
 Shows us the Shepherd’s heart
 (Point 3 – He would not seek the lost nor
 could save the lost if He could not forgive
 them)
 Is the purpose of Church discipline
 (Point 4)

In this Parable we see God's heart...and man's heart

- v21-22 *our forgiveness of others is to be like the Lord's to us – an endless well*
I must forgive those who offend me as many times as Jesus has forgiven me
Matt 10:8 freely you have received...freely give
- v23 *accounts will always be settled*
for the believer, they were at the Cross
for the unbeliever, they will be at the Great White Throne
- v24 *millions of dollars i.e. humanly impossible to repay*
salvation: for man it is impossible but for God all things are possible
- v25 *God is just – we deserve this*
Point 2 of the Context (sin is very serious business)
- v26 *the slave appears to humble himself and pleads for mercy*
he wants a delay of justice...vs pleading for grace
“I can repay!” salvation by works vs by grace
he wants to save his hide, not please his Master
this is Point 1 of the Context (humility is required)
- v27 *God is compassionate...and merciful... and longsuffering...and forgiving...*
forgiveness: the act of setting someone free from an obligation that is a result of
a wrong they have committed against you
- v28-30 *But...man's heart is not like God's heart...the man with a \$10 million debt cannot*
forgive even a \$10 debt
man is vengeful
petty
unforgiving
cold hearted
self-centered
proud
unmerciful
impatient
- man #2 also pleads for time, a delay of justice vs grace and mercy*
- v31 *man has an innate sense of justice...in his conscience, man knows the difference*
between right and wrong
these slaves know this behavior is contrary to the master's will, contrary to
the Shepherd's heart (Context Point 3)

v32-33

*the slave is called “Wicked”
unforgiveness is sin...a stumbling block and a very serious offense in the
eyes of a gracious and merciful God...*

the master expects:

- *Forgiveness to be given freely, liberally (Matt 10:8b)*
- *Do unto others as you would have done unto you*
- *His will be the servant’s will*

v34-35

*the unmerciful will be treated unmercifully
the debt could never be repaid – the slave will be with the tormentors
forever
sin is very serious business...unforgiveness is sin*

forgiveness:

1. *is from the heart*
2. *is given to us by the Father*
3. *is commanded by the Father to be given by us*
4. *is to be given (as often as is required) to every brother*
5. *is for every trespass of my brother*

Q: Someone did you wrong...hurt you real bad
 But the Holy Spirit convicted that person and he repented to God and to you.
 Yet you cannot forgive that person because the wrong was so grievous...perhaps it was
 even a repeat offense.
 Who is in sin? You are.
 Unforgiveness is sin
 Who needs to be forgiven? You do!
 There is no room for unforgiveness in the life of a believer...in the Body of Christ

=====

why forgive?

2. to not give Satan a foothold in our hearts

devices of Satan:

Today we are ignorant of the devices...the ways...of Satan

First...we MUST first recognize that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle
e.g oppression and discouragement I have felt for the past 6 weeks...a
never-ending knot in my stomach...I knew it was spiritual

by recognizing the attack as spiritual, we fight properly...with spiritual weapons

Ch 10:3-5

Eph 6:10-12

But if we fail to recognize the spiritual nature of the attack, we will respond in the
physical realm...and get suckered by the devices of Satan

- unrighteous anger
- “Southern Comfort”
- lust of the flesh...
- unforgiveness

Unforgiveness is a tried and true device of Satan

Satan hates the forgiving, loving, gracious heart of God

So he breeds unforgiveness...which is a cancer that just grows and
grows...and destroys

If the Lord forgives the offender but the offended does not, it is the
offended that suffers...as a root of bitterness grows.

Bitterness, the fruit of an unforgiving and proud spirit, is a self-inflicted
wound...a self-inflicted bondage...far more harmful than the hurt
we cannot forgive

unrighteous anger and bitterness is like drinking poison...and waiting for
someone else to die

Satan howls with delight when we do not forgive each other

so, Remember the “Three Rs”

1. Recognize...the spiritual attack from the enemy
2. Resist...the devil (James 4:6-7)
3. Rejoice...for in Jesus we already have the victory (James 4:8-10)

How many relationships do you have that are fractured by unforgiveness?

Satan laughs...squeals with delight!

But the Lord weeps...and is heart-broken

Confess your sin...repent...ask for the Lord’s forgiveness...receive His forgiveness...and pass it
on...liberally

v12-13 a door was opened...no rest in my spirit:

Remember Paul, in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Cor, did not want to leave Ephesus because the Lord opened a door there. (1 Cor 16:8-9)

he sent his letter to the Corinthians with Timothy and Titus...Timothy was to stay and Titus was to return "immediately" to Ephesus with feedback on how the Corinthians received Paul's letter of rebuke and correction but a riot broke out in Ephesus because of Paul so he was forced to leave town in a hurry...and he did not link back up with Titus until Macedonia

back to the open door...door to a man's hard heart that only the Lord can open

John 6:44, John 12:32

We can seek to break the door down by our own will...and know only frustration...

Or we can, by faith, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit

[[[The Lord opened a door in Ephesus and Paul did not want to leave without first walking thru it...but now, facing another open door, Paul does not stay... but keeps on moving!

Why?

He didn't have the peace of God there

Do NOT do anything unless you have the peace of God!

Don't let anyone pressure you into something about which you do not have peace

James 3:14-18

This is true for me

- Personally – I am not my own...I have been purchased...I seek the will of my Master
- Pastorally – the church is not a democracy or a dictatorship...I don't make decisions based on what I want to do or on what you want to do...the church is a theocracy...we serve the King of kings...and we do what He wants to do

I trust my Lord...He directs my path

Without His peace I do not walk

The only "fleece" you ever need to put out is...do you have the peace of God?

If yes, do it...by faith

If no, don't do it

]]]

v14 causes us to triumph in Christ:

Do we in Christ have occasional triumph? No...always

Rom 8:28

Gen 50:20

An often forgotten truth: Christians do not struggle for Christ's victory (to attain it), we struggle from it (from the vantage point of Christ's victory...which is already ours)

God is the cause of victory, He is the victory...because of Who He is

God is faithful even when we are unfaithful

1 Samuel 12:22

the people's rejection of God does not result in God's rejection of His people.

God did not reject Israel...why will God not ever reject Israel?

- Because of their faithfulness?

No...because they were not

- Because they were wonderful and lovely?

No...because they were not

- For the sake of His holy name.

Not because of who they are or what they did
but because of Who He is

His name is not to be taken in vain...it is written in stone

Ex 20:1-7

Ezk 36:20-23

God does what He does because of Who He is

I am a part of God's people because it pleases the Lord to make me so

John 15:16

v15-16a we are unto God a sweet savour...savour of death...savour of life:

Paul is drawing an analogy from the processions of the Roman legions

If returning from war in victory, which included taking the enemy land,
the Roman legion got a triumphal entry...

incense was burned...flowers abounded

to the Roman, it was the sweet smell of victory

to the captured enemy, it was the foul smell of death on their way
to "Roman Entertainment Tonight" in the Coliseum

Jesus came into enemy territory...was victorious...we smell the sweet smell of
victory...

...and we "smell" like Jesus!

- the children of God, those who have a relationship with God the Father based on a relationship with God the Son, are a sweet aroma to the Father...because we "smell" like Jesus to Him
 1. giant "Plug-ins"!
 2. more than perfume on a pig...a complete cleansing and anointing
- The presence of another Christian is a sweet smell to us...
"Hey, what's that perfume/cologne you're wearing?"
"It's called 'The Way, the Truth, and the Life', the fragrance of heaven"
- ...but our presence is a stench to unbelievers

our church has a smell – what is it?

The Love of the Lord

v16b who is sufficient

Jesus is sufficient...the acceptable sacrifice

- to bridge life and death...
- to remove my sins

God the Father is sufficient

Ch 3:5

His grace and His strength are sufficient for my every need in every circumstance

Ch 12:9

v17 in the sight of God speak we of Christ:

corrupt: “to retail, to adulterate” i.e. a huckster, a peddler

in the church are men who are peddling the Word of God for their own prosperity...speaking words men want to hear in their itching ears

2 Tim 3:15 – 4:4

God’s purpose for His Word is

- To edify, to exhort, and to comfort (1 Cor 14:3)
- To rebuke, to correct, to instruct

“We are not like many who sell the Word of God...just the “feel good” parts people will buy...we speak the entire counsel of God in Christ before God and man.”

God has placed a calling on my life...I have a responsibility to God to be faithful to that calling...and to be a faithful steward of what He has invested in me I am going to stand before Him someday...and my fervent desire is to accurately represent Him until that day

Each of you also have a calling on your life...and the responsibility that goes with it

we are in God’s sight every moment of every day!

Do we act and think and talk accordingly? Ouch!

2 Corinthians

Chapter 3

v1 commend ourselves...letter of commendation:
commend = “to show, prove, establish”

from this came the church’s use of “ordination papers”, used by man to certify
“ministers”

the intent was to protect the flock from wolves in sheep’s clothing

- out to fleece the flock...rather than feed the flock
- out to be served...rather than to serve

but man does not anoint men to serve the Lord as pastors/teachers...the anointing
comes from God

- 2 Cor 1:21
- the “unlearned” disciples chosen by Jesus
- Eph 4:11-13

“Must I prove my qualifications to you...again?

Must I again convince you that I am sent by God?

Do I need a reference letter, a letter of recommendation, before I come to
you?

No...YOU are my letter of commendation..”

v2 Known and read of all men:

Do you know that your life is an open book?

- It is in the sense that those who know you to be a born-again Christian
and are “reading” your life...comparing it to their life and to other
alternatives...assessing its value to them...
- Our lives are most certainly open books before the Lord
He sees everything we do...
He hears everything we say...
He knows our thoughts before we do...

So live your life as the Lord would have you live it...as an “open book”...as an
ambassador to the lost He loves so much!

v3 epistle of Christ:

the Corinthians were letters from Jesus to the lost world around them...so are we
I may be the only Bible some people will ever read...

...am I noticeably different than the other “books” those people read?

The Bible says...does my life say to the lost...?

Rom 1:17	the just shall live by <u>faith</u>
John 13:34-35	<u>love</u> for one another (doing vs feeling)
John 15:13	no greater love than laying life down for friends
Matt 16:24	denial of self...the <u>mind</u> of a <u>servant</u>
John 15:10-11	<u>joy</u> based on <u>submission</u> , <u>obedience</u> ...
Phil 4:7	the <u>peace</u> of God...keeps our <u>hearts and minds</u>

Our lifestyle...the open book others are reading...is based on a faith...that is
established thru our minds...not thru our emotions.

The Christian faith is a thoughtful, reasonable faith...

not a blind faith...

or an emotional one constantly needing a “higher high” or it withers

Is 1:18, Rom 12:1-2

The transforming work of the Word of God starts in our mind...then to our
heart...

God’s Word MUST be written on our heart in order to flow thru our tongue (say)
and our “feet” (do)

- James 1:22
- Head knowledge alone is insufficient (1 Cor 8:1)
- A tree is known by its fruit (Matt 7:16)
- A book is known by its inside

Are you an epistle of Christ?

Examine the fruit of your life...look at your “feet”...

Spirit of the Living God:

notice:

- Spirit – John 4:24...impossible to capture His nature in a graven image
- the – only
- Living – not a concept or an ideal...or teaching of a dead man...but a real Person...who wants a real relationship with other persons
- God – Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Protector, Father...

The Holy Spirit is a unique Author

Is 55:8-11 then...

Rom 10:17

The finger of God writes His Word on your heart...

Just as it wrote on the tables of stone (Ex 20)

In the sky (Ps 19:1)

In the dust (John 8:1-11)

He writes His love letter in my heart

I am a rough draft...but someday very soon I WILL be a Final Copy

Heb 12:1-3, Phil 1:6

I am being transformed...slowly now...but some day...

1 John 3:2...ala...Matt 17

v4 trust we have:

By His Word, we can KNOW God

- His nature...
- His mind...
- His heart...

...He has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ

We know Jesus aka The Word of God is totally trustworthy...

- The Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit
- We have all experienced many times
- the Word of God is sure – without error...
God said it so that settles it...

v5-6a sufficient...sufficiency...has made us able:

Paul is not boasting in himself...but in the Lord
He is nothing...the Lord is everything
This is the answer to Paul's question in Ch 2:16

Doing the work of the Lord does not require any

- Skills
- Abilities
- Strength
- Genius

on my part. All that is required is God!

All that is needed from me is...availability

Is 6:1-10

John 15:5 and Phil 4:13

He is able, more than able, to accomplish more than I ever dreamed (Eph 3:20)
...so "sufficient" is an understatement

you need not wait until you are "good enough" to serve the Lord...if you are
saved you are already "good enough"

you need not wait until you are "smart enough" or "mature enough" to serve the
Lord...serve the Lord today where He has planted you

Spurgeon: "I am not what I should be. But I am not what I used to be...
and I am not yet what I am going to be."

we are not able to do the work of God...apart from the Spirit of God...whatever
work we do for Him is the result of Him doing the work thru us

so why are we so quick to accept less than God's best for us when we do it
our way or man's way...rather than His way?

v6b Testament...letter...spirit:

the letter of the Law was given to Israel to lead them in abject humility to cry out for a savior.

But in their pride, they turned the Word of God into a possession that made them righteous.

And they labored to keep the letter of the Law...and became self-righteous

Jesus came and proclaimed

- Motives count (SoM)...it is the spirit of the Law that counts... furthering the need for a Savior
- The Word of God spoke of His righteousness, not theirs (John 5:39)
- In the Law there is only death...life is in the Spirit (John 3:3-8)

the history of Israel, which is an example for us (1 Cor 10:6) teaches us:

Rules without Relationship lead to Rebellion...

The Law gave us God's code of conduct...of which we fall so far short...

only His grace enables us to have a relationship with Him...

man rebels against the letter of the Law...until he is made alive by the Spirit of God thru faith...and he receives God's grace...and is now able to keep the spirit of the law

We must learn from the example of Israel and not be legalistic and self-righteous
When we judge each other and keep score to compare the scores of others against ours (we score ourselves!)...we suck the life out of each other...

Jesus fulfilled the Law and gives us grace...we are to walk in grace...walk in the Spirit

v7-9 ministration of death...was glorious...ministration of righteousness exceed in glory:

the Law of God is glorious...good...it reflects God's holiness, purity, goodness...
it is His standard of acceptability.

But, the glory of the Law is a fading glory...because no man can be saved by it...
since no man can keep it

James 2:9

The glory of the Law of God...condemned man to death

So the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His
Glory...His goodness...and He became a curse for us so that we might
live...He become our acceptability, our righteousness

The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ

Jesus is the glory of God...the goodness, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God...

He is more glorious than the Law...for only by His Name are men
saved...and His glory will never fade

we radiate that goodness and grace and mercy and forgiveness from within...
because we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit

v10-11 made glorious...is glorious:

The old covenant was going to fade away...for Jesus Christ is the end of the law
for those who believe

God's Word written on stone brought death...but written on the human heart it
brings life.

Because of Jesus, we have

- Reconciliation with God
- Fellowship with God
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- Access to His throne of grace
- A glory that excels the glory of the old covenant

Jesus is glorious...yesterday, today, and forever

The Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2) is the Light of the world (John 8:12)
we radiate His light...we are righteous, glorious...because He is.

