

# **Exton Two Day Study**

**2018**

## **2 Corinthians**



Photo: Darryl Smelser



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## Intro and Inter-relation with 1 Corinthians *Patrick Brentlinger*

### Background and Introduction

#### I. Authenticity & Dates:

- A. The apostle Paul is the undisputed author.
- B. The date of writing ranges from AD 56~57.
- C. AD 41-54: Claudius Ceasar reigned

- a. AD ~49: Expelled the Jews

(Acts 18:1; Suetonius, Divus Claudius 25)

- 2. Precluded by banning meetings, clubs, and other acts and associations in the interest of reforming the tumult associated with the Jews.

(Cassius Dio, Roman History 60.6.6-7; F.F. Bruce, 1962)

- 3. Famine took place in his reign (which does not necessarily imply that it ended with his reign).

(Acts 11:28)

- 4. AD 51~52: Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeanus Proconsulate

(Acts 18:12)

- 1) Son of Seneca the Elder & Brother to Seneca the Younger (stoic philosopher)

- b. AD 52: In the 26th acclamation of Caesar (AoC), Claudius refers to Gallio in the Delphi Inscription as “my friend and proconsul”

(The 26th AoC should have occurred in the first seven months of the year 52 as per CIL, iii. 476 & vi. 1256; F.F. Bruce, 1962)

- 1) Possible that Gallio became proconsul in 52 though 51 the more probable date given the thin margin of time between the 26th AoC and the generally accepted start times of proconsuls in July.

- a) If an early spring start time is considered then 52 becomes more probable.

- 2) He took ill “at the close of his consulship” in Achaia and went for a sea voyage to try and recover; this does not logically impact our timeline.

(Pliny, Natural History 31.33; cf. Seneca, Moral Epistles 104.1)

- c. AD 50~51: Founding of the Corinthian church.

- 1) At the latest, Gallio started in July AD 52.

- a) Counting the 18 months Paul worked before standing before Gallio puts Paul’s work in Corinth beginning no later than 51 AD and no earlier than 50 AD.

(Assuming that the 18 months in Acts 18:11 is a chronological accounting which seems to be the case given Luke’s handling of the timing in Acts 18:18.)

- b) Paul leaves Corinth no earlier than 52 and no later than 53, though how long “many days” from Acts 18:18 leaves lots of ambiguity.

- d. AD 53~57 Paul leaves Corinth & starts 3rd missionary journey, working in Ephesus for 3 years writing 1 Corinthians.
  - 1) Leaves Asia (cf. 2 Cor 1:8), goes to Troas then on to Macedonia to find Titus.
  - 2) AD 56~57: Writes 2 Corinthians in Macedonia.
    - a) Afflictions in Asia.  
(2 Cor 1:8)
    - b) Wanted to go to Macedonia through Corinth but couldn't due to their issues.  
(2 Cor 1:15-17, 23-24)
    - c) Goes to Troas to get word from Titus about the Corinthians.  
(2 Cor 2:12)
    - d) Restless to find Titus he goes to Macedonia.  
(2 Cor 2:13, 7:5-6)
    - e) Writes 2 Corinthians upon receiving word from Titus.  
Goes on to Greece and stays 3 months.  
(Acts 20:2-3)
    - f) Returns to Syria via Macedonia due to plot against him.  
(Acts 20:3)

## The God of All Comfort

- I. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 - Comfort From God
  - A. 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 - Trust in God, not ourselves.
    - 1. God will deliver from this body of death.
    - 2. He will raise us from the dead in the final day.
    - 3. He is Faithful to His Promises
    - 4. Promises of 2 Cor 6:15-18.
      - a. God will dwell in us.
      - b. God will walk among us.
      - c. He will be our God and we His people
      - d. He will welcome us.
      - e. He will be as a father to us.
  - B. 2 Corinthians 1:18-22 - God does not vacillate as men do.
    - 1. We have the Spirit as down payment.
    - 2. The vacillations and evil of men cause Paul's sufferings.
- II. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 - Paul's rebuke
  - A. These brethren should have been grieved at the sin of their brother.
  - B. From that grief, they should have put him out from their number.

C. They were in defiance of the commandment of the Lord.

### III. Paul's Heartache

#### A. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 - Paul's instruction

1. Whatever we do in word or deed we must do in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanks through Him to God the Father.
2. We must be thankful to God:
  - a. We have the opportunity to help another.
  - b. That they have an opportunity to repent.
  - c. That we are not alone in their care.
3. Matthew 18:15-20 The commandment of the Lord
  - a. When two or three Christians bear witness to the error of a fellow believer, the Lord is in their in their midst.
  - b. But the Corinthians had failed to do their part.
  - c. The church did nothing.
    - 1) There are a whole lot of do nothing churches out there.
    - 2) The lesson of 1 & 2 Corinthians is more relevant than ever.
  - d. Galatians 6:1-5 - Are we spiritual or not?
    - 1) This is the affliction of Paul.
    - 2) He could see the cancer of sin eating away at his beloved Corinthians.
    - 3) He could not rest until the matter was closed.
    - 4) He prayed and hoped that they would accept the rebuke and be turned.

## 2 Corinthians 2:1-4 - Paul's Sorrow Expressed

- I. Paul is a man like any other.
  - A. But that didn't mean he became numb.
  - B. He didn't stop working on them.
  - C. Paul sees that they are simply sheep straying from the shepherd.
  - D. And so he exhorts, he admonishes, he rebukes, and he even begs.
  - E. Until he knows how they receive his letter he has no rest in his soul.
    1. If not for the Lord it might have consumed him in fear, depression, and conflict.
      - a. The Lord is rich in His mercy and grace.
      - b. He is sufficient for all our true needs.

## **2 Corinthians 7:1-4 & 2 Corinthians 1:12-14 Confidence and Joy**

- I. Paul had conducted himself with the highest integrity.
  - A. The promises of God move him to do so.
- II. Let us make room in our hearts for the gospel that Paul preached.
  - A. The teacher and his students are bound up together.
    - 1. The teacher will be judged by the Lord for what he teaches.
    - 2. The student for what they do with their knowledge.
- III. Paul loves the Corinthians.
  - A. Some would look at the church in Corinth as a lost mess hardly worth the effort.
  - B. 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 - But Paul loves & labors over them.
    - 1. They had come through the trial.
    - 2. They still had a zeal for Paul and his gospel, which is Christ's.

## **Godly Medicine Produces Godly Sorrow In Spiritual People**

- I. 2 Corinthians 7:8-12
  - A. Paul had to tell them of their error.
    - 1. If he didn't tell them then they would suffer loss in the final day before the Lord.
  - B. Godly sorrow produces result:
    - 1. Repentance back toward God
      - a. Vindication of self, proving true to the Way.
      - b. Indignation at one's sinful path.
    - 2. Fear, Longing, and Zeal toward God.
      - a. Avenging of the wrongs done.
  - C. The fleshly minded when called out for their error will rebel and accuse.
- II. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 - Duty done
  - A. The church noted him, handing him over to Satan.
  - B. Much to his credit, he turns back.
  - C. Paul instructs the church to forgive and comfort him.
    - 1. He needs to be strengthened in the God of all comfort.
    - 2. We are a people who should reaffirm the weak in the Lord.
      - a. Study with them.
      - b. Pray with them.
      - c. Encourage their attendance,

- 1) Show them why it is beneficial to them and others. (See Hebrews 3-4:1 and 10:19-25)

III. The Corinthian brethren had come around.

- A. They had realized through action their zeal for Paul, and the way of Christ which he preached.

## **Thank God for Comfort**

I. 2 Corinthians 7:13–16 - Even tumultuous Corinthians are a comfort when faithful

II. 2 Corinthians 2:14–17 - Triumph in the Lord.

A. Let us not be hindered by this reality.

1. To those who love truth, we bring life.
2. To those who do not, we bring death.
3. It is ultimately for them to decide.

B. We are not special in this calling.

1. It is the Lord's strength and comfort that provides our way.
2. We do not sell the word of truth as a hireling.
3. We do not tickle the ears for the kind words of men.

III. We, like Paul, must speak the truth of God in fear and reverence of Him.

A. For our words are before Him, our deeds are before his eyes.

B. Then let us speak in Christ, let us dwell richly in Him and His comforts.

Patrick Brentlinger 35 E. Main St. Clifton Springs, NY 14432 [pbrentlinger@gmail.com](mailto:pbrentlinger@gmail.com)

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## Paul's Fundraising Trip *Dale Smelser*

### Introduction:

- I. Date and Chronology of Third Preaching Tour, events and contacts between Paul and Corinth
- II. Paul's purpose was not simply to satisfy physical needs; II Cor. 9:12-15
  - A. Attitudes and dilatory response of Corinth complicated completion, noted II Cor. 9:3-4
- III. To discover when funds actually obtained by Paul. Not specified.
  - A. Collection complicated as Luke not record all Paul's visits to Corinth
  - B. Nor is all that Paul wrote to them recorded in I & II Corinthians
  - C. Thus all of Paul's movement not on maps of Paul's "Missionary Journeys."
  - D. We know what happened, but details of how and when take investigation
- IV. In text, a good amount of intrigue, back and forth contact, surprising change of attitudes
  - A. In possible solutions, not claim certitude, but reasonable ones
  - B. Lessons in behavior of Corinth, and related actions of Paul
    1. Intriguing story of new saints and problems with saintliness
    2. Interesting observations of earnest efforts of Paul, Titus, Timothy, Apollos
- V. Purpose of Collection (Limited?), A "treasury" authorized? Or, collected at home?
  - A. What implications for congregational co-operation.

### Body:

- I. Purpose in these churches sending to saints in Jerusalem
  - A. Background: Gal. 2:11-13, Jewish reticence
  - B. Action by gentiles, Rom. 15:25-27; Jn. 4:22; expedited aim in Eph. 2, 4:13
  - C. Unifying Expectation: II Cor. 9:11-15
- II. Paul's contacts with the Corinthian church can be reconstructed as follows:
  - A. Dates approximate, students differ by a year or so.
    - B. Paul visits Corinth for the first time, arriving in Corinth in the spring of 50 AD, he stayed there one and one-half years ([Acts 18:11](#)). The only thing mentioned of his early evangelism during this

time is that of reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue while he made tents with Aquilla & Priscilla.

C. When Silas and Timothy came for Macedonia (Acts 17:14) they evidently brought funds for Paul (Acts 18:5; I Thess. 3:6; II Cor. 11:8-9), and afterward he was "constrained by the word." Titus Justus, was converted as was Crispus the ruler of the synagogue, then many (Acts 18:8). There were the accusations before Galilio who cast them aside and the mob attacked Sosthenes.

D. The foundation for the church at Cenchrea, Corinth's eastern port city, which existed late (Rom. 1:16), must have been laid at this time with Paul's shaving his head probably using the port of Cenchrea to depart for Ephesus then home. It was common for ancients (Gen. 28:20) and Jews to make vows and shaving their heads in connection with gratitude or being which existed later must have been it was common for the Jews to make such vows to God, when they had been raised up from sickness, or delivered from danger or calamity. "See Josephus, b. i. 2, 15." Vows of this nature were also made by the Gentiles on occasions of deliverance from any signal calamity. Juvenal Sat. 12, 81. It is possible that Paul may have made such a vow in consequence of signal deliverance from some of the numerous perils to which he was exposed." (Quoted from Barnes).