Note: Mal 4:2, John 8:12, Ps 119:109...will literally be!
Rev 21:23

Jesus Christ is our:

- Victory
- Sweet savour
- Sufficiency
- Life
- Glory

We are His

- Open book
- Love letter to the lost

v12 plainness of speech:

“boldness, confidence, unreservedness in speech”

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel...for he knew it was the power of God unto salvation and the righteousness of God revealed by faith

Rom 1:16-17

Paul wore the Gospel on his sleeve...we should speak it as boldly...without reservation

share the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- in love
- in simple terms (plain talk...no frills, no “sophistication”, direct and from the heart)
- with no hesitation...“at the drop of a hat”
- confidently
- in word and in deed

v13-15 not as Moses:

Moses was given the glorious Law of God...he came back glowing

But the glory was a fading one...because man cannot have a right standing before God based on his own performance

the Law did not save the Jews then...it still does not today

Rules without Relations leads to Rebellion

salvation comes by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

to this day, the Jews cannot see Jesus in their Scriptures (John 5:39)

e.g. Num 1-2...foot of cross

the Passover meal...and why they do all those things

the sacrifices pointing to Jesus

Is 7:14, Is 9:6

Daniel 9

Zech 9:9 etc etc etc (300 more)

Note: is possible today to become a citizen of Israel if you are an

- Atheist
- Muslim
- Buddhist

...but not if you are a Christian...because none have persecuted the Jews like the Church...in the name of Jesus...with religious fervor

minds were blinded:

the path God uses to our heart goes thru our mind

choice of who to give your heart (devotion) is made in the mind

blindness strikes the:

- eyes
- mind (2 Cor 4:4)
- heart

v16 turn to the Lord:
blinded in part...until the fullness of the Gentiles come in
Rom 11:25
blindness is healed and darkness flees...when you turn to the Light
seeing is not believing...believing is seeing...

v17 the Lord is the Spirit:
Jesus is the Spirit in

- v3 of the Living God
- v6 that gives life
- v8 is glorious

what do the JW's say about this? Mormons?
The complete revelation of God is in Jesus Christ (John 14:6-9a)

liberty:
we live in liberty, not under the Law because...Jesus has freed us from the
bondage of the Law and set us free...
only Jesus can give a blind man sight...and set man free...and we are free indeed
freedom is in Christ...not in USA
freedom to not do vs freedom to do...freedom from vs freedom to

where the Lord is:
The more I hang out with Jesus (abide in Christ), the more I become like
Him...and the freer I am

v18 changed:
as we abide in (live with in intimate relationship) the Lord, we are transformed...
God is loving...he transforms me to be loving
God is forgiving...he transforms me to be forgiving
God is gracious...he transforms me to be gracious

The Lord is the Potter...I am the clay (Is 64:8)

- He molds me into the image of Jesus Christ
- When I resist the strong, molding hands of the Potter, I get "balled up"
and thrown back on the wheel
- the Lord re-molds me...He does the work of transformation...I don't
have to re-make myself...I simply submit and obey

Jesus is that Spirit that changes us into His image
He has started the work and will be faithful to complete it
A personal relationship with Jesus will change you...as you behold the glory of
God

2 Corinthians Chapter 4

v1 Therefore:

Since

- the Law is based on man's faithfulness to God...it is a fading covenant
- Jesus gave us a new covenant...sealed with His blood...based on His performance and faithfulness on our behalf...the glory of this covenant will never fade
- Jesus is the one transforming us...our minds and hearts

have this ministry...faint not:

the Lord gave Paul a ministry to speak boldly and plainly of His Gospel...that...

- gives life...when death is warranted
- loves and restores...when wrath and vengeance are in order
- sets captives free...that deserve to be bound in unbreakable chains
- grows stronger over time...instead of waxing weaker

Paul did not appoint himself the great evangelist to the Gentiles!

The Lord gave it to him

And the ministry was not easy for him...his own people hated him...he constantly faced persecution and death

Since the Lord gave him this ministry, the Lord also gave him the energy to do the work

the Lord has also given each of us a ministry...and the power to do it

the glory of Jesus is also invested in each of us...and we are commissioned to share it

and we do share it...whether we know it or not...even if we don't speak...for our lives are an open book before the people around us

the glory of the Lord can be seen by those people...

- when we actually live like Jesus is our Lord
as we walk with Jesus, we are in the process of throwing out our old life...our old ways and thoughts...even our old friends
- when we serve the Lord in the ministry He has given us
"burn out" comes to those who are laboring of their own strength.

A Spirit-led ministry cannot out run its power source

v2 renounced the hidden things of dishonesty...handling the word of God deceitfully:
Paul did not twist the Scriptures to serve his own desires...he didn't make
Scripture say what he wanted it to say...he faithfully and boldly spoke
what God said

Paul never watered down the Word of God...

- he taught the entire counsel of God...including the parts that mirrored our utter filthiness and unworthiness
- he never tried to take off its edge so that it didn't offend anyone...by dancing around or away from sin...and made everyone feel good

just as he renounced Satan, he renounced dishonesty

Dishonesty is like the father of lies...

- Subtle
- Clever
- disguised...(using the same words but with different meanings)
- thrives in the dark
-

dishonest handling of Scripture can mislead, manipulate, oppress, harm people.

- JWs, Mormons, Roman Catholics
They are wonderful people and sincere...but they are sincerely wrong, lacking understanding
Their doctrines are not sound, are in error...contrary to the Word of God
Sincerity cannot fix the error...only the Truth can fix the error...and truth administered in love
it is heart-breaking...2 Tim 3:5-8
they need to be saved...they need a personal relationship...with the real Jesus
our prayer...2 Tim 2:24-26...for only the Lord can heal a wasted mind
- A watered-down, selective presentation of God's Word that knowingly avoids the issue of sin in man's heart so as to "not offend" anyone so they will come back next week...is a dishonest use of Scripture...
one cannot grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ when fed only watered-down milk

we must be very careful with God's Word...a sharp sword (Heb 4:12)

2 Tim 2:15

Acts 17:11

1 Thes 5:21

Luke 12:48

2 Peter 1:20

prove all things, hold fast that which is good

given much, much is required

no private interpretation...the Bible interprets the Bible...and...the plain, obvious truth is the truth

I realize that I am standing before God...and that I am responsible to Him
One day very soon I will answer to Him for the ministry He has given me
and how I have handled His Word

Ps 138:2

name of the Lord to not be taken in vain...(Ex 20)
the Lord has magnified His Word above His name!

James 3:1

so I strive to be very careful...so must you

and I strive to be very careful with every aspect of the ministry

CCA Finances update:

- I no longer process the offerings....offerings now counted by 3 trusted, honest people with banking, business, and law enforcement (fraud) expertise
(one came to me after last mention...another “knew” before I did)
- Bills are paid by one individual, banks statements reconciled by another
- Purchases over \$200 will require 2 signatures...one of which is mine because I have ultimate responsibility
- Accounting System is being set up

Manifestation of the truth...in the sight of God:

Paul lived the truth, he didn't just speak it

you must know the truth to speak the truth and to walk the truth
to know the truth you must

- pray
- listen
- study...corporately...small group...family...
husband/wife...personal
- put feet to it...apply it...put in action

What you do speaks louder than what you say...your walk is a more
powerful...or damaging...testimony than your proclamations

In every situation...pursue righteousness (2 Tim 22)

live the Word, speak the Word...and let The Sword do its own work

learn what the Bible says and share what the Bible says...don't waste time
defending the Bible

Luther: The Word of God is like a lion...just let it out of its cage and it
will defend itself

v3-4 if our gospel be hid...the god of this world has blinded:
if we clearly present the Gospel in word and deed...and people do not understand
it...then the Gospel is hidden from them
it is not hidden because of us but because Satan has blinded the minds of those
who do not believe...who are in the process of dying physically and
spiritually

a “blinded” conversation could go like this:

Do you want \$10...or \$10M?

\$10M!!!

Do you want Jed Clampett’s house before he struck oil...or after?

The mansion!!!

Do you want to drive a “rent-a-wreck”...or a brand new Mercedes?

A Mercedes!!!

Do you want unending torment in hell...or eternal joy and peace and
comfort in heaven?

Oh, I don’t know. I’m not ready to decide yet

or

Hey, back off and get out of my face!

We can talk rationally to people on every subject...except Jesus Christ
Bring up Jesus to intelligent people...and it’s like lighting a stick of TNT
because unbelievers cannot rationally talk about Jesus...they are not in their right
minds

unbelievers have spiritual AIDS...the disease is 100% fatal and there is no
man-made cure

John 1:1-5, 10-11

John 3:18-21

Eph 4:17-19

spiritual blindness MUST be fought with spiritual weapons...the Word of God
and prayer...to bind the power of Satan in their minds

and we are not to fight on the defensive, but on the offensive

go to the prayer meetings to fight for the heart and minds of your lost
family and friends!

Ask why Greg...Tony...Kathy R...Cindy...etc go to prayer meetings

Why do I go?

- Refreshing time of fellowship with the Lord...and with
brothers/sisters
- Honor and privilege to enter into the will of the Lord and lift
up the needs of others
- Intimate communion with the Lord

What do we pray for? For lost family and friends to see the Light

light...of Christ:

man cannot see in the darkness
which of us would drive a mountain road...new moon...overcast...
at 70 mph...with no headlights?
No one in their right mind would...but that is the spiritual equivalent of what
every unbeliever is doing
they need Light or they will perish

Light

- is a spiritual quality
- illuminates what is on the outside
- reveals what is in the inside
- draws to
- purifies and heals (jaundice)

Jesus said, "I AM the Light of the world"
the Light of the World does not force Himself on us...He invites to come out of
the darkness...we must accept...and act!
The invitation is delivered by His children, whom He called the light of the world
Matt 5:14

On the subject of our minds...the Word also exhorts the believer
the Christian faith is established in our minds...then it goes to our heart...and
back out thru our tongue and our feet...and it spreads
faith without works is dead (James 2)
if there is no "foot work" or words, then He really isn't in the
heart...which means the mind has not been transformed
the battle that rages (Eph 6:10-12) is for the minds of men...of all ages
satan is after our minds...to darken our minds
TV, movies, books (Harry Potter), advertising, etc transmit the messages
of our enemy into receptive minds
What we see and hear DOES affect us! James 1:22

Believers: We must guard our minds and hearts...by putting the things of
God into our minds

Deut 6:1-9

Phil 4:6-9

Rom 12:1-2 be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds
i.e. don't see, read, hear anything that does not
honor the Lord

in the battle for our minds, we need the attitude of mind of Winston Churchill
during the Battle of London:

"Never, never, never, never, never, never, never give up"
...because our enemy won't!

v5 we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord:

Jesus is

- Savior
- LORD
- God Almighty

We preach Him

the central point of everything is Jesus

you don't need to hear what I say, only what the Lord says.

I am only the messenger and servant – His and yours for His sake...

I am not here to rule over you...I am here to help you by leading you to

Jesus...He is the help we all need

v6 God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts:

light is physical...but primarily spiritual

- Gen 1:1-4

God created light...Let there be light

His 1st order of business was light...then He separated it from
the darkness...

before He created the sun, the moon, and the stars

- John 1:1-4, 9

God is the Source of Light...and He came into the darkness

the heart of man is among the darkest places in the universe

every believer has had a personal "Let there be light!"...and we

beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

John 1:12

physical light shines externally and can be seen with our eyes...

spiritual light shines in our hearts and can be seen by faith

v7 earthen vessels:

when we go to a restaurant, we want our vessels...plate, silverware, glass...to be

1. clean...devoid of filth
2. empty...so we can put in them that which we chose to put in them

that's how God like His vessels too!

But unlike me, unwilling to go into the restaurant kitchen to clean my own vessels, God was willing, even eager, to come to earth to empty and clean His vessels!

After He cleanses me, He then fills me, a jar of clay, with His priceless treasure

- the Light of the World and the Glory of God...Jesus, God the Son
- The power of God...God the Holy Spirit

Is that such a good idea? Would you hide your most valued possession in a clay pot outside your house in the front yard? God has...

What if I backslide...and become a cracked pot? Do I lose God's priceless treasure?...Or what if I am stolen?

No...Jesus is both in us...and all around us

John 10:27-30 gave them eternal life...no man can pluck out of My hand...or My Father's hand...We are One

Excellency of the power:

The world...the kingdom of the prince of darkness and enemy of God...measures a successful life by...the power of "us"

- how much money you have (Enron employees)
- where you are on the corporate ladder
- how fast you can run
- how high you can jump
- how big is your house
- what kind of car you drive

driving to Men's Prayer...observing the cars around me...I got to thinking about what God might think of the names we have given these precious things

- Crown Victoria..."You think that is a crown of victory?!"
- Viper..."Why do you want the serpent, I've crushed his head"
- Toyota..."Oh what a feeling...are you kidding?"
- Voyager..."Are you on the right path?"
- Explorer..."My Word is a lamp unto your feet"
- Ultima..."Do you think that is the ultimate?"
- Suburban..."Why do you want to live outside My city?"

See, God has a different measurement of a successful life

- Jesus said Luke 12:15
- He created us to worship Him and to have fellowship with Him...so a successful life is measured by how much, how well you do that

God's measurement of success is the depth and breadth of your relationship with Jesus Christ...how brightly The Light shines!

Without Jesus...the true Jesus...and His Word in your mind and heart...you cannot shine...you are in spiritual darkness

Paul had a very successful life

- No fancy house...barn full of horses...land...but
- A broad and deep relationship with Jesus Christ
- Was a Light-bearer to the nations
- Was a vessel for the power of God
- Was Spirit-filled and Spirit-led
- Humble servant of the Lord

but a successful life is not an easy life...the ministry is not an easy profession!

v8-9 we are...but not..."

When you serve the King of kings with the ministry He has given you, the prince of this world attacks!

And the spiritual attacks are fierce and endless

every man can expect trouble in his life in this fallen world

1. Troubled - hard pressed from all sides
2. perplexed - our fragile mind cannot see a way out
3. persecuted - for hate and evil abound
4. cast down – discouraged, depressed, overwhelmed

but the children of the Light serve a God Who is bigger, broader, deeper than any trouble we may know...He is our refuge, our Rock, our strength

1. troubled but not distressed (John 16:33)
2. perplexed but not in despair - He is our hope (Is 41:10-13, Rom 8:31)
3. persecuted but not forsaken (Matt 5:10-12, 1 John 4:4, Matt 28:20b)
4. cast down but not destroyed (Matt 10:28)

God always preserves His children

If we care for the treasure within, He cares for the vessel

Knowing we are preserved by God in all things...we experience the peace and the joy of the Lord...an internal glow regardless of external circumstances...

v10-12 delivered unto death for Jesus' sake:

I put on Christ's death and He gave me life....
then...

Jesus lives in me when I die to self

The Christian walking with Jesus ...dies every day

Matt 16:24

Denial of self...dying to self...

His will be done...not my will be done...

Is what being a husband and a father is all about!
wife and mother
son or daughter
brother or sister
a servant

I need to die more...

v13 therefore have I spoken:

quoting Ps 116:10

do you believe that Jesus is

- Savior
- LORD
- God Almighty?

Have you beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

Have you been filled with the priceless treasure of God?

Then you will also speak of Jesus

that which is in our heart makes itself known by our tongue

Rom 10:9-11

If you are a born-again Christian, Jesus wants "first dibs" on our tongue...

But rarely do we give it to him because we are too busy using it ourselves...
for ourselves

v14 raise us...present us:
Jesus said, Matt 10:32-33

If we proclaim Jesus

- We will be raised up into eternal life with Him (Rom 8:11)
- We will be kept from falling and presented faultless before the Father (Jude 24)

what an invaluable lesson from the successful life of Paul...
he always had eternity with the Lord in view
It was much more than a destination for him...it was the motivation for what he
said and did

We tend to focus on

- What we have in this world – trials, suffering, persecution, responsibilities, chores, overdue bills
- What we don't have in this world – more, better, bigger...things (materialism, the “sting of things”)

Paul didn't focus on anything in this world...he counted it all dung...Phil 3:7-11
because he was so enamored of what he already had in Jesus Christ...
not to mention all that awaited him!

Paul said Phil 1:21-23

Moses had the same perspective

Heb 11:24-27

Lesson: seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

v15 the abundant grace...thanksgiving

why is Rom 8:28 (all = “good” and “bad”) true?

God gives abundant grace to us, working all things for our good...

...we are thankful and give “super abundant” glory to God

redound = “to superabound”

His grace is poured out and returns as glory

We know how super-good God is as we hear the roar of thanksgiving from those
who have received His grace

v16 we faint not:

we preach Jesus and die to self...knowing we will be raised up with Him
all the while being attacked by the enemy and hassled by the world
and His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor 12:9)...so we

- don't get discouraged by the turnings of this life...
- don't give up...
- don't give in...
- don't stop

Is 40:29-31

outward man perish...renewed day by day:

our tent is going to pieces...no matter how much make-up we put on it or how
much time we spend in the gym...
but we are renewed in our spirits each and every morning

Renewal is a daily event!

- His mercies are new every morning (Lam 3:22-23)
- the period of time our Lord dealt with when His disciples asked Him
to teach them to pray was...one day...today. "Give us this day..."

it is wise to plan...it is foolish to live beyond today

v17 light affliction...works for us:

v8-9...the Word calls "easy" and brief...because of v7

all my trials and tribulations have a Divine purpose, which is accomplished by
His power

John 15:5 with Phil 4:13

With God's perspective, v8-9 is as heavy as a feather and as lasting as the
blinking of an eye

so Praise Him at all times in all circumstances...they work for us!

Account the sufferings of this life to not even worthy of comparison with
the exceeding glory that awaits us (Rom 8:18)

exceeding: surpasses everything we know...we have no idea!

the goodness of God will be poured out on us is beyond measurement in
"weight" and duration

live like Paul...above our circumstances by keeping an eternal perspective

v18 we look not...but at:

all I see around me is temporary.

So it is irrational to care about this stuff as much as I tend to

None of it matters and all of it will be quickly forgotten

Instead, I am called to gaze upon that which I cannot see...to walk by faith, not by

Sight (Heb 11:1, 2 Cor 5:7)

with faith, we see eternally...

v8-9, 17 are impossible apart from God's perspective on life

life is glorious when seen and lived in the Lord...

life is torture without the Lord (either this life or the next life!)

The Bible encourages us to trade

- What we see...for that which we do not
- The present (fleeting)...for the future (forever)

We are renewed as we do that

2 Corinthians Chapter 5

v1 earthly house...dissolved:

this body of flesh, made of the dust of the earth (same 17 elements as in dirt) will die and disintegrate...returning back to the dust (Ch 4:16)

Note: recent scientific studies of DNA and gene pools have concluded that all men go back to a common pair...science ultimately catches up to the Bible!

the house was formed by God...a house suited for the environment in which I was placed...earth (Gen 1:26-27)

The house was claymation...a clay figurine...a clay pot (earthen vessel) until God breathed life (spirit) in me...at which point I moved in (Gen 2:7)

The body is merely the medium by which the spirit expresses itself (say and do) in space and time

sin corrupted this house...we were all conceived in sin, with a fallen, sinful nature Ps 51:5

So it starts to die the moment I am born...the body completely fails, and begins to dissolve, when I leave it

then this house then returns to the dust from which it came (Gen 3:17-19)

building of God:

when I move out of this house, I get a change of address...a glorified body made by God for the environment I will inhabit for eternity Phil 3:20-21

Quite a contrast!

- Incorruptible and immortal...holy and pure
1 Cor 15:53-54
- suited for eternal life with God
- The Spirit is the medium of life (vs blood)
- Not constrained by time – Jesus after His resurrection came and went with the blink of an eye
- Not constrained by space and the laws of physics – He was able to pass thru locked doors
- “flesh” and bone (Luke 24) but no blood
“flesh”...but not of the 17 elements in dirt
“flesh that will not wear our or tire out

this body was spoken of by

- Jesus (John 14:1-3)
- David (Ps 23:6) I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever

v2 in this we groan:
how many times every week do you cry out, “OK, Lord, please come for me now!
Get me out of here, Lord!”
That’s OK...nothing wrong with that
it is understandable to long for that heavenly body and to be done with this clay
tent
Rom 8:22-23 we groan waiting for the redemption of our bodies

After all, which body would you rather have?
So where will you invest in “Home Improvement”?
Our lives should not be oriented around the “here and now”...but on the eternal

v3 we shall not be found naked:
“I don’t desire to be disembodied, floating out in the universe...I want a body”

the two bodies are clothing for the real me (God knows I need clothing, Matt 6),
the real me is a spiritual being made in the image of God
Gen 2:7, John 4:24

the believer is never naked...we are always clothed with a body
the unbeliever, when cast out into the outer darkness, will realize he is naked...
without covering...separated from God

v4 being burdened:
with the dying process (death isn’t so much an event, it is a process) come

- illness and disease
- fatigue
- gravity
- increasing weaknesses – body and mind
- loss of capabilities – we end as we begin...helpless and dependent...but the roles reverse

all the while burdened with the curse...working rocky, thorny soil by the sweat of
our brow in order to eat today

we groan for our superior body yet to be given us
Ps 17:15
1 Cor 15:55-56
Nothing in this world can satisfy me...only Jesus satisfies...
And it is Him we preach

- v5 he that has wrought us:
this is God's purpose, His plan...
- that all men come to repentance and into a meaningful relationship with Him based on faith in His Son
 - to fellowship with us in our eternal bodies...so we can walk with Him in His garden in the cool of the day

earnest:

down payment...earnest money...

God did not put a down payment on me – He paid for me in full “in cash” right up front with the blood of His Son – it is the down payment given to me to give me a foretaste of the life to come

think of it as an engagement ring...to declare His intention to fulfill His purpose for our lives

Eph 1:13-14, 4:30

- v6-8 2 homes with 2 addresses...separated by faith
1. temporary body made of the dust
 2. glorified body eternal in the heavens

v6 at home in the body:

right now, we are tent dwellers

as long as this tabernacle is our address, we are apart from the Lord...though He dwells in our hearts, we cannot see Him face-to-face

This body is a half-way house, temporary living quarters while I sojourn in this land, until I go home...our citizen ship is in heaven (Phil 3:20)

v8 rather to be absent:

I would prefer to be in my glorious body in the presence of the Lord...I would rather be at home with the Lord...than here in this world in this body

Phil 1:21-23

Note: soul sleep is bad doctrine

v7 walk by faith, not by sight:

While I am sojourning in this land until I go home to be with the Lord, how am I to travel?

By faith...not by sight

God's Word says and what my experience verifies:

- My Lord is always on the Throne, in control
- Nothing is impossible for my God
- My Lord cares about the smallest details of my life
- I depend upon my Lord for my next breath, my next heartbeat, everything

I don't see the Lord...but I feel His presence and "see" His loving, gracious fingerprints all over my life

The Lord asks me to walk with Him by faith, not by sight

John 20:29 blessed are they that have not seen yet believe

Amos 3:3 can 2 walk together except they be agreed

And when I agree with the Lord, Who sees all that I cannot, and walk by faith, I know joy and peace and hope

But it is still a struggle! Why?

- Because I want to see!
I want to know when...how...why...
Yet all of those things are hidden from me.
Because they do not belong to me (Deut 29:29)
- My flesh would much rather rely on myself than on Him.
I want people to see how strong I am...not how weak I am
so when circumstances come into my life that are bigger than me, I tend to run into the strong tower that I have constructed.

Instead, I must run into the Strong tower the Lord has constructed.

Consider the mighty men of faith in the Bible

Abraham...who in difficult circumstances often struggled with walking by sight...today's headlines are a result

Moses...Not me, Lord, I don't speak very well, etc

Gideon...hiding in a cave from an occupying army

Jeremiah...Not me, Lord, I am only a teenager, they won't listen

Elijah...running from a woman's threat

David...saw a very beautiful woman and took her

They were not extraordinary, strong people...they were common, ordinary, weak people...made strong...when they walked by faith and not by sight

I am not extraordinary and strong, I am ordinary and weak...made strong when I walk by faith and not by sight

<u>When I--I must remember</u>	<u>My Lord is too</u>	<u>to be</u>
Am surprised by life	sovereign	surprised
Is cry "It is not fair"	just	capricious
Bad things happen to me	loving and compassionate	malicious
Question God's ways	wise	mistaken
think no one cares	faithful	forgetful
am overwhelmed	sufficient	overwhelmed
see no way out	powerful	chained
my ways come up empty	gracious	lacking

<u>When I--I remember</u>	<u>My Lord is too</u>	<u>to be</u>
Cure my "T" disease	near	unknown
And keep my eyes on	able	tested
Jesus...	pure	questioned
	majestic	missed
	wonderful	understood
	awesome	ignored
	jealous	second

when I think about the Lord – His strength and power and love for me...and...
when I think about me – my frailties and inabilities...it becomes easier to walk by faith
and not by sight

so how do I walk by faith and not by sight?

- John 14:1...so...walking by faith is a decision to be made based on what I know vs what I feel
I know that I cannot trust my eyes...for I cannot see the next minute...
my eyes have "burned" me in the past...
So I choose to not live at "see" level
I choose to trust Him Who inhabits eternity...Who is revealed in The Word of God!
This is a choice to be made circumstance-by-circumstance
- walking by faith is believing God will do what He said He would...and then getting in motion
we are to step out in faith...we don't have to leap, take a running broad jump, or take a great stride, we need to but step.
The first step is the hardest one to take
Num 13:30-31

John Higgins demo: looking down, taking one determined step, then another, then another, not looking around
“Doug, have you denied yourself and picked up your cross?”
“Yes, Lord.”
“Then follow Me.”
“Lord, I can’t see where I am going.”
“That’s OK, Doug. Just keep your eyes on My footsteps and follow Me.”
“Lord, the path is kinda narrow and there are obstacles everywhere. Couldn’t we find a wider path that has been cleared of all the obstacles?”
“Trust Me, Doug. Do not lean on your own understanding. Let Me direct your path. Follow Me.”
“I don’t understand, Lord. But I do trust you...so I will follow You.”

When think I know a better way...and look up and around...I walk by sight...and go astray

Another analogy: walking thru a maze of shrubs, listening to and obeying the instructions from one “above” the maze. To get thru the maze, you must listen, trust, obey.

Our sight is so phenomenally limited and dim
Jesus can see the end from the beginning. He is directing us to the place where He wants us to be...home with Him for all eternity
Walking by faith with Jesus is not a blind walk...it is a joyous walk with an all-knowing, all-powerful, real, and completely reliable Guide Who has promised to never leave us nor forsake us

So are you listening, trusting, obeying?
Keep your head down and your eyes on His footsteps...walk by faith...Jesus takes the responsibility for the outcome of your obedience.

The pressures and anxieties of this life in this house of clay melt away when you let Him direct your steps and when you lean not on your own understanding

walking by faith and not by sight is the only rational way to travel!
Is this lesson ever fully learned in our lives on this earth?

Every day we should pray, Lord...
strengthen my faith in You and Your ways
loosen my grip on me and my ways
tighten my embrace of Your cross
train my eyes on You
quicken my ears to hear You

v9 labor, that whether present or absent:
whether at home or abroad, we labor to serve the Lord
With everything we do, be it in this life (absent from the Lord) or in the kingdom
to come (present with the Lord), we seek to please our Master...
I will never get tired of hearing, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."

we are not accepted because of our works...for salvation is a gift...but faith
without resulting works is dead...Love and obedience go arm-in-arm.
we seek to be pleasing to Daddy
Who didn't strive to get the approval of your Dad when you were a child?
Dad's approval even drives grown men and women to do things...
We are motivated by Dad's love
how much more motivated should we be to please our Father...

We please our Father when we trust Him and walk in faith (a spiritual walk) and
not by sight (in the flesh)
Heb 11:6 without faith it is impossible to please God
Rom 8:8 they that are in the flesh cannot please God
Rom 13:14 make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts

v10 appear before the judgment seat:
Believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, Who has already borne
the judgment for our sins.
Having responded to the love of the Father and having exercised the faith given to
us by the Father, we came by grace into a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

The issue to be judged, then, is

- Did you confess Jesus before men?
- What did you do with the love and grace you received?
Did you love as you were loved?
Did you extend as much grace and forgiveness as you received?
- Did you walk by faith?
- How faithful were you to your calling
Billy Graham vs grandmother (faithfulness, not the results!)
- What was your motive for doing what you did?
Motive counts!

Right motives with no results = rewards
e.g. the love of Christ

Results with wrong motive = loss
e.g. drawing attention to yourself
Matt 6 (giving, praying, fasting)

Our works for Jesus will be judged by fire (house fire in 1 Cor 3)
How much will go up in smoke?

The unbeliever does not trust in Jesus to cover his sins, preferring to go it alone.
So he must appear before the judgment seat of God the Father, the Great White
Throne...where none can stand, none will be able to speak...
Rev 20:11-15

v11 knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men:
terror:

- believers: those who have no works...nothing to return to the Lord...who expects a return on His investment (Parable of Talents)
Children both love and fear their Fathers
- unbelievers: Matt 10:28 with Heb 9:27 and Heb 10:31
Jude 22-23
sometimes fear is the best medicine to wake someone out of a "dead sleep".
God is not above using fear in order to get a lost sheep's attention

v12-13 beside ourselves:

Paul's critics said he was crazy

sober:

sound mind, to be in one's right mind
2 Tim 1:7

Paul's response to the Corinthians regarding his critics

- Man looks at the outside but God looks at the heart
- be a fruit inspector
The fruit is love for God and for others...love for self dead last

Christianity is not a mask, it is not "for show"...

Christianity is a transformation from the inside out...a personal walk with Jesus in
faith

v14a constrained:

constrain = leaves me no choice

“I can’t help myself...I must speak of Jesus! I cannot stand idly by and watch lost people march right into hell! I gotta get the Word out!”

this is The Motive!

Not love for Christ (because Rom 5:8)

But love of Christ (flowing in and thru)

What is my motive for doing what I do?

Does the love of Christ “constrain” me...drive me?

Does the fear of man constrain me?

Motive counts!

Many are drawn by the love and the grace and the goodness of God...and are continually being drawn closer

Others don’t want to go to Jesus...but fear/terror might drive them to the Lord...then His love keeps them there.

Regardless, once we are in His presence we never want to leave!

the more we know	the Word	the more we know	Jesus
	Jesus		ourselves...
	ourselves		we wonder why He died for us
wonder...			we wonder about His love
wonder...			we love Him in return

we are not initiators of anything...we are responders to God’s love and His love drives us out into the world to seek and save the lost

v14b-15 one died for all:

1 life for all lives? Only possible if that 1 life is greater than the sum of all lives.

Jesus is fully God, the Source of life

John 11:25-26

Live unto themselves:

since we were all dead before He died...and since we now live because He is risen...we owe our life, this precious gift of life, to Him...so it is only rational to live for Him instead of myself

Gal 2:20

Jesus died for all of us that we wouldn’t live for ourselves...yet so many of us still live for ourselves...”Me first!”

v16 no man after the flesh:

we are not interested in man's flesh...in which there is no good thing...
or in man's achievements in this life...which are temporary
we are interested in a man's spirit, the eternal man

v17 a new creature:

I am 12 years old. In May 1989 I became new...born again
I was dead but by grace thru faith, not works, my spirit became alive.

when we are born again, we are not born over, we are not remodeled...
we are born brand new...a completely different person in God's eyes!
All the old things are forgiven and forgotten...as far as the east is from the west
Ps 139

The Lord remembers the events of my life that have happened after May 7, 1989.
All those before that date He has chosen to forgive...and forget

Shout for joy! A New Beginning!

Every man needs one...the love of Christ constrains us to tell them how

all things are new

- relationship with God
God's "1 Step" program works...it heals and sets men free!
Man's "12 Step" programs keep men in bondage
"I'm an alcoholic...been sober 17 years..."
- relationship with others

v18-19 of God who has reconciled us:

all (new) things (v17) are God's work – my re-birth was His work.
Only God can make alive that which was dead, my spirit.
I am reconciled with Him because of Him

I once was His enemy, in utter rebellion against Him...and separated from Him
because of my sins (Is 59:1-2)...