E. Thus after many days Paul sails for Syria via Ephesus for a brief visit (Acts 18:18-1), taking with him Priscilla & Aquilla. The only thing mentioned of his work during this time is that of reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue. He sails for Caesarea Leaves them there. After greeting the church in Caesarea he travels up to Antioch, completing his 2<sup>nd</sup> preaching tour. Apollos goes to Corinth.

III. In the summer/fall of 54 AD Paul began his 3<sup>rd</sup> preaching tour traveling through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia on this way to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila having remained there while Paul was away ([Acts 18:18-22](#)). While in Ephesus, they met and confirmed Apollos, who when he purposed to go to Corinth, they vouched for him ([Acts 18:24-9:1](#))

A. By the fall of 54 AD, Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8, 19:10, 20:31), and worked there almost three years ([Acts 20:31](#), roughly from the fall of AD 54 to the fall 57). With success teaching in the synagogue for three months, opposition hardened there and for the next 2 years he used the school of Tyrannus as his base, reasoning daily so that the word spread throughout all of Asia among Jews and Greeks.

B. While at Ephesus two things happened regarding Corinth. Paul visits Corinth and writes a lost letter. Though neither is recorded by Luke in Acts they are implied in references.

1. The lost letter. When writing what we recognize as I Corinthians Paul mentions this previous letter (I Cor. 5:9). Some think, "I wrote unto you in my epistle," might simply refer to something earlier in I Corinthians, but are at a loss to say exactly what that might refer to. Besides, in II Corinthians there is mention of Corinth's response previously to "letters." There already had been at least one Letter written besides I Cor. (II Cor. 10:10), and to keep no company with fornicators harmonizes with the impetus for this 2<sup>nd</sup> quick visit (II Cor. 12:21).

2. The unrecorded Visit: The idea necessitated by, when making his final visit for the funds for Jerusalem, it was his third (II Cor. 12:14; 13:1). Not a third *intention*, or coming in two epistles plus one actual presence, for on the way for his visit for their bounty for Jerusalem,

Paul says he had been already *present* with them a *second* time (“as I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time,” II Cor. 13:2). Considering time and geography that second visit to Corinth would have involved a quick sail in the midst of his work at Ephesus during his three year tenure there. For afterward that second time he is still in Asia (Ephesus) when he writes I Corinthians, and sends greetings from Aquila and Prisca with whom he is presumably still associated in Ephesus.

C. The facility of a quick journey is indicated by the frequent contacts recorded between Corinth and Ephesus. Toward the end of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> journey he sailed from Corinth to Ephesus, Apollos leaving Ephesus went to Corinth, Members from Corinth, Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, came to Paul in Ephesus with news from Corinth (I Cor. 16:17), as well as some from Chloe.

D. That brief visit from Ephesus was a painful one – as afterward he was not wishing to come again with sorrow (II Cor. 2:3; 12:21). Pain from members there certainly does not reflect his work there in his first visit there in their beginning. So after that successful presence, there was a painful one, before his arrival following the writing of I & II Corinthians. In I Corinthians he urged a collection for needy saints in Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:1-3), and in II Corinthians urged the completion of it (II Cor. 8-9). Therefore Corinth's disarray, and some in Corinth actually opposing him, delayed his final and third visit (II Cor. 1:23-2:1). But that he clearly expected to see them again is obvious in his purpose to obtain those funds for Jerusalem, but not soon (I Cor. 16:1-6). Another reason for delay, besides avoiding the disarray there which targeted him, is that at Corinth there was some negligence regarding their collection (II Cor. 8:11; 9:1-4).

E. Even the delay brought criticism. A previous planned itinerary is found in II Cor. 1:15-16. Not holding to that plan he was charged with fickleness, whereas it was to spare them. And his altered plan, as he remain in Ephesus, became not putting them first and last, but became Macedonia first, Corinth last (Acts 19:21). But a plot of the Jews evidently planning to interrupt his sailing from there to Syria, led him back up through Macedonia, Troas, Assos, and finally his boarding ship there.

F. The reason for the second visit not being recorded may be accounted for by the fact that it was an unplanned side trip, an interruption to his work at Ephesus, and thus probably brief. For after it and back in Ephesus, from there he had planned to go directly back to Corinth (II Cor. 1:15-16), which they must have known, for this change of plan while still in Ephesus (Acts 19:21- 23), was used to charge him with fickleness (II Cor. 1:17:22). Nevertheless, given the circumstances in Corinth after finishing his work in Ephesus he changed his plan to spare them (II Cor. 2:23). Changing plans he sends ahead Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia (Acts 19:22), with the intent that they proceed to Corinth (I Cor. 4:16-17). Writing this epistle while he remained at Ephesus, he did not know whether they had yet arrived at Corinth (I Cor. 16:10). Some translations say, “if Timothy come.” The verb is 2<sup>nd</sup> aorist subjunctive, stating desire or possibility. Thus Meyer renders it, “if indeed he shall have come.’ But with Timothy's work there, and that of Titus by whom he sent this epistle, Paul was hoping for a better climate to exist by the time he followed them there.

#### IV. Which came first, the unrecorded visit or the lost letter?

A. Did Paul write a “weighty and strong” letter (II Cor. 10:10) and then go weakly and restrained (II Cor. 10:10)?

B. Or did he go, restrained and longsuffering, then pained by response, follow up with a strong letter following information from the house of Chloe and the visit by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Ahaicus, he, responded with I Cor., more comprehensively?

C. If Paul had visited the Corinthians (in the unrecorded/sorrowful visit) *after* he wrote the 'lost' epistle about not keeping company with fornicators, then he would have probably explained their misunderstanding needing the clarification of I Cor. 5:9ff in that visit, rather than needing to explain it in a later letter (our 1 Corinthians). Thus it would appear, appear, that after a short painful visit, Paul wrote a strong exhortation which was not well received by some, and after a visit by members from Corinth with questions from Corinth (I Cor. 7:1ff) he wrote an epistle preceding II Corinthians, a sorrow producing epistle, I Corinthians (II Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8-13).

D. This was probably in the last year of his ministry at Ephesus, in the spring of 57 AD, as he would tarry and spend Pentecost in Ephesus (I Cor. 16:8, 19-20). Late in the next year 58 A.D. would find him in Macedonia and Greece (Corinth, Acts 20:1-2), spending the winter in the latter, and again back through Macedonia where at Troas he was hastening to get back by the next Pentecost (58 A.D.) to Jerusalem with his "bounty" (Acts 20:16).

V. Occasion of the Writing of I Corinthians Indicated:

A. The epistle was likely written after the departure of Timothy and Erastus while Paul was at Ephesus (Acts 19:22), and carried by Titus (cf. 2 Cor 7:12-13). Titus would have gone after the writing of I Corinthians for he went to help with the collection mentioned and is being sent back with the second epistle. After the first epistle the sorrow in some produced repentance (II Cor. 7:9-10), the sorrow in others, challenge (II Cor. 10:1-2, 10-11). But later, Paul having left Ephesus, was disappointed not to find Titus with news at Troas. With Paul on the way Titus meets Paul with enough news of improvement to eliminate the prospect of a visit to Corinth being one of sorrow (II Cor 7:6, 12-13), sends Titus back, and Paul was ready to return (II Cor 7:6; 1:23).

1. I Corinthian epistle sent after Timothy Sent to Corinth: I Cor. 4:16-17

2. When Paul sent it he was not sure Timothy has arrived, I Cor. 16:10.

3. Language clarification: "Now if Timothy come" (subjunctive, desire possibility), thus, "If Timothy be not yet come" Barnes and Robertson.

4. After Timothy had been sent, Paul sent Titus to help encourage Corinth in regard to the collection For Jerusalem mentioned in I Corinthians 16. Leaving Ephesus on his way to Macedonia and Achaia, fearing what he will find at Corinth, Titus meets him in Macedonia. Paul is refreshed and writes II Corinthians and sends Titus back to complete the success in what he had begun (II Cor. 8:6, 16-17), as well as other Corinthian problems about which Titus gives news of improvement (II Cor. 7:5-7).

5. Timothy had not remained in Corinth as he was back up in Macedonia when Paul comes through for is with Paul there when he writes II Corinthians on his way to Corinth (II Cor. 1:1).

6. We are not sure what Timothy accomplished presumably having gone there, but if so, afterward he went back up to Macedonia. Titus did go and remained, met Paul in Macedonia to report and was sent back (II Cor. 8:6, 16-19). Titus is credited with moving things forward (II Cor. 6:6, 13; 8:6).

VI. Paul's previous reticence to visit justifies delay (II Cor. 2:1:12:21). But now urgency necessitates Paul's return. So Paul left Ephesus in the fall of 57 A.D. for Macedonia. He looks for Titus at Troas and does not find him (II Cor 2:12), but a door is opened for him there before he departs into Macedonia where he does find Titus, perhaps at Philippi

VII. Summary of Contact with Corinth Concerns before arriving for Funds:

So, from his base in Ephesus Paul had visited Corinth. He found extensive sin (II Cor. 2:21) He wrote a letter to them, not preserved. Visited by members with news and questions he writes I Corinthians, instructive, ennobling and encouraging, and then scathingly in chapters 3-6, earning the epithet, "sorrowful," after which he takes up their questions. He desperately does not want a repeat of his pain and humiliation of his brief visit from Ephesus (II Cor. 12:21). He has sent Timothy. Afterward he sent Titus and "the other brother" (Luke?). But he still has no word as to the efficacy of his epistle, nor "relief of spirit" (II Cor. 2:13) about what he might find (II Cor. 12). Expecting early on to meet Titus at Troas and find out. Titus is not there. But the gospel is effective there as can be seen later on his return through there. He goes into Macedonia, finds Titus and finally gets the encouraging news that things are improving at Corinth (II Cor. 7:6-16). This occasions Paul *on this way there* writing and sending the encouraging epistle of II Corinthians. After commending good responses in Corinth in the early chapters of II Corinthians, chapters 10-12 though rather seem to repeat the extent of the earlier problem, perhaps, some suggest, the material in the first lost letter, noting the opposition of the Judaizers (7:12; 11:22-23) which had, indeed, created doubts among the congregation about Paul's apostolic authority. However, II Corinthians 10 mentions previous "letters," so being preceded by "letters," chapters 9-12 could not have been a part of the first original letter, unless that statement was parenthetically added.

A. Effects of Paul, Eloquent (Acts 18:23-4) Apollos

1. Paul compelled by mission, goes, confirms brethren, mission accomplished
2. Latter though a following there (1:11), chose not to. (I Cor. 16:12),
3. The steady, un-eloquent Paul successful. The flashiest not always what needed.

VIII. So Paul in Macedonia, almost there, with reassuring news he sends II Cor. back by Titus.

A. Why Titus sent back. To get Corinth to finish their task (II Cor. 8:6, 11), to complete the contribution Paul had urged (II Cor. 9:5). Why not wait until Paul arrives? That they have shown willingness and not wish them to feel they are responding to the coercion of his presence (II Cor. 9:5). These were to assist as Corinth showed in response to them proof of their love, and thus justifying Paul's glorying in them (II Cor. 8:24), their original zeal used to stir up response in the churches of Macedonia.