But the Lord loved me so much that He

- took on my form
- paid the price for my sins...death, the shedding of blood
- removed my guilt
- made the reunion possible

He offered me a peace plan...His grace thru faith in Jesus Christ...persistently
He reconciled me when I finally accepted His peace terms

Given to us the ministry of reconciliation...word of reconciliation:

Having reconciled us, God then gave us His ministry of reconciliation...and sent
us to the dead with His Word of reconciliation

Matt 28:19-20 The Great Commission

Acts 1:8

“Receive the grace of God...receive the salvation and the life God is offering...
stop fighting against God, for you WILL lose.

Be reconciled with Him. He has made provision for reconciliation through Jesus
Christ.”

God is a Living God...and He is God of the living (spiritually)

He is not God of the dead (spiritually)

That is what Jesus said in Matt 22:32

the Gospel of grace, the word of reconciliation, is to be shared in our ministry of
reconciliation so that all men may know Ps 32:1-2...

a clean white board...the record was wiped clean!

It is the love of Christ that constrains me to do this...

He took my place on the Cross...

He took my place in death...to bring me back to Him forever

v20 ambassadors:

representatives...one who stands on behalf of one greater than he and represents
in word and in action the message of the one that sent him
USA has ambassadors to every nation in the world...representing the policies of
our government
born-again believers are ambassadors of Jesus Christ to every person in the world,
representing

- The Way...to God
- The Truth...the only truth, separate from every lie
- The Life...spiritual, eternal

We represent Christ...in hostile territory...with Good News...that offends the
flesh of the spiritually dead who hear the message

God has sovereignly chosen to accomplish His work of reconciliation of dead
men...by using living men as His mouthpieces on earth...

we pray...be ye reconciled:

as His ambassadors, we represent in word and in action His message...
"Don't live in sin and rebellion! You are headed for destruction! Come
into the Light and live!
...and we are to pray that the unreconciled accept His peace terms

the faithful ambassador is he who

- represents God's message in word and in action...living it for all dead
men to see
- and prays for the dead men to whom he has been sent...for salvation is
God's work

Are you a faithful ambassador?

Prov 13:17

v21 made sin for us:

we are ambassadors of the perfect, holy, and Living God...Who became sin...so
we could be acceptable in His eyes
this is the message, the word of reconciliation, we plead the dead will accept

who can understand this?

meditate on the transaction between God the Father and God the Son:
in exchange for our filth and sin He gave us His purity and holiness
in exchange for our death He gave us His life

Gal 3:13 made a curse for us

Lev 16:5-10 (two goats), 15-16 (sin offering), 19-22 (scapegoat)

Including the sins of Osama bin Laden...and South African infant rapists
I cannot comprehend this love...I can only receive it by faith...live it by faith...
represent it faithfully

2 Corinthians Chapter 6

v1 together with Him:
we are partners with Jesus! What an exciting way to look at your ministry of reconciliation!

grace of God in vain:

Titus 2:11

“We beg you...be reconciled...receive God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Don’t pass it up! Don’t let God’s grace be in vain!”

For those who reject Jesus and pass up the opportunity to have their sins forgiven, Jesus died in vain...for them there is nothing else God can do to reconcile them...they choose to not be reconciled

but what a terrible choice...urge the dead to accept God’s gift of reconciliation and life

“Just accept the Gift...accept God’s peace terms!”

v2 now is the accepted time:

to Is 49:8a Paul adds: Now is the day of salvation.

“Now! Receive God’s offer of salvation this instant! Don’t Delay!”

Deut 4:39

There is no moment like this moment...we are not guaranteed a next moment

e.g. I was studying this very passage...

when Monica asked me to unload the dishwasher

“OK, Sweetie. I will.”...and I will...when I’m done doing this...

Is that acceptable? No...I have learned by experience that she means NOW!

She is doing something now and wants me to help her...NOW

Her expectation is that I will drop whatever I am doing and unload the dishwasher! She wants her priority to be my priority

NOW is the acceptable time! Otherwise I would lose the opportunity to serve...because she would do it herself (which is not a good thing...)

The Lord invites us to get right with Him...NOW...right now

“Make a decision to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ...NOW”...is a vital part of the ministry of reconciliation given to us ambassadors

Many people intend to get right with God...one day...after doing things they would rather do...thinking they have to give up fun to be a Christian

A. they are wrong about “fun”

In the world there is fear...anxiety...turmoil...unrest...nervous breakdowns...booze and drugs in order to cope with this life.

In Jesus there is...freedom...joy...contentment...peace...love

B. they are running a terrible risk

Why put it off? Why takes chances? Why not now?

procrastination is a very big problem with many people...

it is very dangerous when it comes to salvation because the day of choice is slipping away

Satan hates “now”

he prefers “tomorrow” and “later”

Many people listen to that message...for it pleases their flesh...and suddenly die...without ever getting around to getting right with God...God never appears on their Day Planner

e.g. 19 year old DVHS graduate that died in his sleep recently
were you thinking about dying when you were 19?

e.g. unsaved in WTC on Sept 11...

The Lord knows the number of our days...we do not...so NOW is the acceptable day of salvation

if you are here and still dead in your sins...examine your priorities...time is of the essence

God has a plan for each of our lives...and we all have appointments with our Creator.

Can you look back and see times when you should have perhaps died or been seriously hurt?

Can you look back and see times and events that, had you gone a different way, you would not be here this morning?

Those times were appointments with God.

God has appointments with us regarding salvation...times to commit our life to Jesus Christ

If you pass that appointment, you have no guarantee that you will have another opportunity, another appointment with eternity

Every person in hell is there because they passed on God’s appointment for their salvation

Perhaps this morning is your appointment with God to settle your eternity

v3 giving no offence:
a continuation of v1...with v2 being a parenthetical thought...
offense in the sense of stumbling one weaker in the faith
don't potentially contribute to another person's stumbling in their relationship
with Jesus by doing things that would cause them to stumble

ministry be not blamed:

Jesus came to serve, not to be served...so how much more should we who are His
ambassadors, given the ministry of reconciliation!
Many "ministers" have brought reproach upon Jesus by refusing to serve...
preferring to be served

v4-10 approving yourselves as the ministers of God:
a minister (ambassador) of God is approved:

1. in much (a great deal of) patience – Ouch! This sure is a tough way to start this list!
2. in afflictions – Wonderful! My flesh just loves afflictions! If the Lord didn't get my attention with "patience", He sure has it now!
3. in necessities – according to Jesus...food and clothes only (Matt 6)
4. in distresses (= "calamity") – anybody here know calamity?
5. in stripes – physical beatings
6. in imprisonments – in most countries, this would be an illegal meeting. Islam is free in USA yet Christianity is not free in any Muslim country
Can any of us relate to these qualifications?
the Church in USA is so pampered and soft and sheltered...
and deceived...for how many have truly counted the cost of being a follower of Jesus?
7. in tumults (= "instability, disorder" no rest)
8. in labors (= "beatings, trouble, sorrow")...ministry is fun, huh?
9. in watching (= "sleeplessness")
10. in fasting – denial of the flesh to focus on the spiritual

an approved minister is a person of integrity...true to God in the way he lives

How can we be approved?

How can we possibly endure these things?

We are able to by that which we receive from God...

11. by pureness – in heart and mind

12. by knowledge – of God, God's ways, Satan's devices

13. by long-suffering – patience with suffering!

14. by kindness – 1 Cor 13:4...God's love...fruit of the Spirit

15. by the Spirit of God – Zech 4:6, Gal 5:22-23

16. by love unfeigned (= “blameless and pure agape” i.e. not hypocritical) – there is no “me” in this love...selfless, sacrificial, unconditional

17. by the Word of truth – our sword, 2 Tim 3:16-17)

18. by the power of God – requires our humility, surrender, submission

19. by the armor of righteousness – putting on the armor of God, WWJD, WWJS

20. by honor & dishonor – encouragement and edification, Gen 50:20 (from men)

21. by evil reports & good reports (from men)

As we serve, as we represent Jesus, we will not be understood by the world

22. as thought to be deceivers...yet, in fact, preachers of truth

23. as unknown (= “ignorant of” ie spiritually to the blind world)...but known (by reputation...”he is one of Jesus' followers”)

24. as dying (to self and even physically)...yet alive (spiritually)

25. as chastened...but mercifully not killed (because God is in control)

26. as sorrowful (seeing the affects of sin and the hardness of men's hearts)...yet always rejoicing (in the victory over sin by the Lamb of God)

27. as poor (materially)...yet enriching many (spiritually)

28. as having nothing (everything is owned by God)...yet possessing all things (joint heirs with Christ...so, possessing everything)

Note: I think about meeting in a school...
and meeting in our own building...
about people who do not want to come to a church in a school...
but would if it were in a building...
But the Lord re-directs my mind...as He tells me

- to serve and to love those He gathers here
- to study to show myself approved of God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God...
- to feed His lambs so they grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ

if and when He packs this place out...He needs a building!
He already possesses it...He will give it to us in His time
i.e. we already have a building...He just hasn't given it to us yet...because there is a work He desires to do in this place first

Paul was an approved minister (2 Cor 11:23-27)...he experienced v4-10
Because he knew who was sufficient for these things (2 Cor 2:16, 3:5)
Paul was a faithful ambassador...conducting his ministry with integrity
We too are ambassadors of Jesus Christ...given a life-giving ministry
Guard the integrity of your ministry – it is a reflection of Jesus to the unbelieving who are watching
1 Thes 5:22 flee even the appearance of evil

So...what is being an ambassador and this ministry of reconciliation all about?
Matt 16:24
Denial of self
Following Jesus
2 Cor 5:7
Rom 12:1-2
at the end of the day...or at the end of this list...we find ourselves at
Joshua 24:14-15

And if you have not yet chosen to serve God...NOW is the acceptable day of salvation
I plead with you to be reconciled to God your Creator!
This is not a New Year's resolution – that which you will do
It's what He has done...and you surrendering to Him

v11 our mouth is open...our heart is enlarged
“I have spoken plainly to you...I have not deceived or manipulated you.
And my heart has been open to you.”

v12-13 Straightened in your own bowels:
Bowels...seat of the emotions...hearts
“I have not withheld my affections from you...you have withheld your affections
from me. To love as you are loved, simply enlarge your heart...as you
embrace others with the Lord’s love....
but do not embrace the world or the worldly.”

Now Paul gives a very solemn warning...we all need to listen

v14-16 be ye not unequally yoked:
unequally yoked is like teaming a live cow with a dead cow

- how effective is that team?
- which direction will it pull (to the dead)?

Deut 22:10 Thou shall not plow with an ox and an ass together
2 different natures yoked together...
ox is a beast of burden...a submissive servant
jackass is rebellious...fighting against the yoke and the master

5 opposing contrasts to drive home this valuable lesson in holiness

1. righteousness vs unrighteousness (lawlessness)
2. light vs darkness (when think of the speed of sound, think of the speed of darkness, which flees the light!)
3. Jesus vs Satan
4. believers vs unbelievers
5. Temple of God (1 Cor 6:19-20) vs temple of idols

a lesson in holiness with applications in

- marriage
- friendships
- business partnerships

Let’s look first at **marriage**...

Many Christians have blindly thought their love for this unbeliever is big enough
and deep enough to cover the differences in beliefs...
...but those marriages are very difficult and so many of them end in tragedy

in marriage one can know the greatest

- companionship and joy
or
- loneliness and misery

In the most intimate of human relationships, what does an ambassador of Jesus
Christ have in common with an ambassador of Satan?

- material and physical...temporary things
- NOT spiritual...eternal things

But the common ground between 2 ambassadors of Jesus Christ is as big, broad,
high, and deep as the Lord...now and forever!

the greatest companionship and joy in a marriage is possible only between
two like-minded believers in Jesus Christ, the Third Cord that cannot be
broken

Note: when we see marriage problems between believers, it is ALWAYS
when one or both spouses take their eyes off of Jesus and “hang out” with
the “other side”...pride and self-centeredness

unequally yoked...it is a mistake for a Christian to marry a non-Christian...in fact
to do so is in direct conflict with the commandment of God

consider **friendships**...believer and unbeliever

how can an ambassador of the Way, the Truth, and the Life be good
friends...with hearts laid wide open to each other...with an
ambassador of the Lie, any way, and death?

The common ground cannot be spiritual...it must be worldly...but God
says...James 4:4

invest of yourself in friendships with people who are Godly...not with
people who are ungodly

this doesn't mean you cut off your lost family and friends

both are true: Heb 7:26...and...Luke 7:34

The idea is that Jesus was there to touch the sick...without getting
infected

Jesus gave to sinners...He did not take from sinners (e.g. advise)

Same is true for us...give the truth in love to unsaved family and friends...
but don't take advise from them and don't hang out with them

consider **business partnerships**...believer and unbeliever

brothers and sisters in Christ have repeatedly gotten themselves in trouble
because they hooked up with a partner who thought nothing of
cheating the customer...the government...even their partner!

In any relationship between believer and unbeliever, there are 2

- Standards of right and wrong
- Value systems
- Perspectives on the world
- Different needs

the 2 are completely incompatible, even hostile...they cannot co-exist.

They cannot mix any more than oil and water can...they remain separated

Truth and error do not mix to make shades of gray.

Truth will always be Truth, error will always be error.

God commands us to not be unequally yoked because error is introduced into the relationship...like leaven/yeast, even the smallest pinch corrupts the whole lump.

So there can be reconciliation only thru the complete and unconditional surrender of error...never by compromise with error

God's Truth is pure and undefiled...He has invested this Truth in us...

we are to keep the vessel and the Truth pure and undefiled.

v17-18 Wherefore:

because of this

come out...be separate:

if you are a Christian...hanging out in the world...you are cheating on God

1 Peter 1:16...Lev 11:44

“Be holy...for I AM holy.”

Why must we be separate? Because God loves us...being separate to God is for our benefit and our preservation

do not have communion with darkness...do not be unequally yoked

1. come out of the world
2. be separate (holy) to God, from the world
3. be pure (Matt 5:8)

be a faithful ambassador

and for those where NOW is the acceptable time of salvation, the born-again experience is a

- “coming out” party
- going home journey

2 Corinthians Chapter 7

v1 these promises:

this verse sums up Ch 6...we should be noticeable different from other people
Ch 6:14-17

1 John 2:15-16

if we are holy, separate from the filth of the world to Him, God will

1. receive (“treat with favor”) us
2. be our Father – Provider, Protector, Healer...our everything
Even big kids need a Daddy! e.g. Christian on drive
3. we will be His sons and daughters – entitled to the benefits and privileges of “blood” relations

cleanse:

Eph 5:32, 20-27, includes

- thanksgiving and gratitude to God (vs the ugly ingratitude of self-centeredness)
- submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ
- cleansed by the Word...daily (the reading schedule) which is as important as your daily shower

filthiness of the flesh and spirit:

- the unsaved man is not good
fornication...drunkenness...idolatry
Gen 6:5-6, Gen 8:21, Jer 17:9, Rom 7:18, 24, Rom 8:8
man trying to cleanse himself is like taking a bath in the sewer...
needs to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb
- the saved gets dirty feet
John 13:10 he that is washed need not, save to wash his feet
we get dirty feet walking in this world...we need the Lord, the
Word of God, to wash our feet clean

perfecting holiness:

as a child of God, I must walk with my Father in
holiness...purity...righteousness
being completely separate to God, apart from the world, is a life-long
process (Phil 1:6)

in the fear of God:

fear = awe, reverence

most people do not have a proper understanding of God, so they lack the
proper respect for God

“the man upstairs”... etc are irreverent, insulting, and careless references
to the Creator of the universe who holds it in his hand!