B. With regard to collection Corinth had been first to make a beginning, to will, now Paul urges they complete the doing – some slack 8:10-11

C. Evidently Titus had helped them – 8:11, and another brother with him, whose praise spread through all churches 8:18, appointed (hand forward) by churches in this matter, IICor. 8:

D. Having churches appoint accompanying messenger avoided cause for suspicion, taking though for things honorable, 9:21

1. Just as Corinth had a say, I Cor. 16:3
2. The other brother, one proven earnest, "who has confidence in you"
3. Titus certified, 8:23, and "our brethren" (of Acts 20:4), identified as "messengers" (apostoloi), those sent by churches as Paul and Barnabas (Act 13; 14:4).
4. So, Titus my fellow worker to you-ward, a brother chosen by churches, a brother who knows you, and brethren who are apostles of churches ("missionaries").
5. This should insure trust. Ready for exhortations to completion, goals, of II Cor. 9

E. So finally, from Macedonia Paul went into "Greece." Thus now, in the winter of 57-58 A.D., Paul a visits the Corinthians for 3<sup>rd</sup> time ([Acts 20:3](#); cf. [2 Cor 12:14](#)).

F. Surely contact also was made with the church at Cenchrea, as he had contact with one of its members, Phoebe, who going to Rome might have carried his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:1-2). She being a "servant" (diakonia) of the church, shows the church there had progressed to having deacons, she a female one.

G. While wintering three months in Corinth, Paul sent his epistle to Rome (Rom. 16:22) Gaius being his host and Erastus being the "oikonomos," steward" (cf. Lk. 12:420) of the city, describe by Robertson and Barclay as "city manager."

H By elimination and opportunity, this also would be when Paul obtained possession of the funds for Jerusalem.

#### IX. The Return by altered Route and Pauls' Companions

A. Remember 1<sup>st</sup> Plan (II Cor. 1:15-1), Corinth, Macedonia, Corinth, Judea, having to alter that (Acts 19:21, Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem), and now danger required foregoing return by ship from Corinth and thus a land exodus through Macedonia (Acts 20:3).

B. So after spending three months in Corinth Paul and his companions intended to sail directly to Syria, aiming to arrive in Jerusalem in time to celebrate Pentecost. Paul changed his plans on hearing of a plot by the Jews in some way related to his plans to sail, and though it was very risky travelling over the long land route back through Macedonia and Asia with all the money Paul had collected. Thus he and the 7 named traveling companions walked the three hundred or so miles to Philippi where Luke joined them ("us," "we," Acts 20:5).

C. There is a puzzle about the companions who traveled with Paul. There are 7 listed in Acts who accompanied him up through Macedonia to Philippi. But beforehand in II Cor. 8:16-24 Paul has sent to Corinth Titus, a brother appointed by the churches to travel with Paul.

D. The two with Titus and he are called "messengers" (II Cor 8:20), or literally, *apostoloi*, apostles of the churches. Probably in the sense that Paul and Barnabas were apostles of the Antioch church, ones sent in the work of evangelism. And commended as such to Corinth in that sense. Thus in their significance to keep their responsibility, it is not necessary to include them in Paul's traveling companions named below. But it is necessary to include *one* of them because he had been individually chosen by churches to travel with Paul. That would indicate that his name is among those listed 7 who with Luke accompanied Paul.

E. But then there is the language in Acts 20:4 about accompaniment only as far as Asia. Is that as far as any went? Later one of that list, Trophimus, is present in Jerusalem with Paul, certainly accompanying Paul beyond Asia. The solution seems to be in the clauses and read accordingly thus: And there accompanied him *as far as Asia*, Sopater, - and (accompanied him) Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Tychicus Gaius and Trophimus (to Jerusalem). So 6 of former, plus Luke, appear to have traveled with Paul. From Macedonia, the original 6, minus Luke, preceded Paul to Troas, Paul and Luke remaining in Philippi for the Passover. There they ate the Lord's supper with the disciples on the first day of the week and Paul preached. Then those above, 6, including the one unnamed accompanying disciples in II Cor. 8:18, 19-22, minus Sopater, sailed for Assos, including Luke, for he says, "at Assos we took him in" (Acts 14).

X. Why did Paul walk from Troas and the rest board ship for Assos.

A. The first we know of Troas is a stop there where he received the "Macedonian Call" and crossed the Aegean Sea to Philippi. Then on his last free journey after leaving Corinth and in distress at not finding Titus there with information about Corinth, a door was opened. Now he is back and after the Lord's day there, Paul chose to "talked a long while." Likewise is this the time, it being spring and after the winter he spent at Corinth he left his cloak at Troas with Carpus. These things suggest reason for an affinity with the new church there, grown enough that worshippers sat in windows, that he chose to stay behind and talk "for a long while, while Luke said, "we going before to the ship"

B. Ships leave on schedule. It could be that Passage paid and the rest boarded, as it would also be easier than hauling all their baggage (Acts 21:15).

C. It would not overly delay the hastening Paul as it was only 18 miles from Troas to Assos over paved Roman Road, and 40 miles sail around Cape Lectum.

D. Perhaps a combination of his desire to visit with brethren, but passage paid, and ships have some sort of schedule and sail upon convenience, not when lagging passengers choose, plus easier transport of baggage sent the other travelers ahead. And after life endangerment in Ephesus, fear for what he might find in Corinth, a plot against him when leaving there that altered his route, and now the relief of funds collected, Paul may simply have relished a desire for solace.

XI. Mission Denouement

A. To Mitylene, past Chios, touched at Samos, past Ephesus to Miletus, not wishing to spend more time in Asia by visitin Ephesus, call to him Elders from there (Acts 20:16-17)

1. His interview, reminders, exhortations, warnings

2. His departure provokes strong passion. Do we think of Paul as right but rigid, respected, formidable, daunting, intimidating? They fell on his neck and kissed him, sorrowing that they would see him no more because of warning by Holy Spirit in every city (Acts 20:22-23, 37-38). See also all the disciples with wives and children accompanying to his ship, kneeling and praying on beach (Acts 21:5), and the with the warning of Agabus at Caesera when Paul pleads, "why do ye, weeping and breaking my heart?" (Acts 21:13)

B. So, Cos, next day Rhodes, to Patara, finding a ship passing over to Phoenicia. Past Cyprus to Tyre, then Ptolemais, Caesera, took baggage, walked to Jerusalem.

C. Received gladly. After all that not one detail about disposition of funds!

XII. Who were funds for? Acts 24:16-17: "alms to my nation." II Cor. 9:13, all (*men*, KJV)

A. I Cor. 16:1-2 (specified for saints, not general relief); In execution, it was for Saints, II Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12 (response of thanksgiving to God indicates beneficiaries were saints)

B. Rom. 15:25-26 (Delivery specified to poor among "Saints")

C. II Cor. 9:13: *πας* (all): "of the class denoted by the noun annexed," Thayer, I.1.a... "totality of sum of things, the context showing what things are meant (Ibid., II.2.a)." Saints being specified in this context and other related passages, the "all" would be in that classification, emphasized by the fact that the "contribution" is the word "koinonia," its usage in this passage having the sense, the "embodiment and proof of fellowship" (Thayer, 3).

D. H.A.W. Meyer: "all" refers to the persons, namely, to them, the receivers themselves, and all Christians in general... Paul rightly adds *κ. εις παντες* for by beneficence toward the Jews the Corinthians showed... they excluded *no* Christians from the sincere fellowship of love." So the Jerusalem saints thanked God for the obedience of the Corinthians and that in giving this contribution (fellowship, sharing) to them, it demonstrated a fellowship to all saints, not just to gentiles as themselves.

E. Congregationally collected funds for relief are limited to "Saints."

XIII. Does I Cor. 16:2 authorize a common continuing collection for work, contributed weekly?

A. To collect to help Jerusalem saints, Corinth told do as Galatian churches "ordered."

1. But the order to the Galatians did not involve collecting for Jerusalem, Rom. 15:25-26, but to get funds for that, Corinth was to do what the Galatians were ordered to do, "lay by" on first day of week

a. The "κατα" modifying "lay by" is intensive, and thus intends "every" first day of the week.

b. Beyond that, while the Galatians were given no further command, the Corinthians were urged by Paul's judgment (II Cor. 8:10) to send funds so gathered to Jerusalem for poor saints there.

c. Thus there was something they were ordered in common with the churches of Galatia, and something else distinctive they were urged to accomplish thereby.

2. So, what was common between Corinth and the churches of Galatia? A commanded laying by, giving, upon the first of every week (II Cor. 9:7).

3. The weekly giving was ordered to the churches, Corinth as in Galatia. The gathering of funds for Jerusalem did not involve the churches of Galatia, therefore this weekly giving for all churches was not limited to this one "Jerusalem occasion."

4. As for other uses of collected congregational funds, churches also used such to support preachers locally, also elsewhere (I Cor. 9:11; Phil. 4:15-16; II Cor. 11:8).

5. As far as funding other matters, it would be axiomatic for churches to fund whatever they are authorized to do. The command includes authorized means of doing it.

B. I Cor. 16:1-2 orders churches to employ weekly laying by in store by saints. While the order involved individual action, the result was something done as churches. Just as in the Lord's Supper. Though it is done as each eats and drinks (I Cor. 11:28), it is done "in the church...when ye assemble yourselves together" (I Cor. 11:18, 20), and that on the first day of the week (Acts. 20:7). Individual action by each when assembling together on the first day of the week. The order of a regular laying by did not involve isolated individuals, but churches.

XIV. Were these funds kept individually "at home," or treasured together as assembled?

A. Text: *παρ' ἑαυτῶ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων*, "by - himself - put - treasuring up."

B. A majority of modern lexicographers do translate, "lay by him *at home* in treasuring." But there is also ample support for the funds being put into a common treasury. Which is right?

1. Since the words "at home" are not in the text, the reason has to do with the grammar of "*par(a) heauto titheto*," "by him (himself) put." The text is dealing with the dative case which can have a locative application (place, location), or and instrumental application (manner)

2. The issue is, does "by him" mean location, or can it designate instrumentality or manner of giving? Most of the lexicographers here make "*para*" (*by*), the dative with the locative case, thus by him, indicates in "someone's house, city, or company" (BAGD), and Thayer adds, "Society."

3. But if someone's city, company, or society (company companions) is acceptable, how can someone's assembly as his society, that being a fellowship of company with whom he shares, his social network, by this alone be rejected? So even if this is a locative situation, "at home," without supporting necessity is not linguistically demanded.

4. And when we look at textual evidence and necessity, I believe the "at home" concept is foreign to what is required.

C. As for the possibility of *let him put by, treasuring*, having an instrumental application (manner) here are some uses of *para* with the dative you can check for instance in BAGD and Thayer under the heading of *para* (by, with). The following parentheses are my observations:

1. "in the sight of one's judgment, in his sight or judgment" (e.g., "as he has prospered")
2. "with one's self i.e., in one's own mind" ("as he purposes in his own heart, II Cor. 9:7)
3. "belong to his nature or character" (as he purposes, a cheerful giver)
4. "in his judgment, he being judge, *παρ' ἑαυτῶ*, cf. Rom. 2:13; I cor. 3:19; Gal. 3:11; II Thess. 1:6; II Pet. 2:4 ("as he purposes")
5. So in I Cor. 16:2 we have *para* with the dative showing instrumental possibility.

D. Though preferring "at home" in I Cor. 16:2, Thayer's summary does not necessitate that or mitigate an alternative application: "Dative, *παρὰ* (*para*) indicates that something is or is done either *in the power* of or in the immediate vicinity of someone, or (metaph) in his mind, nearby, beside. In the power of, or in the presence of, with." Or citing *παρὰ ἑαυτῶ* (*par heauto*), "in his judgment, he being judge" (II.e). So "lay by him," lay or put, as *he* judges, amount in his power.

E. So, though so many lexicographers prefer a locative application, at home, while citing many instrumental (manner) uses of *παρ ἑαυτοῦ* (by him), is there persuasive information and textual information to justify that, or might such indicate their instrumental applications?

- 1) There is a precedent for a shared congregational treasury (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2).
- 2) The order to Galatia to be followed by Corinth was to “churches.” Not of separate individual activity at home. This culminated in church function every first day of the week, as noted when they came together “in the church” to eat the Lord’s supper.
- 3) While the ancient Syriac does say, “at home,” seemingly an impetus for modern conclusions, it was not based on “pure texts,” by hybrid traditional texts. A little later Jerome from better texts, and considered “a most learned father, and the best linguist without controversy, of his age” (ISBE), gave us the Latin Vulgate and translated, “laying up what pleases him well.” Thus the “by him” is instrumental, the *manner* of his laying by, not of forced necessity, but as he *himself* purposed. The “by him” meaning his choice.
- 4) Thus I Cor. 16:2 parallels II Cor. 9:7: Let each man do (put, lay by) according as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity (not as imposed but an amount determined “by him, himself”), a cheerful giver. Seeing “by him lay by” as instrumental, manner of how the amount is determined, makes the two passages perfectly parallel.

F. Paul wanted the funds ready so that when he got there, there would be no need of collecting or gathering it. If at home, it would have to gathered. They did let up in this matter (II Cor. 8:10- 11), and Paul sent brethren ahead to see if the aforementioned bounty might be ready (8:3-5).

1. if this was individually being stored up at home, how would Paul know the status?

G. Interestingly though Robertson in his “Word Pictures” prefers the locative, “at home.” He also said this, “The only instance in the N. T. of the locative with para after a verb of motion is in Luke 9:47, “estēsen auto par eautw.” *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, A.T. Robertson, quoted in [cliffbaird.files.wordpress.com](http://cliffbaird.files.wordpress.com), *I Cor. 16:1-4*: “Put” (lay) is a verb of motion, and per Robertson, the overwhelming tendency is for *παρ ἑαυτοῦ* with a verb of motion is to be instrumental. But even in a locative use such as “in his society” there is allowance for it being with others in his society, or congregation.

H. Given this information, linguistic, textual, and contextual, it would suggest a paraphrase such as, “Let each by his own self-determination, by his purpose and generosity, *by himself*, without compulsion, put, treasuring up,” the result being an every first day of the week treasuring executed by individuals in concert as an assembly or church, as in coming together “in the church” with each individual eating the Lord’s supper, in mutual society by the way.

1. And one thing beyond what was “ordered,” the Corinthians seeing all the blessing involved in Paul’s urging were to have funds treasured up, “bounty” (I Cor. 16:3), to send to Jerusalem.

XV. Does the action of assembly funds from Corinth to poor saints in Jerusalem authorize organized Congregational co-operation, church to church Funds?

A. In Distribution, was this congregation to congregation, or congregations using Paul and company as messengers not to the congregation in Jerusalem to distribute, or did the messengers distribute and minister to the poor Jews on behalf of love extended by gentiles?

1. Paul and whom Corinth choose to carry their bounty to Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:3-4)
2. "To travel with us in the matter of this grace *which is ministered by us* to the glory of the Lord (II Cor. 8:19).
3. "The bounty which is ministered by us" (II Cor. 8:20 )
4. "I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints" (Rom. 15:25).
5. "When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them (poor saints, Rom. 15:26) this fruit" (Rom. 15:28).
6. "That my ministration which I have for Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:31).
7. "I came to bring alms to my nation" (Acts 24:17).
8. There is nothing here as the bounty of the Corinthians and Macedonians fill up the measure of the want among saints in Jerusalem being delivered to the elders in Jerusalem. There is nothing of money from the treasuries of churches in Macedonia and Achaia going into the treasury of the church in Jerusalem. Paul with messengers takes funds to minister to needy saints. It would appear they did the distributing.
9. A problem concerns when Paul had time to do this. Within a couple of days there was his agreement to go to the temple with some to enter a vow to be completed there with sacrifices in 7 days, Paul being at charges for them.
  - a. He had the week in between beginning and returning to end the vows. And remember the 7 he had with him: Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Tychicas Gaius and Trophimus , and Luke.
  - b. And note the names. They are gentile name. Gentiles came for gentile churches to give assistance to needy Jewish brethren. Paul's mission accomplished.
10. This appears to be Paul and companions taking funds from brethren in Macedonia and Achaia, and distributing it to needy saints in Jerusalem. It would appear there was no Church to church relationship.
  - B. This would not be a matter of church co-operation as practiced today. It does not appear to be a Church to church treasury incident. Nor does the circumstance in Acts 11:27-30 seem to be if we apply strictness to language. *Disciples* in Antioch sent funds to the elders in Judean churches. If it followed the Acts 6 example the deacons would have distributed it.

## Conclusion:

We do not know how long Paul had his plan, but he began to effect it during his three year stay at Ephesus during his third preaching tour. Planning even at a time of trouble with and at Corinth. The launch of it all evidently occurred in his last nine months or so at Ephesus if Acts 19:21-22 is chronological and the beginning of implementation. Paul had spent 3 months in the synagogue, then two years at the school of Tyrannus. That amounts to two years and three months of his roughly three 3 years there. Now after that in the period that would involve the Dianna peril, he sends Timothy and Erastus there through Macedonia.

Before they arrive he writes I Corinthians laying out how by weekly contributions as ordered in other churches, they can have funds ready. He writes telling of Timothy's coming. For some reason the giving slackens and Paul sends Titus. So Paul has this grand plan to secure love and relationship between Christian Jews and gentiles by generosity and love from gentile churches to poor Jewish saints in Jerusalem.

Relations between Paul and some at Corinth has been tenuous at best and tense at its worst. He had visited briefly early on and found rampant immorality. He wrote them pretty sternly. He has received messengers from them. Now he has written the first of the two great epistles we know. How will it go? Well, not long afterward it is time to leave Ephesus. Surely he can get a report from Titus at Troas. Titus has not gotten there but Paul finds good response to the gospel while he waits. He describes himself as having no rest in his spirit wondering how they had receive his epistle. Did it help? Did it arouse opposition? Are the cooperating. Still he presses on and finds Titus in Macedonia. The epistle had been effective. Titus has done his work well. Things were improving. So in Macedonia, as he is on his way to Corinth, he writes II Corinthians. Appreciating, cajoling, encouraging, holding up the goal, though after all that he opens up on them sharply, loosening them up in chapter 10, then unloading in chapters 11 and 12.

But shortly he arrives now and spends the winter of 57-58 with them. Strangely there is no mention of the money. But of plotted perish with his shipping, he does not head toward Jerusalem by boat into Syria, and he will make the long trek by land back up through Macedonia, after that combining walking and sailing and with the help of 7 brethren, carries the funds, "baggage" as it called when they finally unload at Caeserea, and start overland to Jerusalem.

So, we get to Jerusalem. He is bringing alms to his people. He is received well enough by the leaders at Jerusalem, but they are more concerned that he prove himself a good Jew. There is no mention of distribution. But for about a week Paul and companions must have been busy, Paul and his 7 gentiles, though Timothy's mother was a Jewess. At the instigation of Jewish enemies of the gospel Paul is arrested on a false charge as was Christ. He was going to Rome after all, but not necessarily as he had planned. So, All of the planning, all of the effort, of all the intensity with the Corinthians and yet all the love he showed, after all of the generosity of gentile Christians, many in great poverty themselves, all of the peril, and all it meant for cementing brotherhood, and the record of Luke contains not a word about the disposition of the matter.

Dale Smelser  
12807 Sutters Lane  
Bowie, MD 20720  
[dalsmelser@aol.com](mailto:dalsmelser@aol.com)

EndSmelser

## The Letter, The Spirit, and the Glory Behind the Veil *Joe Hamm*

Text: 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6

### Abstract:

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6, the apostle Paul “commends” his “sufficiency” as a “minister” of God. He understands that through this ministry, God is fulfilling his promise of a new covenant, characterized by heart transformation and the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 11, 36-37). Like Moses, Paul’s ministry is from God, and the proof of Paul’s claim is the Corinthian church itself, who are “reflecting like a mirror” the glory of God as they are being “transformed” into the “image of God” – Jesus Christ. Unlike Moses, Paul’s ministry is superior in that God’s glory is not veiled (Exodus 32-34), it is being revealed to all who will “turn to the Lord.” Accordingly, the glory of the old covenant has been surpassed and “rendered ineffective” in Christ.

If the above is true, at least three questions remain. By what means does this transformation of the Spirit occur? In what way does the Christian reflect God’s glory? And if this “letter” is read by all, why is God’s glory not seen by all? Paul gives us these answers in 2 Corinthians 4. First, God’s truth appeals to every man’s conscience as it is revealed in the Gospel of Christ. This knowledge manifests God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ, the image of God. Second, Christians reflect God’s glory as they begin transforming into Christ’s image and experience the same righteous suffering. In fact, Paul’s ministry is an example of God’s glory displayed through suffering.<sup>1</sup> Third, those who do not see God’s glory in the Gospel have their minds blinded by Satan.<sup>2</sup>

To support this reading of the text, we will need to explore the following:

- I. A Brief History of Interpretation
- II. Themes in Paul’s Letter
- III. Old Testament Context
- IV. The “Letter” and the “Spirit”
- V. The Glory Behind the Veil

### Body:

- I. A Brief History of Interpretation
  - A. The Historical Debate

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<sup>1</sup> This theme of righteous suffering is not developed in 3:1-4:6, but the idea is found in the surrounding context and should impact the reading of this passage as it relates to the rest of the letter (1:5-10; 2:14; 4:10-11; 6:3-10; 11:23-33; 12:7-10).

<sup>2</sup> “god of this age” most likely refers to Satan, who is mentioned several times in the letter (2:11, 11:14, 12:7).