- v2 ...no man:
 the ministry is not a place to pursue monetary gain or pleasures of the flesh
- v3 I speak not to condemn you:
 “I’m not putting you down, I’m not condemning you. I love you.”
 Ch 6:14-16 is not a condemnation...it is a strong warning of holiness for our
 benefit and preservation...and usefulness as an ambassador
 we cannot effectively speak the word of reconciliation in the ministry of
 reconciliation we have been given unless we are holy
 we must be different from the world and worldly people if they are going to hear
 what we are saying...otherwise, “Why should I listen to you? You are just
 like me!”
 we are called peculiar people...we need to act like it!
- v4 Great is my boldness of speech:
 Paul is tuned into the Holy Spirit and has the heart of God
 He spoke boldly and lovingly to them
- I intend to speak to you boldly and lovingly.
 We live in very exciting and eventful times...and time is clearly running
 out...so time is of the essence – “Get right, stay right with God.”
 What I say sometimes will make you uncomfortable...but be a Berean
 so when I stop speaking boldly, tell me.
 If I refuse to speak boldly, leave this fellowship for one where the
 pastor is not afraid to speak boldly
 and if I don’t speak lovingly, tell me
 if I stop loving you, leave this fellowship for one where you will be
 loved
- great is my glorying of you:
 “I’ve been bragging about you. My heart is for you. You are wonderful people. I
 love to tell others what God is doing in Corinth.”
- when I talk with other pastor’s, I speak highly of you. I love you, you have
 blessed my life abundantly
- v5 no rest...trouble...fights...fears:
 Paul had trouble within and trouble without...obstacles at every step of the way
 he was an approved minister of God (Ch 6:4-10)...yet he knew fear and
 discouragement and depression
 i.e. Paul was just like us!

v6 God...comforted us:
but, fear not, God is the God of all comfort
He sends comfort when we need it

sometimes I get discouraged...when I take on the things that belong only to God

- increase (growth)
numerically and in maturity...
 1. in the Body as a whole...and in every individual
 2. in specific ministries within the Body
 3. in giving God our very bestmy will is growth...but it is God's work, not mine

- a building
but all things belong to God...so
we already have a building, He just hasn't given it to us yet!

but the Lord is faithful to encourage me...many times by sending one of you with words of encouragement

So, when you are discouraged, the Lord will encourage you.
the Lord is THE solution to discouragement and depression...
He is the God of all comfort

v7 he told us:

Paul wrote a Tough Love letter (1 Corinthians) to a carnal church
Titus carried 1 Cor.

Paul was anxious to know how they received it because sometimes love is not understood

e.g. 1 Cor 5:1-7

they received it well – they mourned because of their sin

Matt 5:4 blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted

We mourn when we

- realize that we failed and have fallen short of God's desire for us
- are confronted with our sin
- see the weakness of our flesh

v8 I do not repent:
“I was broken-hearted over that letter. I even had second thoughts about sending it after I had sent it. I didn’t want to hurt you...”
Paul has the heart of a shepherd, loving and caring for his sheep
Ch 2:4
But sometimes love must be tough...because we are called to be holy

I can relate...I hate confrontation...it’s not what gets my juices flowing
If there is a problem in the church, I pray fervently that the Holy Spirit will speak to the hearts of the people involved
I never want to hurt anyone...but I seek the heart of God and sometimes confrontation is necessary for the good of the Body...and godly discipline is an act of love
Matt 18:15-17

v9 you sorrowed to repentance:
Paul did not want to condemn the Corinthians...he wanted them to repent... and they did...Paul’s letter did not damage them...it helped them
the Body of Christ needs 2 Tim 3:16-17...spoken boldly and lovingly

sorry after a godly manner:
being sorry is not enough...there must also be a change.

v10 sorrow worketh repentance:
2 kinds of sorrow:

- one is broken...the other is rebellious...defiant...defensive
- one results in change of heart and mind...the other in no change
- one draws you closer to God...the other drives you further from God
- one is based on the conviction of the Holy Spirit (feels bad)...the other on the condemnation of satan (feels horrible)

Godly sorrow bears good fruit - repentance
e.g. Peter after denying Christ
worldly sorrow bears no fruit – no repentance, no change
e.g. Judas after betrayal of Christ

Just being sorry is lethal, repentance leads to Life
The Bible the fool hates instruction...and is judged
But the wise man listens and obeys...and is saved...made new
Ch 5:17

v11 evidence of Godly sorrow:

- brokenness
- change of heart and action (attitude and behavior)
- carefulness – spiritual awareness, sensitivity to God’s ways...being circumspect, not a loose cannon
- clearing – confession and forgiveness...cleansed the offense forgiven...and forgotten

As an ambassador of Christ, how forgiving are you? Forgetful?

Forgiveness without forgetfulness is

- Misplaced vengeance waiting to happen
 - Bitterness taking root
-
- indignation – to realize I allowed sin to rule over me; hating what God hates
 - fear – reverence and awe of God, Who graciously and mercifully forgives you
 - vehement desire – to follow and obey and please the Lord; to share the word of reconciliation, being driven by the love of Christ
 - zeal – “fierce excitement” i.e. on-fire to know and serve the Lord...taking action against sin in your life...resisting temptation
 - revenge – “acquittal and vindication”...and doing the right things
Luke 18:3 widow before a judge, “Avenge me of my adversary”

v12 I wrote unto you...our care for you:

“his” cause...the man in 1 Cor 5 involved in an incestuous relationship

“suffered the wrong”...that man’s father

the biggest problem, however, was the church...”you”...that didn’t think anything of the sin (no thought for holiness)...and were even proud of their open-mindedness

the rebuke was for the Body as a whole, for not doing what they needed to do – purge sin from the camp, be holy...and minister to the offended

is there sin in the family that needs to be confronted?

- doing the right thing will not win you a popularity contest with man but it always pleases the Lord
- rebuke a brother/sister out of God’s love for him/her, not out of God’s wrath.

Don’t, like Moses, misrepresent God

Note: rebuke family, not the lost...share God’s truth and love with them

Is there a sin in your life that is being confronted?

- Know the heart of God is being sought by the confronter
- Know that God’s discipline is an act of love

- v13 we were comforted:
a closed loop:
Paul was grieved by sin in the family...
so he sent a bold love letter...
the confronted and convicted Corinthians mourned their sin...
and were comforted by the Word of God...
so Titus was comforted, joyous, and refreshed...
and Paul was comforted
- The Father of mercies and God of all comfort (Ch 1:3)...
accomplished His ministry of reconciliation (Ch 5:18)...
via His Word of reconciliation (Ch 5:19)...
given to a faithful ambassador (Ch 5:20)...
who spoke it boldly and lovingly (Ch 7:4),
resulting in holiness (Ch 6:14-17)
- the Word of God...works!
- v14 found a truth:
“You lived up to what I told Titus you were. I’m so proud of you!”
Paul knew their hearts, that they loved the truth
- v15 inward affection:
“Now Titus loves you like I love you.”
The church has a renewed humility and is again growing in grace and in the
knowledge of Jesus Christ
- see how love...obedience...humility...submission are all linked?
Result in comfort, joy, and spiritual refreshment
- v16 confidence:
“of good courage and good cheer”
- how sweet is fellowship with someone you can trust to do the right thing...
takes us back to ...holiness...being peculiar

2 Corinthians Chapter 8

Here at Calvary Chapel, we study the entire counsel of God...verse-by-verse

We don't seek out "pet" topics, we don't avoid any topics...we study God's perspective on all topics in context

Ch 8 & 9 deal with an issue that is quite sensitive to most people...their wallet.

The subject of Paul's teaching is Christian giving

Paul never pressed people for money – he was very careful to never make money an issue in his ministry...he always worked, making tents, to supply his own needs...he never took a salary from the churches

So why is he dealing with giving now?

In the sweep of Scripture, Paul is on his 3rd missionary journey, headed to Jerusalem with a financial offering from the Gentile churches to the desperately poor Jewish church in Jerusalem

In these two chapters, Paul is urging the Corinthians to give...not to him...but to the poor brethren in Jerusalem

Paul started many churches...but his heart he was a Church-builder...a "Body-builder"

His heart was to break down the wall separating the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers

this offering was the love of Christ...which constrained Paul...in action

One of his stops enroute to Jerusalem was Miletus where Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus that there would be some that follow him that will not care for the flock but rather seek to take advantage of them to enrich themselves (Acts 20:28-29)

Paul warned of wolves in sheep's clothing who come to feed on the flock, rather than to feed the flock...who are in the ministry for personal gain, to steal from the flock

And that is precisely what happened...and it is still happening today

Money is a problem within the church because many "ministers" have made money a big issue...as they make their living in Christian ministries knowing that Christians are loving and generous people

So...because of greed in the heart of man, money has been abused in the church...and giving is a very sensitive issue

But...you and I have been given an awesome privilege of investing in the kingdom of God...and the awesome blessings of the dividends God has promised to those who invest in His kingdom!

Try to relax...there is no pressure...this is a Bible study to help us understand God's perspective on the issue of giving

Like all the other topics in the Bible...listen to what God says about giving...search the Scriptures yourself...and ask the Lord what He wants you to do

- v1 wit of the grace of God
 “Let me tell you about the grace of God that fell on the churches in Macedonia.”
 The grace: a giving heart...God’s heart
- v2 in...affliction...abundance of their joy and their deep poverty:
 great trial + joy + extreme poverty = generous gift of their possessions
 Notice...in the midst of a great financial affliction, the poor abound in their giving...because the poor, so much more than the wealthy, understand when there is a need...because they live it every day
 But...their joy in the Lord moved their hearts to give to others even less materially fortunate – the church in Jerusalem
- so of the 3 conditions...trial, joy, poverty...which one dominated?
 Joy...a matter of the heart, not of circumstances
 God’s incredible gift of joy...
 happiness is an emotional experience based on pleasant circumstances
 if the circumstances get ugly, happiness flees
 joy is a spiritual experience not based on circumstances but on a right relationship with God thru faith in His Son Jesus Christ
 your circumstances can be miserable...extreme financial distress, illness, persecution by the world, a strained marital relationship...but because you are in a right relationship with God your heart is filled with joy!
- v3 power:
 power (1st) = “credit”
 power (2nd) = “strength, ability”
 these poor people were willing to help beyond their ability to help.
 their hearts, minds, affections were not fixed on their bank account balance...but on the needs of others
- willing:
 this is one of the keys of Christian giving...
 we should never give because we are being pressured to...because then we will resent giving...resentment is a heart disease
 we should give because we want to...as we purpose in a willing heart...
- I will never ask you to make a financial pledge...even if we embark on a building project...because where God guides, God provides
 I will never question nor challenge you on your giving...that is something that is strictly between you and the Lord...it’s none of my business

v4 praying us with much intreaty:
the poor “begged” Paul to receive their gift to minister to the church in
Jerusalem...they wanted to help!
Paul may have said, “No. You need to buy yourself new sandals and a new coat.
Keep the money.”
But they said, “No! They need it more than we do. Besides it is the least we can
do for them. (Rom 15:27) So please receive it, Paul...please let us help.”

that we would receive the gift:

A subtlety of significance...taking a gift...or receiving a gift

Here at CCA, we never **take** an offering...we **receive** an offering from those who
want to give and participate in this ministry in this community
we don't pass a plate or a bag or a bucket, we make available to the willing heart
that wooden box on the back table
and the offering is not for me...I do not take a salary...it is to pay the bills we
incur to do the work of the ministry here in Ahwatukee, in Arizona, and in
the uttermost parts of the world

v5 first gave their own selves to the Lord:
this is where giving starts...my first offering to the Lord should be myself
He has purchased me...I am peculiar
All I have is His...I am His steward (I own nothing...house, car,...)
We are to have the heart of a steward

- “It is all Yours Lord, so whatever You want, it's Yours.”
- a heart for the Lord, not for the Lord's things

by the will of God:

it was the will of God that they give...giving to those in need is God's heart

v6 in you the same grace also:
grace = giving...from a giving heart

v7 as ye abound in every thing:
“Since you abound in everything that matters....

1. Faith (in Jesus Christ...God's precious gift to me)
2. speech (witnessing of Jesus)
3. knowledge (of God and His Word)
4. diligence (to obey and follow the Lord)
5. love (*agape*...selfless, sacrificial...as given me)

...may you also abound in this grace of selfless giving.”

be as gracious and generous with others as He has been with me

v8 I speak not of commandment:

Paul speaks to the proper motive for giving...
tithing as a commandment...No

“Tithe/Tithing” is not mentioned in NT except in

- Matthew 23 and Luke 11 when in context it is part of the Lord’s rebuke of the Pharisees
Luke 11:39-42
what does the Lord care about?
Our hearts...not our wallets
- Heb 7
the context is Abraham...i.e. not a New Covenant context

Some believers have a legalistic view of tithing...it is every Christian’s duty
e.g. family in Queen Creek fellowship

- initial “interview”, this was a primary topic
- later left the fellowship because I didn’t speak enough about it
- they had a heart of self-righteousness...were big tithers...but they were not big givers...not stewards...we could not meet in their house...only in their back yard...in the summer

some believe a Christian must give 10%...but what did the Lord say?

Matt 10:8 freely you have received, freely give

- if make \$10,000...10% is way too much...you are in need
- if make \$1,000,000...10% is way too little...you are in abundance

Christian giving is not a legal requirement to have a right relationship with God...
it is not a forced march...it is a voluntary choice of a loving heart

Christian giving is an expression of love...the love of Christ that constrains you is
the proper motive...we worship in giving

Therefore, what you give is strictly between you and the Lord...NEVER between
you and me...or the church...or any other man

the issue between you and the Lord is Stewardship vs ownership....will you use
what you have been given to magnify the name of the Giver of every good
and perfect gift, Who has so freely given to you?

On the subject of motive...going back to the wolves in sheep’s clothing...

- Don’t give thinking God is broke.
The money in your pocket, in your bank account, is the Lord’s...
- Don’t give to any ministry that says it will have to close up shop
unless you give them money...let them close.

God is not a poor money manger...over-spending and always in
need.

Where God guides, God provides.

v9 grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:
the heart of giving of Jesus Christ

“God defined ‘giving’ for us when He sent His Son to reconcile us to Him.
With God’s gift, He exchanges our poverty (spiritual) for His wealth.
God gave to us out of a loving, selfless heart, not out of some legal
requirement.
With the Lord as our model, we are to give the same way.”

might be rich:

He gave in order to enrich us...for in God’s eyes, man without Jesus is
poor...even if he is as materially wealthy as Bill Gates
money and possessions are just things...wealth is a spiritual measurement
Matt 8:20...(spoken by the Creator of the universe): foxes have holes,
birds have nests, but the Son Of Man has nowhere to lay His head
Luke 12:15-21
Bill Gates without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is a pauper

v10-11 expedient...readiness of will...a performance also:

Paul told them of his “Body-building” gift a year ago...they said they would help
“Put your words and your attitudes into action...don’t just say it, do it!”

expedient...that which is good for me
I benefit from giving...I need to give...it reveals...to me...what is in my heart

v12 first a willing mind:

Christian giving starts in the mind...if the gift does not come from a willing mind,
God will not accept it
Don’t give thinking you are indebting God...
“I am giving to God so God will give to me...”
if you give to get...you won’t...for the Lord will not bless it
giving with the wrong motive will not result in reward, now or later
but if you give...to give...the Lord blesses
because our motive count...our faithfulness as a steward is important
the Lord wants us to give just because we love Him
He isn’t interested in the money, He’s interested in our heart and our love

That a man has, not according to what he has not:

you cannot give what you do not have...we give from that which the Lord has
given us

if you are scraping by to pay rent and formula and diapers for your baby...no one
here is asking you to give...more likely we will be asking you to
receive...for you have a need

v13 not that other men be eased and ye burdened:
Christian giving is to be selfless and sacrificial...because Jesus gave selflessly
and sacrificially
David (2 Sam 24:24) would not give that which cost him nothing...he had
a heart after God's
but it is not God's intent to drive you into the poor house.
Nor is it His intent that you go into debt to give.
Give of your abundance...don't give yourself into poverty...or into debt

v14 an equality...your abundance...their want...their abundance...your want:
"I'm receiving an offering for them now. Who knows what tomorrow brings...
I may be receiving an offering for you...it'll all even out."
Today you may have abundance...but tomorrow you may be in need...
Today you may be in need...but tomorrow you may have abundance
In the Body of Christ, those parts who are in abundance help those parts who are
in need...and who is who changes over time

The Body of Christ demonstrates its love one for another by its giving to those in
need...the world shall know we are His disciples by our love

Gal 6:10

e.g. we will rally around the Castillo's...

give of ourselves

prayer

comfort and encouragement

shoulders to lean on

ears to listen

give of our resources (if led to take children, open their house...)

money

bedding

clothing

food

Note: a Christian gift is not always money

Help comes in other ways, too – things, time, etc

In the past we have helped some financially...when in hindsight the help

really needed was not financial assistance but financial advise and

direction...if you catch the distinction...or goods vs money

we have erred on the side of generosity...

v15 gathered much had nothing over...gathered little had no lack:
God is at work behind the scenes equaling things out, providing for all

v19 this grace:
the gift from the Gentile churches that Paul is taking to the church in Jerusalem

to the glory of the same Lord:
the purpose of giving is

- to meet the needs of all parts of the Body
- to give glory to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body

When Christian giving pours forth from a loving heart...when those with surplus minister to those in deficit...the whole Body shouts “PTL!”

the ultimate purpose of Christian giving is to praise the Lord...to worship the Lord...Who first gave to us

v20-22 no man should blame us...now much more diligent:

the subject is the offering of the Gentile churches in Asia to the Jewish church in Jerusalem...the issue is still stewardship...over the Lord’s money

Never one to make money an issue, Paul wanted to avoid even the appearance of evil...so he was very careful and very diligent to be above reproach when it came to handling the offerings.

So, Paul did not handle the money...others have joined him from the Gentile churches and they are handling the Lord’s money...with Paul’s oversight.

Money is a great corrupter of the heart of man...”The love of money is the root of all evil”...money tests our hearts

so we as individuals and as a Body must be very careful when it comes to money. The offering is the Lord’s...to be used for His glory...His work...His will

At the church, handling the offerings is an awesome responsibility, to be done by

- highly trusted individuals of great personal integrity...
- those who are skilled with money...but not “in love” with money...
- those who love the Lord with their whole heart.

The Lord has raised up faithful stewards to help me handle God’s money, I no longer handle the money...but I oversee that ministry.

And I say, “PTL!”

The offering is the Lord’s. We give to Him...to do His work...for His glory And...God sees everything we do with His resources!

Knowing the offering is the Lord’s, the sense of responsibility is heightened and the diligence is intensified...because of the trust given by the Body and by the Head of the Body

the Lord Himself gave us a lesson in diligence – the feeding of the 5000

at the end, He instructed His disciples to gather up the scraps...12 baskets

Why? The Creator of the universe wastes nothing

Monica...”What is that squeaking noise?”.....frugal...waste nothing

v24 the proof of your love:

“Prove your love by your giving...live up to our boasting.”

Did Paul care about their money? No more than God did...He cares about our heart

Giving is a reflection of your heart...

- act of worship of the Lord
- act of love for others

James 2:15-16

Giving of yourself to others....with a willing mind...is proof of your love.

Being diligent in your walk with Christ includes being diligent in giving

2 Corinthians Chapter 9

v1-2 the ministering of the saints...your zeal:

“I don’t really need to tell you these things...I already know that you have giving hearts.”

Paul knows they will give lovingly and zealously

They were ready to participate in this offering a year ago...Paul had been boasting of them in the other churches

And their zeal for giving inspired others to give too

“But now is the time to live up to your billing...and my confidence in you.”

v5 be ready:

“Be ready. Give your gift before I get there. Give when your heart is settled. Don’t wait until I get there...and you feel pressured to give.”

Remember...motive counts

The Lord wants us to give because we love Him and we desire to participate in what He is doing...

He will not honor a gift that the giver covets after...his heart is in the wrong place

Don’t give emotionally...your emotions are unstable

Christian giving is to be thoughtful...and prayerful

Consider the Lord’s blessings.

Consider your needs (vs wants)...

Consider the needs of others...

seek the Lord’s guidance...

obey, walking by faith and not by sight

v6 sow...reap...sparingly...bountifully:

In Christian giving, there is a spiritual law at work...this law works...as certainly as the law of gravity works

the Law of Sowing and Reaping

1. what you sow you will reap

if sow corn, will reap corn; if sow apples, will reap apples

if you sow lies, you will reap lies

if you sow Truth, you will reap Truth

Gal 6:7-8

If you sow a little, you will reap a little

If you sow much, you will reap much

2. the harvest is always after the sowing

we are diligently sowing the Word into this community...the harvest comes later...

in your daily reading, you are sowing the Word of God into your heart...the harvest will follow

there is no such thing as “instant fruit”...harvesting comes after perseverance...endurance...waiting while the Lord works

3. you always reap more than you sow

1 apple seed can result in thousands upon thousands of apples

Hosea 8:7a

If we honor God with our substance, we will reap much more in eternity...and He will make sure we have plenty until then

Don't just apply the Law of Sowing and Reaping financially...because it is so **much broader** than that as we bear each other's burdens

- your ear
- your sweat
- your time

(Note: and personally...

Men's and Women's studies, prayer meetings

Daily reading)

- yourselves

E.G. Talking with a couple in the Body...they made a decision to sow at home

Working mom would quit and stay home with the children...

a thoughtful decision by a financially stretched couple

“We have more money now than when she was working! We don't have to worry about groceries any more.”...

a step of faith...honored by the Lord our Provider

God's principles of Christian giving work...the Law of Sowing and Reaping works...supernaturally!

v7 cheerful giver:

this is the key to Christian giving – a willing mind and a cheerful heart...a glad heart...giving to give, not to get...giving to thank God and to bless another

do not give

- grudgingly...
"Fine! Here, take it! Ras-a-fras..."
- "legally"...
"I must tithe 10%...I must tithe to be a member in good standing"
- when you feel pressured...
"Gosh, everybody is looking...
the minister keeps telling me to dig deep and everybody else is digging..."

Give only when you can do so joyfully...with a glad heart

Jesus Christ's giving to us is an act of love...

Our giving back to Him is an act of worship and thanks and love...never an obligation...it's part of our relationship with Him

If you cannot give cheerfully...don't give.

God doesn't need it...He doesn't want it...He won't honor it

Such worship is not pleasing to Him...it does not reflect His heart

For example, somebody does you wrong...

"Well, I'M SORRY!" (with an attitude)

Do you accept the apology? No...it wasn't heartfelt

The same holds with Christian giving...

If the giving is not heartfelt, don't give.

v8 sufficiency in all things:

if you cheerfully give to God with a willing heart, He will see to it that you are taken care of

Q: Can I afford to give...or...can I afford to NOT give?!

If I lay up treasure for myself, I will never have enough

But if I lay up treasure for the Lord, I will have plenty

v9-10 multiply your seed sown:

just as the Lord multiplies one seed of grain into many, so does He multiply our offerings...and our blessings...when we gladly give from the heart

the 2 fishes and 5 loaves cheerfully given...and were supernaturally multiplied so that none were in need

v11-12 thanksgiving to God:

His faithful provision and His multiplication of our gifts...”every thing...all bountifulness”...results in our

- praising Him
- giving Him thanks
- worshipping Him

our giving is a reflection of our gratitude to a loving Father

the dynamics of Christian giving...starts with God and ends with God

1. God meets the needs of people...
2. people give thanks to God

v13 experiment:

“proving”

God’s way works...prove it to yourself...open up your heart to His love and by your giving be a funnel of that love to others

the Church, when submissive to God’s way, is a witness to the world of how a healthy society works...and why...the love of God poured out on men

v14 by their prayer for you:

who got the better of the deal?

The Jewish church for their financial gift from the Gentile churches...or the Gentile churches for their spiritual gift from the Jewish church?!

v15 God’s unspeakable gift:

the greatest Giver is God

James 1:17

Eph 2:8

our ability to give comes at His cost...His only begotten Son

John 3:16

So, with my eyes on Jesus, how I can not give cheerfully?

The issue of Christian giving is one of trust...

Can the Lord trust you with His resources?

...and love.

How generous and free and loving are you with that which He has so generously and freely and lovingly given you?

Basic principals of Christian giving: (write down since will be a VERY long time before we pass thru 2 Cor 8-9 again!)

- 1. Give willingly and cheerfully (8:3, 8:12, 9:7)**
- 2. Giving is proof of the sincerity of your love and it glorifies God (8:8, 9:13)**
- 3. What goes around comes around; you may not be in need now but you may be later. Give while you are able, receive when you need (8:13-15)**
- 4. Be diligent...thoughtful and prayerful...in giving (8:22, 9:7)**
- 5. Know the spiritual Law of Sowing and Reaping...but it applies to much more than money (9:6)**
- 6. Jesus is our model of sacrificial giving (8:9, 9:15)...and you cannot out-give God (9:8-10)**

2 Corinthians Chapter 10

In Ch 10-12, Paul addresses some problems in the church

First and foremost is the problem of false teachers who followed him to Corinth...after he established the church there and the Lord moved him on to plant other churches

- they subverted the Gospel
- they attacked Paul in order to make themselves look better to the people

Paul is going back to deal with these problems. Specifically the false teachers harming the flock

v1 the meekness and gentleness of Christ...am base among you:

a cynic is one who thinks people act out of self-interest...

Paul is being cynical here

the false teachers were continually tearing Paul down...he knows what they are saying about him

one of the things they were saying is,

“That Paul is meek and mild-mannered (base) when he is with you, but when he is gone he thunders (bold) at you through his letters. His true nature comes out in his letters. He is all bark in his letters, but no bite in person...courageous when he is gone, a coward when he is here.”

A false accusation.

Paul always came to serve, never to lord over the people.

This church had problems and Paul loved them too much to look the other way

they needed instruction and correction...so he gave it to them...firmly, strongly, without compromise...just as Jesus would give it to them...whether he was present or absent

Paul was not coming back in an uproar...he was not going to damage this fellowship like a raging bull in a china shop...because he was being personally attacked

his focus is his love for the Corinthians...not his righteous anger toward the false teachers

a Spirit-led man, he is coming as Jesus would come, with meekness and gentleness...and self-control (perhaps the “hardest”, huh?)

Gal 5:22-23

v2 I am present with that confidence:

“I am not a rabid dog in my letters or in your presence...although perhaps I should be with those false teachers!”

Paul ministered by the power of the Holy Spirit, a man to be reckoned with...

he was no one's pushover...he was not an empty suit

Acts 13:6-11

Acts 23:1-4

2 Tim 4:14

Paul had power! But he didn't want to exercise that power when he came to

Corinth...he wanted to enjoy the fellowship with his beloved church

v3 do not war after the flesh:

the false teachers are a problem...but they are not the enemy

Eph 6:12

We live in the flesh...we struggle in the flesh...but the real battles are spiritual

In the flesh...we are defeated...no match for Satan

In the Spirit...we have victory...Satan is no match for us...because Jesus

Christ has defeated Satan

In the realm of the Spirit we have victory

Every Christian struggles against the flesh...but be wise!

Don't be drawn into the realm of the flesh...by pride...or the lusts of the
flesh...or by run-away emotions

We all need more of Jesus and less of us

Gal 5:16-18

It's war...choose wisely where to walk and where to fight...in the spirit

v4-5 our weapons:

we have weapons with which to fight in the Spirit...VERY effective weapons

1. pull down strongholds
2. cast down imaginations
3. cast down every high thing opposed to God
4. taking every thought captive so we can obey Jesus

Both “casting down” and “pulling down” = “demolishing”

construction projects start with...demolition...the tearing down of the old and useless and the dangerous

Strongholds: fortified castles

Imaginations: evil thoughts

Gen 6:5 grieved...the thoughts of the heart only evil continually

Gen 8:21 imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth

Rom 1:21 vain in their imaginations, foolish heart was darkened

take captive (“prisoner of war”) every thought...detain it in an isolated camp far away where it cannot harm you

if the thought matures...runs around loose...it becomes sin...and seeks your destruction

after we realize that we are in the midst of a ferocious battle...after we put on the armor of God...we must realize we are heavily armed with very effective weapons...and dangerous to our enemy!

We don't have to cower and hide...we can march forward to reclaim stolen territory

we are the ones who are armed and dangerous!

What are these mighty weapons?

1. Prayer
2. the Word of God

- Prayer should be our first response...not our last resort
Luke 18:1 we ought to always pray and not faint
e.g. Parents in a prayer vigil during school bus missing in PA.

So why don't we use this weapon...as quickly as we use our tongue?

1. Stubborn self-sufficiency...aka Pride...
2. Unlearned...we must learn to grow up spiritually

Pray more than you talk...alone...at home...and

Come learn...come join the battle at the prayer meetings

Note: the Law of Sowing and Reaping applies to prayer

1. you shall reap what you sow
2. the harvest comes after the sowing
3. you will reap more than you sow

- The Word of God

Heb 4:12

The Word is the Light that causes the darkness to flee

know the Word so well that when you are prideful...or facing a temptation of the flesh...or a run-away emotion...you know what to say and do...you fight with the sword God has given you

to get the Word out to fight, you must first put it in!

one of reasons daily reading is so important

Note: the Law of Sowing and Reaping also applies to the Word

you should know the Word better than you know anything else...including your profession

The strongholds of the enemy cannot stand against prayer and the Word of God... all we need to do is march forward...use the weapons we have been given.

Matt 16:18

Remember, the battlefield of the spiritual war is our mind and heart

In the world around us are many opportunities to pollute your mind

Self-help books and programs to inflate Pride

Billboards and Magazines

Television and Movies

Internet surfing to enflame lust of the flesh

Do not let the things of the world stay in your mind...or you might entertain them and fantasize about them...and maybe even seek to make those fantasies a reality

thoughts are the enemy's toehold...that can become a foothold or a stronghold we must guard our mind...it is a target of the enemy

Jer 23:16-17 a lie from the pit of hell

When we think "in the flesh", our thoughts end up being evil

But the born-again believer can choose to think "in the Spirit", which means taking every thought captive...washing it with the water of the word...

if evil thoughts, putting them "in jail"

if good thoughts (honor the Lord), cling to them...

and choosing to think on the Word and will of God

Phil 4:8

Eph 4:29

Ps 1:1-3

in these times in which we live...on the cutting edge of the return of Jesus Christ...every believer has 3 priceless assets

1. the Word of God
2. prayer
3. Godly friends

Both Men's and Women's studies this week touched on Godly counsel...and Godly friends

A friend is someone you go to for

- Help
- Comfort
- Strength
- Advise and counsel for a situation in your life

In 1 Sam 10:26....but...1 Sam 15:22-23...and by time get to 1 Sam 19:1... except his son Jonathan...a Godly man

What is a Godly friend?

someone who will

- Pray with you...pray for you
- Help you search the Word to get God's counsel
- be used by the Lord to meet a spiritual need...not just an emotional need
- a believer...to help you fight the spiritual battle

the believer is a 3D person...the unbeliever is a 2D person

life, the power of God, truth, peace, joy...all reside in the 3D

Jesus is I AM...

- the answer to our every question
- the solution to our every problem
- the satisfaction of our every need
- the Way, the Truth, the Life

You simply cannot get what Jesus says or what Jesus can do from a friend that does not have Jesus in their heart...any more than you cannot get orange juice out of a raisin

we are engaged in a real war...spiritual war

the time is urgent

the battlefield is our mind and our heart

Our best friend is the Creator of the universe...Who heals and transforms our mind and heart into His image...Who gives us victory in every situation

Do your friends help you to hear His voice? Help you to obey His voice?

Only a 3D friend can...

Love as Jesus loves your 2D friends...but don't seek their advice

We need Jesus...your 2D friends need Him even more!

Seek Godly advice from Godly friends the Lord has surrounded you with

v6 readiness to revenge all disobedience:

“When I get there, I am going to take care of business!”