For 1200 years, stretching from Origen to the Reformation, there were two main competing interpretations of 2 Corinthians 3 that seemed to be centered on Paul's letter/Spirit contrast mentioned in 2 Cor. 3:6.<sup>3</sup>

1. A distinction between a literal and spiritual sense of Scripture (the popular view from the time of Origen till the Reformation)
2. A distinction between the OT and the NT. (The modern consensus among conservative scholars)

It's interesting to note that the modern consensus is opposite of the predominant view in the Middle Ages. The use of 2 Cor. 3:6 to support the distinction between the literal and spiritual sense of Scripture was replaced by its use as a proof-text for the contrast between the Law and the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. The Modern Debate

Many modern scholars and readers alike have been puzzled over Paul's use of the Old Testament Scriptures in 2 Corinthians 3. It is often suggested that Paul has torn Exodus 34 out of its original context and uses allegory to give the story new meaning to suit his purposes. In doing so, it is said that he contradicts the plain reading of Exodus 34 and finds a reference to Christ where it was never intended.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, he has been accused of embellishing the story so that the glory on Moses' face is fading, a detail not found in the original account. In response, some have suggested that New Testament writers like Paul have been influenced by the contemporary Jewish interpretations of their day.<sup>6</sup> Others agree that Paul's interpretations were flawed, but the meaning he wrote down was still inspired. Accordingly, we can't use his same interpretative methods today, but we can trust his conclusions and believe his doctrine.<sup>7</sup> While it may seem that NT writers like Paul are not respecting the original intention of the OT texts, the greater context of the OT texts should be carefully considered before labeling such usage as non-contextual.<sup>8</sup> Revitalized interest in "Biblical Theology" has recently led some to reexamine how NT writers use OT texts.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> S. J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> For a presentation of this sort of view, see M. Hooker's "Beyond the Things That are Written" in G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 279-294.

<sup>6</sup> However, all surviving evidence indicates a belief that the glory on his face never faded.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief overview of several classic debates regarding the way NT writers and Jesus use the OT, see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 1-24.

<sup>8</sup> Other English translations should be consulted as well. Also, consider that the NT writer could be quoting from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (LXX).

<sup>9</sup> While scholars have differing approaches to "biblical theology," it is distinct from systematic theology in that it favors an inductive approach and seeks to discover themes as they progressively develop within a single book or the Scriptures as a whole. The following papers provide a brief history of biblical theology as a discipline, varied approaches, and some suggestions for future practice. Donald A Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 17-41; Andreas J Köstenberger, "The Present and

Others favor a different view. They propose that the old vs. new covenant interpretation relies upon speculation concerning Paul's opponents. Furthermore, those who believe that 2 Corinthians is a fragmented letter reject imposing Paul's opponents in chapters 10-13 on the interpretation of chapter 3.<sup>10</sup> Without Judaizing opponents in view, they see no context for Paul to argue for a nullification of OT law. Those who see a continuity of the Mosaic Law into the new covenant argue that Paul must be contrasting something else.<sup>11</sup> Modern speculations aside, many scholars since the time of John Chrysostom have believed that Paul is directing his defense against Judaistic opponents.<sup>12</sup>

### C. A Way Forward

While it may not resolve all disagreements over the text, I propose that the way forward is an intertextual approach.<sup>13</sup> This method focuses on literary analysis rather than historical reconstruction. Such an approach can accomplish two things. First, by looking for common themes throughout the letter, we can bolster belief for a unified letter in which Paul defends his ministry against Judaizers. Second, by looking closely at the broader context of each Scripture quotation or allusion, we can gain better insight into Paul's intended meaning.<sup>14</sup>

## II. **Themes in Paul's Letter**

I propose that any reading of 2 Corinthians 3 should at least consider the contextual themes of commendation, sufficiency, ministry, and the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

### A. Commendation

Those who argue for the disunity of 2 Corinthians fail to account for one of the central unifying themes of in the letter. Paul's constant reference to "commendation" is a strong argument for one letter (3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12, 18; 12:11).<sup>16</sup> In 2 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul rejects a perceived need for written letters of recommendation to the Corinthian church. It

Future of Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (November 2012): 445–64; Charles H H Scobie, "New Directions in Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 17, no. 2 (January 1992): 4–8.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Paul Duff does not see a unified letter or any evidence for false apostles in 2 Cor. 2:14-7:4. He argues that Paul is responding to suspicions about his honesty and integrity related to the collection for the Jerusalem church. Paul Brooks Duff, "Paul's Elusive Opponents: Reading 2 Cor 3 without the 'False Apostles' of 2 Cor 11:13," *Biblical Research* 54 (2009): 37–59.

<sup>11</sup> For a survey of different letter/spirit interpretations see Randall C Gleason, "Paul's Covenantal Contrasts in 2 Corinthians 3:1-11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 613 (January 1997): 61–79.

<sup>12</sup> Melvin Curry, *The Book of 2 Corinthians*, ed. Mike Willis, Truth Commentaries (Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2008), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Hafeman has presented the most extensive intertextual analysis of this passage to date and adds some helpful insights Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> This approach is gaining wider acceptance, although the details are still being debated. Beale suggests a practical methodology. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

<sup>15</sup> This is not meant as an exhaustive list of themes.

<sup>16</sup> I owe this observation to Colin G Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1987), 89. Melvin Curry mentions a similar observation by F.J. Long who adds a reference to the Corinthians commending themselves in 7:11. Curry, *2 Corinthians*, 126.

is not that Paul disapproves of letters of recommendation. In fact, he provided them for others (Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:10-11; Phil. 2:19-24).<sup>17</sup> However, he shifts the attention from written letters to the Corinthian church itself as the visible proof of his apostleship. The church there was a result of Paul's ministry. Therefore, if they question Paul's legitimacy, they must also question their own. This commendation theme provides the context in which Paul will defend the sufficiency of his ministry and compare his ministry to that of Moses.

### B. Sufficiency

In 2 Cor. 2:16, Paul asks the rhetorical question “and who is sufficient for these things?”<sup>18</sup> as he begins to affirm his own legitimacy. Paul's rhetorical question is answered in the verses that follow as he develops the theme of sufficiency. This same word will again be used in 3:5-6. Paul's sufficiency in 3:4-6 is parallel to the content and structure of his argument in 2:16-17, with the latter extending the thought of the former<sup>19</sup>:

Paul's Sufficiency (2:16)

before God

(κατέναντι θεοῦ)

*based on*

The Call of God (2:17)

(ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἐκ θεοῦ)

Paul's Confidence/Sufficiency (3:4)

before God

(πρὸς τὸν θεόν)

*based on*

The Call of God (3:5)

(ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)

In both phrases, the “sufficiency” is “from God.”<sup>20</sup> Paul likely has the call of Moses in mind when he says God has made him “sufficient” for his ministry. This should be considered

<sup>17</sup> Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 8:89–90.

<sup>18</sup> καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἰκανός;

<sup>19</sup> Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 62,100-104.

<sup>20</sup> ἐκ θεοῦ

because Paul will go on to compare his ministry with that of Moses in 3:7-18. Like Moses, Paul was made “sufficient” in spite of his insufficiency. Through God’s grace, he has overcome his inadequacy and has been made qualified. This idea becomes more apparent in the light of the Septuagint (LXX) version of Exod. 3:1–4:17. This passage corresponds closely to that of the Masoretic Text (MT). However, there is one major difference which may provide a clue for understanding Paul’s argument. In the MT, Moses protests that he is not “a man of words,” whereas in the LXX Moses’ response is that he is not “sufficient” (ικανός).<sup>21</sup> The καί of 3:6 may also refer to Moses’ being made competent as a minister of the old covenant. If so, God made not only Moses but “also” Paul sufficient to be a minister.<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that Paul is not presenting himself as the fulfillment of a “second Moses” based on Deut. 18:18. There is no indication of this in 2 Corinthians 3 or elsewhere in Paul’s writings. Rather, Paul seems to be using the call of Moses to validate his own ministry. Even though Moses (and the prophets) were insufficient in themselves to accomplish God’s purposes, they are made sufficient for their ministry by God’s grace. From Paul’s first-century perspective, this pattern of a prophetic call would provide a strong defense for his ministry. If God used Moses and other prophets in spite of their weaknesses, then Paul’s weakness cannot be used to disqualify him as an apostle. God used human weakness as an essential part of a prophet’s ministry. This demonstrated that God was the source of the prophet’s message and sufficiency.

From this context, it appears that the Corinthians were struggling between Paul’s definition of “sufficiency” and that of others who had infiltrated the church. They may have brought letters of recommendation from other churches (or Jerusalem) and asked why Paul hadn’t done the same (2 Corinthians 3:1-3). If so, they were proving their sufficiency through written letters. For Paul, true sufficiency can only come “from God” (3:5).

Paul would not have been more of an apostle with a letter of recommendation.

### C. Ministry

Another important theme introduced in chapter 3 is “ministry.”<sup>23</sup> The church itself is a letter “ministered” by Paul (3:3). This term “minister” describes his role in regard to the new covenant (3:6) which is a “ministry” of the Spirit and righteousness (3:7-9). This theme will continue throughout the letter. The verb “to minister” appears in three places (3:3; 8:19, 20). The noun “minister” is found five times (3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23). Finally, the noun “ministry” is used eleven times (3:7-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13; 11:18).<sup>24</sup> Within this broader context, the major focus of Paul’s argument in 2 Corinthians 3 is the contrast between two ministries. And by connecting his ministry with the new covenant, he contrasts his ministry with others

<sup>21</sup> David E Garland, “The Sufficiency of Paul, Minister of the New Covenant,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (September 1989): 21–37.

<sup>22</sup> Carol Kern Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3.1-4.6*, vol. 116 (Roma: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 84.

<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, such word themes are often not well preserved in English translations.

<sup>24</sup> Curry, *2 Corinthians*, 129.

who would still enforce the Mosaic law.<sup>25</sup> The ministry contrast that Paul develops in 3:7-18 appears to relate to the awkward situation of having to defend his own. These contrasts show that his new covenant ministry is superior in its surpassing glory, open proclamation, and transformative power.

#### D. The Spirit

Paul uses the word “spirit” seventeen times in this letter (1:22; 3:3, 6, 8, 17-18; 4:13; 5:5; 6:6; 7:1; 7:13; 11:4; 12:18; and 13:14). When viewed in their contexts, all but five appear to refer to the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Why is Paul so concerned with the Holy Spirit? Paul emphasized the role of the Spirit as providing proof of his ministry. For Paul, his ministry is a fulfillment of God’s promised new covenant in the OT.<sup>27</sup> As predicted, this covenant involves the Spirit and brings about a transformation of the heart which makes obedience possible. Paul appeals to the work of God’s Spirit in the lives of the church for proof of these claims. Paul sees the Spirit as a “down payment” in the heart (1:22, 5:5), the source of life (3:3, 6), and something Christians share (13:14).

### III. **Old Testament Context**

#### A. OT Context of the Letter

On the surface, 2 Corinthians may seem to have little interest in the OT. Some view Paul’s use of Scripture as incidental to the defense of his ministry or to the collection for the saints in Judea. However, it should be noted that Paul uses at least fifteen Old Testament quotations and perhaps forty-six allusions throughout the letter.<sup>28</sup> The law, prophets, and writings are all represented; predominantly Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, and Proverbs. When these passages are considered in their contexts, it has been suggested that several themes emerge<sup>29</sup>:

1. Israel’s exodus
2. God’s covenant with Israel made through Moses at Mt. Sinai
3. The promise of a “second exodus” redemption
4. A new covenant (and a new creation)
5. The suffering of the righteous

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 133.