Paul will be ready to enforce Church discipline...to not compromise with sin
and keep the Body holy...and healthy

v7 look...outward appearance...let him of himself think this again:

“Tell those false teachers think they are of Christ...yet they tear me down. Let
them also record in their description of me that I am Christ’s servant.”

the false teachers attacked Paul’s physical appearance
according to extra-Biblical historical sources, Paul was not an imposing physical
person

- slight/short
- hooked nose
- eye problem that caused him to squint a lot

We cannot tell the contents of a book by looking at its cover

- what looks powerful...may be superficial and light
- what looks anemic...may be deep and broad

therefore, we cannot judge another man’s heart...but we are to inspect fruit...
and when we do we should err on the side of grace and mercy
(God’s heart), not on the side of judgment (which makes our flesh feel
good!)

v8-9 Lord has given us for edification and not for your destruction:

Paul is again affirming the apostolic authority he received from the Lord
Jesus commissioned Paul to edify the Church...not to terrorize, judge, condemn,
or destroy it

the false teachers were accusing Paul of using his letters to terrorize and destroy
the church at Corinth

Paul’s first letter was heavy and tough...but written with a broken heart and many
tears...so the Corinthians would get right with the Lord

Sometimes the Word of God is heavy and tough...even divisive...Matt 10:34-39
but it is a Love Letter written is that we would get right and stay right with
the Lord

v10 bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible:
 Paul is attacked personally by the false teachers...being torn down to make
 themselves look better in the eyes of the people

Paul was not loud or imposing. He was humble and meek...useful

Paul's letters were powerful exhortations from God to the Church...but God's
chosen messenger was a small weak man with an irritating, squeaky
voice...and natural man attacked the outward appearance

v11 such will we be in deed:

“Let it be known right now...I will be in person as I have been in my letter –

- bold, but broken hearted...
- encouraging but never compromising or condemning...
- seeking the Lord's will and never my own.

And I will deal with you false teachers!”

no one in their right mind would want a showdown with the Apostle Paul!

v12 commend themselves...measuring themselves by themselves:

“These guys build each other up...they do not seek to glorify the Lord. And they
compare their acceptability to God by comparing themselves to...each
other...not God's standard, Jesus Christ.”

“I stand against that and will deal with this self-righteous cliché. They will harm
you because they are not wise in the ways of the Lord.”

This is an important warning

The righteousness of the self-righteous is in themselves...

the righteousness of the poor in spirit is in the Lord

it is easy to think highly of myself when I am among the drug-wasted homeless or
when I am in a county jail...but...it is impossible to feel highly of myself
in the presence of the Lord...because in God's eyes am I no different from
them and I fall woefully short of Jesus

who does this, measure themselves against themselves?

- Joiners that want to be cool (fads, fashions, peer pressure help to
identify them)
- Religions
- You and me...tend to be this way...in our flesh

Heed the warning...properly compare yourselves

Regardless of how we appear on the outside...the only thing that really matters is
a heart that loves Jesus

v13-16 boast of things without our measure:

the false teachers were boasting of things that were not really true...exaggerating to make themselves look better than the others...and boasting of things others did, not them

Note: some would say this is just “stretching the truth”
problem is that the truth is not elastic...it is absolute

The false teachers moved into a ready-made congregation when Paul left, continuing on his Spirit-led journey to the Gentiles they tried to “build” where they had not been called...they were living off the flock, not giving life to the flock

Lesson: Wolves...false teachers...go where another man has worked...because there are sheep there!

Wolves do not go where no man has gone before...because there are no sheep there!

measure of rule:

Paul is speaking only of what God is doing in the sphere of influence given him.

Paul's sphere of influence is the areas where he was sent to share the Gospel...and he did not go build on another man's foundation

Then Paul sent others out to share the Gospel e.g. Timothy, Titus, who were given a sphere of influence by the Lord.

Their spheres of influence were related to Paul's sphere of influence.

i.e. Paul's sphere of influence grew through them

And when Timothy and Titus sent people out...and so it goes.

Consider the sphere of influence God has given to Chuck Smith, for example...

But his is related to the Apostle Paul's....

The Lord has faithfully and wondrously multiplied the seed of His love sown by a faithful and loving heart!

What about your sphere of influence?

- Your children...who go out into the neighborhood and to school...
- Bible discussions over a cup of coffee with other moms...who may move away and look for or start that themselves
- Bible discussions over a cup of coffee at work...that may lead to a Bible study at lunch time...and someone may change jobs and start a Bible study at the new job...etc

See how this Sowing and Reaping works?

v17 he that glorieth

Jer 9:23-24

so no man can boast in himself. The Lord has done all the multiplication and all the increase belongs to Him...and ALL the glory

Jesus has given His righteousness to me!

So I will boast in Him.

Remember... the proud shall be humbled and the humble shall be exalted

v18 himself is approved...the Lord commendeth:

I am not approved because I approve myself...

but because God approves me

I am not approved by what I do (Is 64:6)...

only by what Jesus has done (2 Cor 5:21)

by grace thru faith, our approval is established – we are God's children

We work to accomplish His purpose...not to gain His approval

This should be the primary concern of my heart...

- Is my life useful to God? Especially in these times!
- I do not answer to men, I answer to the Lord...
What does He think? What does He want?

My I by

- prayer
- Word of God
- Godly counsel from Godly friends

hear what Jesus thinks and what Jesus wants to do thru me

2 Corinthians Chapter 11

Paul continues addressing the problem of the false teachers in Corinth...who were

- Substituting a gospel of works for the Gospel of Grace
- Making themselves look better by discrediting Paul
- Abusing the people...not loving them
- Were fleecing the flock...not feeding the flock

v1 bear with me a little:

“Humor me, would you? The false teachers love to boast of themselves...let me tell you a little bit about myself. It is of the utmost importance, so please kindly bear with me.”

Paul then sets out to paint a picture of his ...

- His style of ministry
- His sacrifice unto the Lord for them...why would he do this ministry and endure what he did? Must be the love of Jesus that drives him
- His love for them

With this picture the Corinthians can contrast to that of the sacrifice of the false teachers...who are raking them over the coals for money

v2 I am jealous...with godly jealousy:
jealous = "to have warm feelings for, to desire"
jealousy = "zealousness as a husband for his wife"

espoused:

Paul is saying his role as father to prepare the Bride (the Church) and give her
away to the Bridegroom (Jesus)
1 Cor 4:15

in that culture, marriages were arranged and it was the father's responsibility to
present his daughter as a virgin
The Church is the Bride of Christ - a virgin, not a wife yet – and will be presented
to the Son by the Father
Eph 5:25-32

the intense time of commitment (1 year) of a couple after engagement,
before the marriage ceremony

Chaste virgin:

"clean, innocent, modest, pure, perfect" woman who has known no other man

Q: Given all their problems...would you say this about the Corinthian church?

The chaste virgin is the church that, though it stumbles and falls and struggles in
the flesh, it clings spiritually to Jesus Christ
those that chase after idols are called "whores" by God
purity is a spiritual quality
purity is not by of our works...but by of Jesus' work...and by God's grace

What an incredible encouragement to us as we struggle in this flesh!
If we confess our sins and repent, God sees us as a pure virgin
Is 1:18
Ps 103:8-14

Wow! That is how the Lord looks at us!

v3 But I fear...serpent beguiled Eve:
"But I am afraid you will be defiled, polluted."
Just like Eve was in the Garden

Satan deceived Eve, not Adam.
But God gave His Word to Adam, so Adam chose to follow Eve into sin
1 Tim 2:14

Satan slanders God in the midst of tough situations and kicks us when we are
down and hurting

Gen 3 slanders God to man

Job 1-2 slanders man to God

result...2 Cor 4:3-4

but... Matt 4 ends up speechless as he faces both man and God!

simplicity that is in Christ:

where does the corruption and defilement take root? In your mind
our minds must be guarded from attack

We are so

- Ready to receive something different than the simple truth God has given us...
- Prone to complicate the Gospel
It is easy to complicate the simple...
It is difficult to stay simple

the gospel of Christ is so simple (1 Cor 15:3-4) – just accept God's gift of love
and grace - that natural man cannot accept it.

"There must be something I can do to earn this..."

it is amazing the requirements man can add to God's grace...
to make salvation something earned...something impossible
to turn a relationship into a religion (fig leaves)

the false teachers were attacking the simple truth of God's grace...they were
poisoning the well of Living Water with religion in order to control the
people and to enrich themselves

In light of John 19:30, what can possibly be done?

Religion is blasphemous.

v4 another Jesus...another Spirit...another Gospel:
another Jesus: the Jesus revealed in NT is God Almighty in human form
every cult denies the deity of Jesus Christ
JWs: Jesus is Michael the Archangel...not God Almighty
Mormons: Jesus is the brother of Lucifer...not God Almighty

Another Gospel = Jesus Plus
Anything added to Jesus and him crucified is another Gospel
Gal 1:6-9

“I came to you preaching the true Gospel...
I led you into a saving faith in Jesus Christ...
You were indwelt by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit to
do the Lord’s work and will.
But in my absence you listen to someone who is putting you in bondage!”

v5 whit:
“They have gotten your ear and into your minds by saying I am a self-appointed
apostle. The Lord Himself sent me and empowers me. I am no less an
apostle than the other 11.”

v6 rude in speech:
another accusation against Paul...“an idiot, an ignoramous, unlearned”
of “reasoning or speaking”

ironically, this accusation is grounded in ignorance because

- Paul was a brilliant, very highly educated man.
Acts 26:24 Festus: Your much learning has made you mad.”
A Beautiful Mind
- That which Paul spoke of was apparent, even in their midst...he was
an open book before all eyes
 1. he lived the Gospel he preached
 2. he demonstrated the power of God in his life

v7 Have I committed an offense:
“Did I stumble you by freely preaching the gift of God’s grace?
Are you offended that I didn’t come asking for money?
I came as a servant to minister to you...if I had charged admission to my Bible
studies would you have held more tightly to my message?”

v8-9 I robbed other churches...brethren ...supplied...will I keep myself:
Paul was a missionary...sent out and supported by other churches
he received financial support from other churches so that he would not
have to ask the Corinthians for support while he was planting the
church there.
Money is time. Other churches gave Paul time to work the soil and sow the Seed.

Because money was not an issue with Paul, the Corinthians were able to see that
his motives were pure and his love unconditional...he wasn't in it for the
money, that's for sure!

Paul, obviously is building a case to contrast his ministry with that of the false
teachers

v10 no man shall stop me of this boasting:
so Paul is saying, "I have not ever taken any money from you for my needs and I
am not going to start now.
"You cannot say that I ripped you off...nor will you be able to say that."
"I loved you...with no strings attached...no purse strings, that is."

v11 because I love you?:
"Did I not ask for money because I don't love you?
God knows my heart, my motives...how much I love you."

I am not in the ministry for the money...this is not a career path that leads to
financial independence or early retirement

I am here because I love

- The Lord
- The Word of God
- God's people
- You

Monica shows me she loves me by investing time and effort into a
healthy meal...and I eat it with relish...and am healthy!

I show you that I love you by investing time and effort into
preparing a healthy meal for you on Sunday AM

- meaty...something to stick to your ribs
- the entire counsel of God

and for the men on Tuesday PM...Monica on Thurs...

I am here because the Lord called me into the ministry...serving Him Who loved
me when I was His enemy is my reward

the Corinthians should have seen how much Paul loved them by how well they
"ate" vs the false teachers

v12 occasion

= “opportunity”

“I will destroy the opportunities the lovers of money now have to make merchandise of you. My way of ministry is God’s way...I follow His heart. Their way of ministry is man’s way...who follows the money.”

“If they are sincere in their love for you, let them stop taking your money...let them be as I am.”

Q: Would they stay without the money?

A: Money reveals the true colors of a man

v13-15 false apostles...transformed:

Paul takes his gloves off here and levels a very strong accusation against the false teachers – so that there is no misunderstanding!

Satan is a

- Deceiver
- Slanderer
- Liar
- Murderer
- Destroyer
- Counterfeiter

Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.

Lucifer, The Shining One, was the most beautiful of God’s creatures

The deceiver is very dangerous to those

- who don’t know Jesus
- who don’t know God’s Word
- who don’t test all things (words and works) against God’s Word

and like their father, the false teachers also transform themselves into what appears on the outside to be holy men of God

they are subtle and clever counterfeits who so easily prey on the spiritually undiscerning....

- learn the lingo
- imitate an attitude
- put on airs of spirituality
- claiming to be so close to the Lord when in fact they are so far away.

the Mormons and the JW’s look good and sound good

But though they can fool men, they cannot fool the Lord

What should every individual do?

- Use the spiritual weapons we have been given
- Be a Berean
- Put your faith and loyalty in Jesus, not in any man or in any denomination

v16-19 let no man think me a fool...you suffer fools gladly:

“I am nobody’s fool...save Jesus Christ’s.”

suffer = “allow”

Paul is being sarcastic...the Corinthians were very impressed by the glorious tales of the false teachers

“Fools (those who refuse God’s instruction) come to you and you receive them!

You should be able to see with discernment and show them the front door!”

if you are in the Word consistently and deeply, you will not be fooled by a false teacher

you will know the Truth so well that you can immediately recognize the counterfeit...just ask any bank teller...

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

1 Tim 4:1

v20 for you suffer if a man...:

you allow a foolish man to:

- bring you into bondage...legalism...self-righteousness
- devour you...feeds on you...taking advantage of you
- take of you...feeds off you...rip you off
- exalt himself...above you...puts you down...even though Rom 8:1
- smite you in the face...pushes you around, bullies you

every religion is filled with defenseless sheep blindly following a controlling leader, not searching the Word themselves

“You cannot read the Bible for yourself...you must be trained to interpret it...so we will interpret it for you”...

and they hand out tiny morsels (for show) , never a full meal (so can grow)

v21 I am bold also:

“I am looked upon with disdain by the false teachers...they have assassinated my character and smeared my reputation. But listen up! Do not confuse “meek” with “weak”! None is more bold than me.”

Meek: power under control...fruit of the Spirit (a spiritual quality)
During His “trials” and crucifixion Jesus demonstrated the ultimate
in meekness

Weak: no strength...the human condition
But the all-powerful God most certainly does not lack strength
Is 40:28-30, Is 41:10
and neither are His children
Phil 4:13
The Lord is my strength

Is meek easy? Not for natural man because meekness is a fruit of the Spirit
Is weak? Oh yeah

v22-28 Are they...I am more:

none had the pedigree nor the track record of Paul

Paul lays out his unmatched qualifications...proof of his love for them and for the Lord.

The sincerity of his heart can be seen on his body...what about the false teachers?

1. Jewish – check! (the early church was Jewish, Paul always went to the Jews first)
2. Servants of Christ – here we have a wide disparity that speaks volumes of the contrast in hearts and motives

- labours – trouble, sorrow – unlike what they know
- stripes – physical wounds, whippings – too many to count (v24 just a sample)
- prisons – imprisonment and chains for the Truth – were they ever?
- Deaths – near death...stoned to death in Lystra – they have not gone here
- Scourged – 5 times...195 whip marks on his back – unscarred backs
- Beaten with rods – caned...had a baseball bat taken to him...any broken bones? – how about them?
- Stoned
- Shipwrecked...even overnight
- Have taken many journeys to remote places to share the Gospel....they went to a ready-made congregation

- Many types of perils – danger everywhere...willingly walked into dangerous situations to share the love of Christ – who is weak and timid? They would have been paralyzed by fear...while he was moving by faith
- Weariness – always trouble and sorrow
- Painfulness – hardship...nothing was easy – but theirs is a life on Easy Street
- Watchings – sleeplessness...never enough sleep
- Hunger and thirst – the needs of the flesh going unmet – they are always well-fed and never thirsty
- Fastings – purposeful denial of the flesh to focus on the spiritual
- Cold and nakedness – clothes wearing out, not enough clothing in the winter...”camping” while on the road
- Continual concern for the Church, every fellowship

Got problems? Consider the Apostle Paul...

all these things happened to Paul between Acts 9 and Acts 19...when he wrote this letter

We have no record of these things!

Not included are the things that happened to him on the way to Rome

And Paul was shown these things in advance (Acts 9:15-16) !!!

Truly, he counted the cost...and the Lord knew how much he could bear

1 Cor 10:13

v29 Who is weak:

“So let’s reconsider.

- Who is weak – me or them?
- Who has been offended – me or them?
- Therefore...who is a false teacher – me or them?

So just what is their self-righteousness based on?!”

burn:

“indignant”

v30 I will glory of...infirmities:

the only area to boast in are my weaknesses, for then Christ is strong

2 Cor 12:7-10

“My track record speaks of my love for you, my sincerity of purpose, my genuine call of the Lord – for who would or could endure all these things without the love of the Lord driving them?”

v31 God...knows that I lie not:

“God is my witness. Go listen to what He has to say.”

v32-33 in Damascus...:

“Oh yeah, I was always being chased out of town by people who wanted to kill me because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example....”

2 Corinthians Chapter 12

- v1 It is not expedient...I will come to”
“Truly, it is not profitable for me to boast to you. But you are kinda forcing me to by making me defend the Gospel and my calling..
So I have told you about the sacrifice I have paid to serve the Lord. But that isn’t all.
I have also received many visions and revelations from the Lord.”
- On the road to Damascus (Acts 9)
 - The man that prevented from going into Macedonia initially
 - The Lord in prison in Jerusalem
 - 3 years of personal tutoring by Jesus in the deserts of Arabia
 - ...

- v2-4 I knew a man in Christ...”
“The most incredible of my visions was this one that happened about 14 years ago...”

What happened? Paul, writing of himself, was caught up to heaven
The Bible teaches three heavens:

1. atmosphere
2. stars/universe
3. God’s dwelling place (Paradise)

in Acts 14:19-22, Paul was stoned and left for dead in Lystra
(is treated like he treated Stephen...)
Paul does not know if he died or not, but God knows

But Paul does know that he was “caught up” to God’s dwelling place...
caught up = “*rapturo*” in Latin Vulgate = rapture
raptured, translated like Enoch...but sent back!

1 Thes 4:16-17

Paul was raptured...so he knows what he is talking about

Paul says it would be criminal to try to frame in finite human language the things he saw in heaven

finite human language cannot communicate to the finite human mind what Paul saw and heard in infinity.

There are no words to describe it...words have not been formulated to communicate its beauty

1 Cor 2:9

like trying to communicate an Arizona sunrise or sunset to a man born blind...
how could you describe brilliant color to one who has never seen color?

So any attempt to would do terrible “violence” to Paradise

imagine the boost in faith, strength, courage, peace, urgency, obedience, etc!!!
Because of this experience or vision, Paul was able to take anything the world
threw at him...which we read about last week in Ch 11

this event radically impacted his life – fueling his zeal and giving him a
purpose...a focus...that could not be denied or distracted
Paul feared no man, feared nothing

It is why he could write Rom 8:18

v5 yet of myself I will not glory but in my infirmities:

“I will boast about Him who dwells in the third heaven...but I will not boast of
my meager little self. All I will boast of this side of Paradise is my
weaknesses...and my scars for serving Him Who lives in Paradise.”

v6 I forbear lest any man should think:

“In my pride I desire to boast, but that is foolish. For in truth, I have nothing to
boast of.

So I will keep quiet so as not to stumble any man by drawing attention to me.”

“Don’t think of me as some celebrity or some super saint. I am a man of like
passions as you are.”

Do not put Paul on a pedestal, he cannot save us. No man can save us.

There is only one name under heaven given men to save us – Jesus Christ.

We must guard against putting any man on a pedestal.

v7 lest I should be exalted...the abundance of revelations...there was given to me a thorn:
Who had more revelation of Jesus than Paul? (3 years instruction...visions)
Who was used by the Holy Spirit to write over half the NT?
But, because of that Paradise experience, God needed to humble Paul...to free
him from spiritual pride, which would ruin his ministry.

Thorn = "tent stake"

Not a minor irritant...this is a major malady

We don't know what it is...perhaps we see it in Gal 6:11

But whatever it was, we do know its purpose – to humble Paul

This thorn was given to Paul...by God Himself...in His grace...to prevent Paul
from torpedoing his own ministry

Sometimes God prescribes sickness and affliction for our spiritual good!

irony: Saul of Tarsus was a thorn in the side of the Church before he was
transformed

messenger of Satan to buffet me:

the thorn described another way...or...harassment to go with the tent stake!

"If God loves you, why do you have this stinking thorn? Stop kidding yourself –
God doesn't love you...God cannot forgive you for the things you've
done!"

v8 I besought the Lord thrice:
just as the Lord in His Passion asked the Father three times to take His cup of
suffering away...

v9a My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness:
Paul prayed fervently...and was quiet enough to hear God's answer...and faithful
enough to accept God's answer
after praying three times as Jesus did in the Garden, Paul arrives at the same place
– “Not my will but Your will be done.”
God's will: that we accept the sufficiency of His grace over our own “strength”

In the areas where I know I am weak...where I have fallen before...I already
know I must trust in the Lord and depend upon His strength
in those areas I am much less likely to fall...because I am on alert and I am
clinging to the Lord, who by His grace strengthens me

But...whenever I feel strong, I think I can handle things myself...
and that is where I am most vulnerable to major stumbling or falling...
We deceive ourselves with our strengths – “Oh, I would never do that!”
but no matter how strong I am in a certain area, someday a situation will come
along that is bigger and stronger than me...and I won't be able to handle it
myself
Consider big, strong, boastful Peter before a little servant girl...

Whether we think we are weak or think we are strong...at the end of myself...is
the Lord!

He puts me in circumstances that will take me to the end of myself...

- so He can show me His power...
- so I can see Him more clearly...
- So I can know Him more completely

We prideful creatures can only completely see and truly appreciate the power of
God when we compare it to our strength...which the circumstances of life
reveal to be in truth our weakness, our utter and abject weakness.

God's power is seen by me only in my weakness...

(He will not work and not get the glory)

God strips us of everything we depend on but Himself.

God's grace is all I need.

2 Cor 3:5

“If you rely on yourself, you will get weakness. If you rely on Me, you will get
My strength...you will get grace.”

John 15:5

Phil 4:13

Matt 23:12

(all possible only by grace)

v9b-10 I take pleasure in infirmities:

Because my God is strong in my weaknesses, I can delight in trials and tribulation, in persecutions

Trials are not things to show God how strong I am...but to show me how weak I am...and how strong He is

boast in God's grace...and power...and love...seen more clearly because of our weaknesses and afflictions

when I am weak then I am strong:

"I would rather have the thorn and all my weaknesses and the power of God resting on me...than to be strong and powerful in and of myself without my relationship with the risen Lord."

Jesus is the prize...why we are running this race

- Am I willing to suffer for Him in order to know Him better?
- Is he a greater treasure than the deliverance from the affliction?

A radical truth...strength only in weakness...victory only thru surrender

Is 55:8-9

Zech 4:6

v11 I am a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me:

"I am grieved and wearied that I had to speak about myself, that I had to defend the authority given me.

I spent so much time with you. I invested so much of myself in you...you should commend me to those who attack me."

For in nothing am I behind...though I be nothing:

"I am no less an apostle than the greatest apostle...even though I am nothing."

1 Tim 1:11-17

I am nothing...but Jesus is everything

v12 signs of an apostle:

are there apostles today? No - examine the qualifications: signs, wonders, and miracles...

Heb 2:1-4

Rom 15:17-19

the apostles were also those used by the Holy Spirit to write the NT.

They were given an authority not given today...for Scripture is complete

God chose 12 specific men to be the apostles – there are only 12 names on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:14)

v13 inferior to other churches:

Paul is again being sarcastic:

“Well, excuse me for not being a financial burden to you!”

Where did they get this silly notion?

From the false teachers who fed them this lie in order to open up the people’s wallets for their personal enrichment

Paul was entitled to be supported by them, for the laborer is worthy of his hire, but he chose to not receive their support

v14 I will not be burdensome to you:

“I am coming a third time to you. And just like the other two times, I will support myself, I will not be a financial burden to you. I am not coming to get money from you for myself.

Because I do not care about your money, I care only about you.

I do not love your money, I love you.”

The shepherd’s heart!

And the heart of God is being revealed thru Paul

lay up for:

“I mean, think about it – the kids don’t support the parents, the parents support the kids.”

v15 gladly spend and be spent...less I be loved:

“And I gladly...cheerfully...willingly...freely give all that I have and I that I am to you...even though the more I show you how much I love you, the less you love me.”

A refreshing contrast from so many ministries today...followed by a tremendous heartbreak again, God’s heart (break) is heard thru Paul

the more time you spend loving others the less time you have to love yourself

Matt 16:24

Matt 22:36-40

v16 but be it so:

“But no matter. I do love you and will love you any way.
My love for you is not contingent upon your love for me.”

Again, we see the heart of God...

I caught you with guile:

“My love is not be like a run away train...in your face. It is subtle.
Someday it will ‘dawn on you’ how much I love you.”

v17-18 Did I make a gain...whom I sent unto you:

“I did not rip you off, nor did I sent any one to you that ripped you off.
I sent brothers to you who are like-minded with me.”

Amos 3:3 can two walk together except they be agreed?

Paul is contrasting himself against the false teachers, who have put a major
emphasis on money

2 Peter 2:1-3a

v19 we speak before God...for your edifying:

“Do you think we have to defend ourselves to you? No, we are accountable to
God, not to you. Everything we did and said was to comfort and
strengthen you.”

Christian love is action, not words.

Christian love is sacrificial, not self-centered

The ministry: self-less, God-centered and others-centered

Contrary to the ministry of God are...the false teachers

v20 I fear, lest I come:

“My great fear is that we...me and you...are no longer like-minded. My fear is that I will find you to not be what I desire...and that you find me to not be what you desire. Because if that is so, we will know nothing but trouble.”

Trouble...fruits of the flesh

1. Debates = “quarrels, wranglings, contentions”
2. Envyings = “jealousy”
3. Wraths = “fierce passion, indignation”
4. Strifes = “intrigue”
5. Backbitings = “defamation, evil speaking”
6. Whisperings = “slander, secret detraction”
7. Swellings = “haughtiness, inflation”
8. Tumults = “instability, disorder, confusion, commotion”

v21 lest...I shall bewail many:

“And I fear that when I come again...since you have listened to a false gospel from the lips of false teachers...I will not find the repentance for the sins of which I wrote about in my first letter.”

the unbeliever and the unrepentant backslider should break our heart...not raise our ire. Hate sin but love the sinner.

If you are an unbeliever or an unrepentant backslider, you are wrestling with God...He will win!

2 Corinthians Chapter 13

v1-2 two or three witnesses...told you before...foretell...now I write:
quoting Deut 19:15
Paul has told them three times

He is coming...and he is not going to spare those who are living in sin and those
who are creating divisions

He is going to deal with sin and division (God hates them) head-on...because he
loves them

v3 seek a proof:

Paul steadfastly defends his calling by Jesus Christ – apostle
he is not a self-appointed apostle...he speaks the Word of God
they themselves are the greatest evidence Paul can offer them of his apostleship

“Is Christ speaking thru me?

Consider

- Your lives and what you believed before I was sent to you with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Your lives and your beliefs now.

Has your life changed because of what I have spoken to you?

My thoughts/words/philosophies could effect no such radical,
lasting change.

Only the Word of God, made manifest in the person of Jesus
Christ, changes lives.

Then know that Jesus has sent me with the Word of God to you.

Give Him the glory.”

v4 he was crucified...yet he liveth:

for my weakness, not His own, was Jesus crucified
Phil 2:5-11, John 10:11-18, 1 Cor 15

the very heart of Christianity – the Resurrection...the power of God
Jesus, the Giver of Life, the Source of Life, defeated death

Are you born again? It is because Jesus died and rose again

Without the Resurrection Christianity is just another powerless philosophy

v5 examine...prove...selves:
“Don’t examine me...examine yourselves until I get there.”

examine: take an long, honest, thorough look

- Are you really born again?
Do you know the power of God in your life?
- In whom or what do you trust (go to first)? Jesus or man or self?
Do you walk by sight or by faith?

prove: test...against The Standard...daily

many people hear the Word of God...but don’t do it

James 1:22

self-deception is the most blinding form of deception

the self-deceived

- go to church...
- hear and acknowledge the Word...
- speak the Christian lingo...
- but...live for worldly things...and...live in worldly ways...
- and have deceived themselves into thinking they are OK with the Lord

Matt 7:21-23

Is 1:11-19

the Church, the Bride of Christ, is not something you join...it is something you are born into!

Being a Christian involves having an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ

Know...except ye be reprobates:

“Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are a reprobate?”

know: acknowledge the truth

- there is nothing good in your flesh (Rom 7:14)
- you can do nothing without Jesus (John 15:5)
- when you are weak He is strong (2 Cor 12:9-10)

reprobate = that which is unfit and is rejected, waste

Religion deceives...it sends men to hell

Jesus brings His Bride to heaven with Him

v6 we are not reprobates:

“Examine, prove, know me – apply Acts 17:11, 1 Thes 5:21 to my life

Paul was not just a hearer, but a doer of the Word of God

Our actions speak louder than our words

v7 do no evil, not that we should appear approved:
“Be holy, obedient doers of the Word...to please the Lord, not so we look good.”

Ex.: our kids...PKs.

“You expect us to be perfect so you don’t look bad!”

An attempt to manipulate us...or...a cry caused by intense
pressure of having to live a perfect life.

Oppressive words from Satan, not us or the Lord.

We live in a glass house, they live in the same house.

They sometimes feel enormous pressure. Satan at work...

I discipline them as a loving father, not as a pastor looking to keep a false
front before the church.

And being a pastor does not mean that I “have arrived”

I am a work in process, God’s project.

I am not the perfect parent

When I blow it, I ask the Lord to forgive me and I ask my kids to
forgive me

I am not a spiritual giant and I don’t pretend to be...and I don’t
expect my kids to be.

But...I seek an intimate relationship with the Lord.

I have discovered that He is everything I need

and that He has all the answers to all my questions and needs.

I fervently desire that for my kids...but they must seek their own
relationship with Him.

I want them to be holy and obedient...for the Lord...not for me

Col 3:23

v8 we can do nothing against the truth:

The Truth is going to stand!

- my strength is no match for His
- my ways are trivial compared to His
- my thoughts are so much lower than His
- my wrestling with God is pointless...He always wins
- my unbelief does not change the Truth

It doesn’t matter what man does, God’s will WILL be done

We cannot stop the Truth...but we can work on its behalf

e.g. Jer 16:14-17

so...

- I get out of God’s way, surrendering my will to His.
I quit arguing and fighting and complaining.
- Don’t do what you want to do and ask God to bless it...find out what
the Lord is doing and get involved!

v9 we are glad...we wish...perfection:
Perfection – in maturity of relationship, not in performance

I let Him mature me and mature you.

I am God's project...you are God's project also, not mine

I only minister the Word of God as He leads me...and the Lord matures us thru
His Word

The Lord accomplishes His intended purposes...by using available men

sad story of (Norm Abbott) in my office yesterday – the result of working in one's
own strength and according to the "business plan" of man

v10 I write these things:

"Thankfully, the Lord is leading me to write these things so they can be edifying
to you, which is God's desire.

If I had done it my way, I would have marched into town and taken your heads off
with the fire and zeal the Lord has given me.

So, you also should be thankful that God's will be done, not mine."

The Master is wiser than the servant...the wise servant does all things how and
when the Master wants them done.

v11 final admonitions

1. be perfect – mature i.e. "Grow up! (vs carnal)

2. be of good comfort (John 14:1-3, 18)

3. be of one mind/like-minded (1 Cor 2:16, James 1:8)...not divisive and
unstable

4. live in peace (Rom 12:18, John 14:27)...and have God's peace
Heb 12:14

God of love and peace:

the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3) is the God of love
(1 John 4:8) and peace

only an insane man would not lean on Him and walk with Him

v14	the Trinity:	<u>Person</u>	<u>seek His</u>
		Lord Jesus Christ	grace
		God (the Father)	love
		Holy Spirit	fellowship

compare with Num 6:24-26