<sup>26</sup> Some do not see such a consistent theme. For those references that do not seem to refer to God’s Spirit see 2:13, 4:13, 7:1, 7:13, and 12:18. Perhaps a case could be made that 4:13 and 12:18 are indeed referencing the Spirit.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit In The New Testament: A Study Of Primitive Christian Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1921), 1–7, 192–98; Paul R Thorsell, “The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant According to Paul,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 397–413; Scott J Hafemann, “The ‘Temple Of The Spirit’ As The Inaugural Fulfillment Of The New Covenant Within The Corinthian Correspondence,” *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 29–42.

<sup>28</sup> According to Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> The development of these themes in 2 Corinthians is beyond the scope of this paper. For a more detailed proposal see Scott J Hafemann, “Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians,” *Interpretation* 52, no. 3 (July 1998): 246–57.

In the old covenant as well as the new, the law was intended to be in the hearts of God's people (Deut. 6:4-6; 11:18; Isaiah 51:7). Isaiah 51:7 makes it clear that to know righteousness and to understand the true nature of the covenant is to have the law in the heart. God called for this both nationally and individually (Deut. 10:16). In foreshadowing the return of Israel after exile, God would circumcise the national heart (Deut. 30:6). This will produce love from the heart and obedience (Deut 30:8). When repentance was needed, Jeremiah called upon the people to circumcise their hearts (Jer. 4:4). The inward nature of a covenant with God is an expectation found throughout Scriptures, not just the NT.<sup>30</sup> The above themes serve as the broader OT context for the defense of Paul's new covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians.

#### B. OT Context of The Passage (3:1-4:6)

Now, we will focus on Paul's use of OT quotations and allusions in 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6.<sup>31</sup> I propose that Paul is following the original logic of the following OT texts<sup>32</sup>: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 11:16-23, Ezekiel 36-37, Exodus 32-34, and Genesis 1.

Paul claims that the Corinthian church is a letter "written on our hearts"<sup>33</sup> (3:2). He also expands the letter metaphor to be written on their hearts (3:3). Interestingly, God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah that he would bring about a new covenant written on hearts:

*"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and **on their heart I will write it**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"* (Jeremiah 31:33).

This connection to Jeremiah might be ignored, considering Paul is referring to a recommendation letter written on the heart rather than God's law. However, Paul also includes the phrase "new covenant" found in Jeremiah 31:31<sup>34</sup>:

*"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of **a new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."* (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

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<sup>30</sup> Jesus told Nicodemus that he should have known about a spiritual rebirth as a teacher of the Law. (John 3:10)

<sup>31</sup> This is commonly known as an intertextual reading. Intertextuality involves the interconnection between texts that influence the reader's interpretation.

<sup>32</sup> Most of the authors consulted agree that Paul had these passages in mind. However, there has been much debate on how he uses them.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, several early manuscripts including Codex Sinaiticus read ὑμῶν "your," but Bruce says the committee went with the reading found in Papyrus 46 after considering Paul's statement in 7:3, "I have said before that you are in our hearts." Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Revised edition (Hendrickson Publishers, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Hafemann points out that this is the only explicit reference to "new covenant" in the OT. Scott J Hafemann, "The 'Temple Of The Spirit' As The Inaugural Fulfillment Of The New Covenant Within The Corinthian Correspondence," *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 34.

What is the connection between Paul's "letter of Christ" and Jeremiah's new covenant? Paul says this writing is "*inscribed not with ink but **by the Spirit of the living God***" (3:3). In other words, God is the author of this letter. This brings to mind another passage of Scripture where God is the writer of a covenant:

*"When he had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses **the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.**"* (Exodus 31:18).

Paul is also pointing to the proof of transformed hearts and attributes this to a work of God. He quickly distinguishes the two covenants by clarifying "*not on **tablets of stone** but on **tablets of fleshy hearts***" (3:3b). With Paul's contrast between stone and flesh he appears to be adding another allusion to the prophet Ezekiel:

*"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; **and I will remove the heart of stone** from your flesh and **give you a heart of flesh.**"* (Ezekiel 36:26).<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, some modern translations conceal the Ezekiel allusion in 2 Corinthians 3:3 by translating "fleshy" as "human".<sup>36</sup> The hearts of the Israelites had not been transformed since the time of their fathers in the wilderness. This was observed by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel and had not changed in the time of Paul.

As mentioned above, Paul's use of the phrase "tablets of stone" (3:3) alludes to the book of Exodus (Exodus 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1).<sup>37</sup> Exodus 32 tells how Moses brought the tablets of stone down the mountain. These tablets were written by God and represented his covenant with Israel.

*"Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the **two tablets of the testimony** in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. **The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.**"* (Exodus 32:15-16)

When Moses saw that the people had rebelled against God and were worshipping a golden calf, he became angry and broke the tablets.

*"It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain."* (Exodus 32:19)

As a result of the rebellion, three thousand died on the day God's covenant was introduced (Exodus 32:28). Moses returns to the mountain to seek forgiveness for the people.

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<sup>35</sup> See also Ezekiel 11:16-23.

<sup>36</sup> NIV, ESV, NASB, and NET are all guilty. KJV, ASV, and HCSB are among those that preserve the allusion.

<sup>37</sup> See Peter Balla's essay "2 Corinthians," D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, First Edition (Grand Rapids, MI : Nottingham, England: Baker Academic, 2007), 753–64.

*“But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from **Your book which You have written!**” The Lord said to Moses, **“Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.”** (Exodus 32:32-33)*

Here we are introduced to a “book” written by God in which those who sin against God are removed. From the immediate context, this book most likely represents God’s covenant with his people and contains the individual names of those who have remained faithful to the covenant.

God then tells Moses to lead the people into the land he promised. However, God will not be going with them because they are obstinate and he might destroy them (Exodus 33:3). This greatly upsets the people and so Moses approaches the Lord at the tent of meeting because he was able to speak to the Lord “face to face” (Exodus 33:11). Moses seeks the presence of God and the “glorification” of all the people as an assurance of God’s promises.

*“Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.’ And He said, ‘My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.’ Then he said to him, ‘If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, **so that we, I and Your people, will be glorified**<sup>38</sup> above all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?’ The Lord said to Moses, ‘I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.’ Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, **show me Your glory!**’” (Exodus 33:13-18)*

We read next that God ordered Moses to cut two new tablets of stone and God wrote on them the words that were on the first tablets.

*“Now the Lord said to Moses, ‘Cut out for yourself **two stone tablets** like the former ones, and **I will write on the tablets** the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain.’” (Exodus 34:1)*

It is at this meeting that Moses sees God’s glory as he “calls on the name of the Lord” (Exodus 34:5). Moses asks the Lord to remain in the midst of the people, even though they are obstinate (Exodus 34:9). Moses remains with the Lord forty days and the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on the replaced tablets (Exodus 34:27).<sup>39</sup> As Moses comes down the mountain, he does not realize that his face has been glorified. Because his face is shining, the people are afraid to come near him. Moses commanded the people to do all that the Lord had spoken (Exodus 34:29-32). Afterward, he put a veil over his face and only took it off when

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<sup>38</sup> LXX contains καὶ ἐνδοξασθήσομαι ἐγὼ τε καὶ ὁ λαὸς σου, “And I will be glorified, both me and your people”

<sup>39</sup> It’s important to note in this passage that the Ten Commandments written on the tablets are also called “the tablets of the testimony.” If this covenant is rendered ineffective by a new covenant, this applies to the Ten Commandments as well.

he was in the presence of the Lord or communicating to the people what the Lord had commanded.

*“When Moses had finished speaking with them, **he put a veil over his face**. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, **he would take off the veil** until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that **the skin of Moses’ face shone**. So **Moses would replace the veil** over his face until he went in to speak with Him.”* (Exodus 34:33-35)

Notice that we can see the following pattern from this passage:

1. Moses spoke God’s commands to the people
2. Afterward, he would put a veil over his face
3. Moses would remove the veil whenever he went before the Lord
4. He would replace the veil after he had communicated the Lord commands

Unfortunately, the Israelites would not experience God’s transforming glory because of their continued rebellion.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul alludes to the creation account in Genesis when he says: *“For God, who said, **‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’** is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”* (4:6). From Genesis we read the following:

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, **“Let there be light”**”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and **God separated the light from the darkness.**”* (Genesis 1:1-4)

Notice here in Genesis God is creating through the agency of the Spirit. However, we don’t see the exact phrase “Light shall shine out of darkness”. Some have suggested that Paul is just paraphrasing, but others have suggested that he is also alluding to Isaiah 9:1-2:

*“But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on **He shall make it glorious**, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the **Gentiles**. The people who walk in **darkness will see a great light**; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.”* (Isaiah 9:1-2)

This passage contains the idea of light shining out of darkness. We also see the idea of “glory” among the “Gentiles”.<sup>40</sup> Isaiah 9 is well recognized as a Messianic passage among the NT writers. It also says that the child to be born will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:9). In light of this evidence, it is easy to see how Paul connects God’s creation of the world to a new creation in Christ (4:6). This idea is developed further in the next chapter:

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<sup>40</sup> Matthew connects this Isaiah 9 passage to Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Matthew 4:13-16)

*“Therefore if anyone **is in Christ**, there **is a new creation**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

We have seen how the ministry of Moses under the old covenant left the nation of Israel cut off from the glory of God. Paul’s ministry of the new covenant, which is the fulfillment of the restoration prophecies in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27 transforms the obstinate hearts of God’s people and makes them alive by means of the Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Paul uses these OT Scriptures in the context of his defense in 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6. Furthermore, these Scriptures serve to support the legitimacy of his ministry. Paul’s own ministry of the Spirit (3:6, 8) is the means by which the prophetic expectations are being realized.

#### IV. The “Letter” and the “Spirit”

##### A. A Contrast of Covenants

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6, Paul contrasts “the letter” and “the spirit” to distinguish between the old and new covenants. Paul says that the new covenant is not of the letter but of the spirit (3:6). Paul’s is not concerned with contrasting the literal and the spiritual (i.e. allegorical sense of Scripture). He is not emphasizing the “spirit” of the law above the “letter” of the law. Rather, he is stressing the life-giving quality of God’s new covenant. This stands in contrast to the legal, death-dealing nature of the old covenant. The old covenant brings a curse on Israelites if they failed to follow all that was written (Deut. 27:26). By contrast, God writes his law within the hearts of those who embrace the new covenant in Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34). This provides life to all who were formerly dead through their disobedience.<sup>42</sup>

Some have suggested that this contrast is between dispositions of the heart, which determine whether the glory of God produces death or life. As a result, some understand that the Law remains valid for all Christians.<sup>43</sup> However, if this is true, what is the “Old Covenant” that is being rendered ineffective?

Paul’s contrast between Old and New Covenants should be understood in view of Judaizers who stressed the Law of Moses to discredit Paul’s ministry in the eyes of the Corinthian church. The fact that we have little evidence about the false apostles and their teaching does not invalidate the evidence we have here in 2 Corinthians 3.<sup>44</sup> Paul contrasts Christians to “the sons of Israel” who have a “veil” over their heart whenever Moses is read. This veil is taken away in Christ so that the truth can be revealed and shared with others (2 Corinthians 4:2).

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<sup>41</sup> It is the Spirit of God that gives life to the dead in Ezekiel 37:14.

<sup>42</sup> Curry, *2 Corinthians*, 133.

<sup>43</sup> Hafemann and others have concluded that the newness of the new covenant is the ability to obey the law through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It then follows that some see a continuation of the law rather than a full nullification. However, this does not seem to be well supported. See William J Dumbrell, “The Newness of the New Covenant: The Logic of the Argument in 2 Corinthians 3,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 61, no. 2 (August 2002): 61–84; Gleason, “Paul’s Covenantal Contrasts in 2 Corinthians 3”; Sigurd Grindheim, “The Law Kills But The Gospel Gives Life: The Letter-Spirit Dualism in 2 Corinthians 3.5-18,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (December 2001): 97–115.

<sup>44</sup> Dumbrell, “The Newness of the New Covenant.”

Some have argued that Paul is only contrasting ministries, not covenants. As I mentioned earlier, Paul connects his own ministry to the new covenant and Moses' ministry to the old covenant. Therefore, any comparison of the two ministries applies to the two covenants as well. Paul also uses the name "Moses" as a synonym for "the old covenant" (3:14-15). This means that the distinction between the covenants underlies his comparison of the two ministries. The old covenant has been rendered ineffective; the new covenant remains. Paul's premise is that Moses' ministry is inferior, therefore the old covenant is also inferior.<sup>45</sup>

Most conservative scholars who believe in a unified letter read this passage within the larger context of the pervasive Holy Spirit theme. Paul attributes the transformation that occurs in the new covenant to the work of the Holy Spirit. However, some do not see a consistent reference to God's Spirit at work in this passage.<sup>46</sup>

#### B. A New Hermeneutic in Christ?

Many have strongly insisted that this passage should not be viewed as a principle for interpreting Scripture. Historically, this opposition arose as a reaction against allegorical readings of the text. Some Christians, since the time of Origin, have looked to this passage to justify their practice of discarding the literal meaning of a text in favor of allegory. Other misguided individuals believe that the Holy Spirit removes the veil of literal meaning (which they view as legalism) and gives freedom to intuitively interpret the text. Any such approach to interpreting Scripture is a valid concern. However, an overreaction to this error may prevent readers from "unveiling" how the Scriptures point to Christ.

The apostle Paul's conversion experience and his new belief that Jesus was the Christ required a fresh reading of Scripture. Paul's new approach to the Scriptures caused tension between his interpretation and the Jewish interpretation.<sup>47</sup> However, he insisted this revelation was not at all in conflict with their original meaning, but rather a fulfillment.<sup>48</sup> In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul even states that Scripture was ultimately written as a message for the Christian church.

In 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, Paul contrasts himself and other Christians to the "sons of Israel," who have a "veil" over their hearts "when Moses is read." However, in Christ this veil is taken away so that the truth can be seen and shared (4:2). It may be said that Christians apply a "new covenant hermeneutic" when reading the Scriptures.<sup>49</sup> The revelation on the road to

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<sup>45</sup> Grindheim, "The Law Kills But The Gospel Gives Life," 101.

<sup>46</sup> James Coffman viewed "spirit" in 3:6 as the heart. James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, vol. 7, Coffman Commentaries on the Bible (Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, 1984); Curry doesn't appear to see a consistent Holy Spirit theme. He does see the Spirit in 3:3, neglects the issue in 3:6, and argues against the Spirit in 3:8. Later, he admits transformation by God's Spirit in 3:18, but limits it to the apostles. Curry, *2 Corinthians*; Lipscomb sees God's Spirit as it "dwells in the word," David Lipscomb, *Second Corinthians and Galatians*, vol. 3, Gospel Advocate Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1958), 50-51, 242.

<sup>47</sup> Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> See "Letters of Christ" in Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 122-53.

<sup>49</sup> Hays, 124.

Damascus informed Paul that Christ is both the “end of the Law” and the true meaning of the Law.<sup>50</sup> Paul’s new perspective “in Christ” forced him to confront not only the relationship between the Law and the Gospel (2 Cor. 3:6), but also its hermeneutical implications.<sup>51</sup> 2 Cor. 3:7–18 demonstrates that in Christ the Scriptures receive a new relevance. In fact, this is the only passage where Paul explicitly reflects on the implications of his Christian convictions and presuppositions for the interpretation of Scripture. Both early Christianity and Judaism shared the conviction that the Scriptures looked forward to a future redemption and restoration of God’s people. However, Paul and the early Church insisted that the Scriptures were pointing to the salvation which had taken place in Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup>

## V. The Glory Behind the Veil

As mentioned earlier, one of the problems with this text involves understanding Paul’s use of the veil as a metaphor. As I also alluded to earlier, the key to understanding the meaning of this passage begins with a proper understanding of the OT context of the passages Paul uses in his rhetoric. This process is made more difficult by how many English translations handle the verb *καταργέω* found four times in this passage (3:7, 11, 13, 14).<sup>53</sup> Many do not translate this verb consistently which hinders the proper reading. According to BDAG, the range of meaning for this word within Paul’s letters include the following: to render ineffective, invalidate, make powerless, to come to an end, to be no longer in existence, abolish, wipe out, or set aside.<sup>54</sup> This word also has a similar meaning in Greek literature outside the NT.<sup>55</sup> So why do some modern translations translate this verb as “fading?”<sup>56</sup> There does not seem to be any support for this.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, some have argued convincingly that the current English

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<sup>50</sup> Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Hafemann, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Hafemann, 25–26.

<sup>53</sup> For a helpful essay on translation issues see Duane A Garrett, “Veiled Hearts: The Translation and Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 4 (December 2010): 729–72.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Edition, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 525.

<sup>55</sup> The most common being to leave idle, to make useless, or to hinder. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Roderick McKenzie, *Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement*, ed. Henry Stuart Jones, 9th ed. (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), 908.

<sup>56</sup> Among them are NLT, NASB, CEV, GNT, and HCSB.

<sup>57</sup> Not all are agreed as Belleville, Harris, Kruse, and Plummer have promoted the idea of fading. L.L. Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 8, The IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 3:7; Colin G Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1987), 96; Murray J Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans ; Paternoster, 2005), 284; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), 96. Others have argued for the standard lexical meaning. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 182-183; V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, vol. 32A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 203; George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 211-212.

translation of “fade” should be abandoned.<sup>58</sup> Even these translations are not consistent because in 3:14 they translate the same verb as “removed” (NLT, NASB, GNT), “take away” (CEV), or “set aside” (HCSB). They obviously are reading something into the context which is not found in the Exodus account and not supported by Greek lexicons. So how should we understand Paul’s argument? Let’s start by using the lexical meaning of the verb καταργέω, which can be seen in my own English translation below:

*“And if the ministry of death, in letters written on stones, came in glory, so that the sons of Israel are not able to stare unto the face of Moses on account of the glory of his face which is **being rendered ineffective**, how will the ministry of the spirit not be in more glory? For if the ministry of condemnation is glory, much more the ministry of righteousness is abounding in glory. For indeed the thing that had been glorified was not glorified in this part because of the surpassing glory. For if the thing **being rendered ineffective** is on account of glory, much more the thing remaining is in glory. Having therefore such hope, we use more boldness. And not as Moses, placing a veil on his face so that the sons of Israel would not stare unto the end of the thing **being rendered ineffective**. But their minds were hardened. For until today, the same veil remains on the reading of the old covenant, not being unveiled that in Christ it **is rendered ineffective**. But until today, whenever Moses might be read, a veil lies on their hearts.”* (2 Corinthians 3:7-15)<sup>59</sup>

So how does “rendered ineffective” apply to the glory on Moses’ face? Many commentators have looked to the similarities between 3:7 and 3:13. In both cases, we see the phrase “the children of Israel could not stare”. In 3:7, they could not stare “unto the face of Moses.” In 3:13, they would not stare “unto the end of the thing *being rendered ineffective*.” Many have understood this to mean that the glory on Moses face was fading.<sup>60</sup> But this is not mentioned in the Exodus account nor is it supported by our current knowledge of Jewish tradition which indicates a belief that the glory remained unchanged on his face.

There is another explanation which I will propose based on the context of Exodus already mentioned above. We know from that text that Moses begged the Lord to remain in the midst of Israel and expected that both he and the people would be “glorified” (Exodus 33:13-18). We also know that the people of Israel were obstinate and continued to rebel against God even after the renewal of the covenant. As a result, only Moses experienced the transforming glory of the Lord. The people were afraid of God’s glory reflected from the face of Moses, so he put

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<sup>58</sup> William R Baker, “Did the Glory of Moses’ Face Fade?: A Reexamination of Καταργέω in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 (2000): 1–15; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 301-310.

<sup>59</sup> The first three instances of καταργέω are in the present passive participle form (“being rendered ineffective”) and the last one is present passive indicative (“is rendered ineffective”).

<sup>60</sup> Garland, “The Sufficiency of Paul, Minister of the New Covenant,” 30, 32.

on a veil.<sup>61</sup> The glorification that Moses expected for all the people was now being “rendered ineffective” by the veil (3:7).<sup>62</sup>

For Paul, if the ministry of Moses, which was characterized by condemnation and death, came with glory, the ministry of the Spirit characterized by life has even more glory (3:8-9). In a play on words, Paul connects the ministry of Moses to the old covenant itself when he later says “*For if the thing **being rendered ineffective** is on account of glory, much more the thing remaining is in glory*” (3:11). In this reading, “*the end of the thing **being rendered ineffective***” (3:13) could be paraphrased as “the end goal of the glory which was being blocked.” The end goal of the glory was glorification of all the people. However, up until the day of Paul, the hearts of Israel remained hardened when the old covenant was read and so God’s glory remained veiled (3:14). It has been debated whether the phrase “*in Christ it **is rendered ineffective***” is referring to the old covenant or the veil. Paul often employs word plays in his metaphors and double meanings as he develops his arguments. In this example, the veil on Moses’ face becomes a veil over the heart (3:15). But whenever someone “turns to the Lord” the veil is removed (3:16). In the context of Exodus, Moses removed the veil each time he returned to the Lord’s presence. However, under the old covenant, Moses was the only one who had access to God’s glory. In the new covenant of the Spirit, God’s glory is available to all who “turns to the Lord” (3:16). At this point, Paul most likely has God in mind when he refers to “the Lord” as this is within the context of Exodus as well.<sup>63</sup> But he quickly connects “Lord” with the “Spirit” which brings “liberty” (3:17). What does Paul mean by liberty? This word ἐλευθερία translated as “liberty” or “freedom” may have the same meaning as it does in Romans 6:18, where it means freedom from sin. In the immediate context, it may also mean liberty to access God’s glory.

The climax of Paul’s argument is in 3:18: “*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit*” (NASB). Some have argued that the phrase “we all” only applies to the apostles,<sup>64</sup> but this seems very unlikely in the context.<sup>65</sup> The majority still thinks it refers to all Christians. This stands in contrast to Moses who alone reflected God’s glory under the old covenant.<sup>66</sup> Paul often uses the phrase “all” to refer to all Christians (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:15, 1 Corinthians 15:51). Furthermore, the main verb in this sentence

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<sup>61</sup> Hafemann concludes that this is connected to their obstinate hearts. For the rebellious, the presence of God’s glory means condemnation.

<sup>62</sup> Refer back to the context of Exodus 33:13-18 on page 8.

<sup>63</sup> Scholars debate about who Paul is referring to when he mentions “The Lord”. Some say Christ while others say he is talking about Yahweh. Because “the Lord” is “Spirit”, some feel the implications impact the doctrine of trinity.

<sup>64</sup> Curry, *2 Corinthians*, 147–48.

<sup>65</sup> However, it should be noted that πάντες is not found in Papyrus 46 or the Vulgate. Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, First Edition, vol. 29, THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY (Nashville, TN: Holman, 1999), 198; George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 226.

μεταμορφούμεθα “are being transformed” is only used by Paul here and in Romans 12:2, where it is used to describe the renewal of the mind, which applies to all Christians.<sup>67</sup>

The next problem we face is the translation of κατοπτριζόμενοι, which is often translated “beholding/seeing as in a mirror” or simply “beholding”. The problem with translating this verb is that it is passive or middle. Should it be thought of as “beholding like a mirror”<sup>68</sup> or would it be better to render it as “reflecting like a mirror?”<sup>69</sup> The use of this word in ancient Greek literature often involves the subject of optics and mirrors. Considering that we also have a mention of an “image” in this verse, it is not hard to see the mirror idea. But how is the mirror being used? In the context, Paul identifies the church as his public commendation letter. If we take the middle form of this verb to indicate “they are themselves mirroring” God’s glory, then they also “are being transformed” in the process.<sup>70</sup> In this reading, “from glory to glory” fits with the thought of an “image” being bounced off a mirror.<sup>71</sup> The last phrase “even as from the Lord the Spirit” can then be seen as the source. Paul goes on to say that the “image of God” in this mirror analogy is Christ (4:4) and that God’s glory is seen in the face of Christ (4:6). For Paul, this glory is brought about in his ministry by the proper handling of God’s Word which is “the manifestation of truth” appealing to every man’s conscience (4:2). This is the “gospel” (4:3) he “preaches” (4:5) which is at times still veiled by the “god of this age.”<sup>72</sup> Finally, he attributes this work to God who has revealed “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

## Conclusion:

In this paper, I propose that 2 Corinthians 3 should be read in the context of the commendation, sufficiency, ministry, and the Spirit themes found within the letter. These themes should influence the reading of 3:1-4:6 as a defense of Paul’s ministry. Furthermore, the context of Paul’s Scriptural quotations and allusions provide the information necessary to understand the rhetoric of his defense. Paul commends his ministry of the new covenant as a fulfillment of God’s promised redemption and restoration of God’s people through the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian church is public proof of this ministry as they reflect God’s glory into the world. They are being transformed into the image of God as they behold the face of Christ in Paul’s gospel.

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<sup>67</sup> I owe these observations to Laura Tack, “A Face Reflecting Glory: 2 Cor 3,18 in Its Literary Context (2 Cor 3,1-4,15),” *Biblica* 96, no. 1 (2015): 87.

<sup>68</sup> Lamrecht argues that Paul’s gospel is the mirror, but she is getting ahead of Paul. Jan Lambrecht, “Transformation in 2 Cor 3:18,” *Biblica* 64, no. 2 (1983): 243–54.

<sup>69</sup> Plummer, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 105–6.

<sup>70</sup> Plummer points out that this same word is used to describe Jesus’ transfiguration (Mark 9:2, Matthew 17:2). Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 106.

<sup>71</sup> Duff argues “from old covenant glory to new covenant glory” while Thrall argues for a progressive increase in glory. Paul B. Duff, “Transformed ‘from Glory to Glory’: Paul’s Appeal to the Experience of His Readers in 2 Corinthians 3:18,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 4 (2008): 759–80; M.E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 285-287.

<sup>72</sup> See footnote on page 1.

In the beginning, God created man in his own image, but throughout man's history he has continued to rebel and tarnish that image. However, through Paul's new covenant ministry of the Spirit, man is being restored back into "the image of God" which is first seen in Christ and then reflected by his saints into the world.

Joe Hamm

5232 Spruce St.

Philadelphia, PA 19139

hamm@mailcan.com

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EndHamm

## Implications of Our Bodies and How They Relate to Ministry

### *Tim Bunting*

**Text:** II Corinthians 4:7-5:19

### **Introduction:**

- I. Summary of text: In this text, Paul discusses several truths about our physical and spiritual resurrected bodies and relates their implications to ministry. Paul does this to address numerous problems amongst the Corinthian brethren.
- II. About these notes:
  - A. Purpose of these notes: This information is just as valuable to us today as it was to the Corinthians then. We will discuss these truths about our bodies and consider how their implications affect our ministry and lives as Christians.
  - B. Contents of these notes: five major points of discussion:
    1. Outline of II Cor 4:7-5:19
    2. Paul's purpose in writing this text
    3. Walking by faith, not by sight
    4. The power will be of God, not ourselves
    5. Deeds done in the body
  - C. How to use these notes:
    1. The style of these notes: They are not a continued development of thought from one point to the next, but rather five separate discussions, each discussion being an analysis of the text from a different perspective; thus, each of the five points should be understandable independent of the others.
    2. Option A: read all the notes consecutively. Since all these points are based on one text, one point can help you have further insight into another point, but bear in mind that in reading all five points consecutively there will be some redundancy, since its five separate analysis of the same text.
    3. Option B: just read the point that interests you. If you are familiar with this text, each point should be sufficiently understandable independent of the other points.
    4. Option C: throw in the waste bin. These notes are not long because I have lots of good content, but rather to discourage you from reading them so that you won't take the time to discover how truly incompetent I am as a Bible teacher. Cheers!

### **Body:**

#### I. OUTLINE OF II COR 4:7-5:19

##### 1. Context

##### 1. The Corinthians in general:

- a. Struggling with immorality (all rooted in pride).

b. Struggling with proud leaders trying to commandeer the congregation.

2. Previous interactions:

- a. Paul started and worked with the congregation for 1.5 years.
- b. After leaving, Paul wrote them a (at least one) letter (I Cor 5:9).
- c. They responded to that letter, and Paul then wrote I Corinthians (I Cor 7:1).
- d. It is likely then that Paul wrote them a very harsh letter of rebuke after that (II Cor 7:8).
- e. It is also possible that Paul had an additional harsh visit (II Cor 12:14).
- f. Paul was then awaiting their response from Titus which turned out to be a positive reception of his harsh letter (II Cor 7:5-7).
- g. Having been comforted by their positive reception of his harsh letter, he then writes II Corinthians.

3. Purpose of II Corinthians:

- a. Strengthen his relationship with the Corinthians.
- b. Discuss the nature of gospel ministry.
- c. Remind them about their offering to Jerusalem.
- d. Address the proud leaders.<sup>1</sup>

4. Outline of II Corinthians 1:1-4:6

- a. 1:1-11: Salutations and introduction.
- b. 1:12-2:13: Paul explains changes in travel plans.
- c. 2:14-4:6: Pauls discusses the nature of gospel ministry
  - 1) 2:14-17: Proclaiming the victory of Christ
  - 2) 3:1-18: The ministry is of the Spirit
  - 3) 4:1-6: Paul's character in ministry

B. II Cor 4:7-12: The nature of gospel ministry

1. 4:7: A description the ministers: "treasure in earthen vessels"

- a. Treasure: this is the truth of the gospel that is being preached / not peddled.
- b. Earthen vessels: this is a reference to their physical bodies which are functional but crude and replaceable objects used for spreading the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Paul seeks to both strengthen his relationship with the Corinthian brethren and address the proud leaders by discussing the nature of gospel ministry. By helping them understand what true ministry is, they will 1.) see that Paul's ministry conforms to that, and trust him more, and 2.) see that the ministry of the proud leaders is quite different, and that they are not trustworthy. II Cor 4:7-5:19 falls in the middle of this discussion of gospel ministry.

2. 4:8-10: A description of the ministry: “
  - a. The suffering of the body:
    - 1) Afflicted
    - 2) Crushed
    - 3) Perplexed
    - 4) Persecuted
    - 5) Struck down
  - b. Help from the Lord:
    - 1) Not despairing
    - 2) Not forsaken
    - 3) Not destroyed
3. 4:10-12: Summary description of ministry:
  - a. The minister suffers in the body to manifest the life of Christ.
    - 1) Suffering to emulate the earthly life He lead.
    - 2) Suffering in order to share the eternal life He offers.
  - b. The “dying” of the minister leads to others having life.<sup>3</sup>

#### C. II Cor 4:13-18: Motivations for ministry

1. 4:13-15: Reasons they are willing to suffer death in order to minister the gospel:
  - a. Faith in the resurrection.
  - b. For the sake of those being saved.
  - c. For abounding thanks to the glory of God.
2. 4:16-18: Further discussion of faith in the resurrection:
  - a. Description of the resurrection
    - 1) As the outer man decays daily, the inner man is renewed daily.
    - 2) The greatness of the eternal glory our bodies will receive is not comparable with any affliction our bodies have suffered.
  - b. Description of faith

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<sup>2</sup> NOTE: In this verse is found a key concept that the body (and other things) are made weak so that the strength of God will be made known.

<sup>3</sup> NOTE: This is an example of the key concept introduced in the previous verse: The strength of God is made known through our weakness. God uses the weakness of the ministers in order to share His message of life.

- 1) Faith is focusing on the eternal unseen things rather than the temporary visible things.
- 2) This is comparable to “hope” in Rom 8:24-25.

D. II Cor 5:1-5: Further discussion of the resurrected body

1. 5:1-4: Comparison between earthly body and resurrected spiritual body

a. Earthly body:

- 1) Tent
- 2) Is our house
- 3) Able to be torn down
- 4) Cause for groaning
- 5) Insufficient clothing
- 6) Burdens us
- 7) Wanting immortality

b. Spiritual body:

- 1) Building
- 2) Is our home
- 3) Not made with hands (i.e. made in heaven not earth)
- 4) Fulfillment of our longing
- 5) Sufficient clothing (doesn't leave us naked)
- 6) All of burdens (immortality) swallowed up
- 7) Clothes us with immortality

2. 5:5: The assurance of our resurrected body

- a. God prepared us for this very purpose. It's our destiny, not just something incidental.
- b. He has given us His Spirit to dwell in the body as a pledge that we will soon have a spiritual body.

E. II Cor 5:6-19: Effects of understanding the resurrection of our bodies

1. 5:6-8: More courage

- a. “We are of good courage”. This echoes “we do not lose heart” found in II Cor 4:1, 16.
- b. Because the promise of our the resurrected spiritual body ...
  - 1) We do not lose heart because of what happens to our physical bodies.
  - 2) We are of good courage when considering the death of our physical bodies.

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## 2. 5:9-10: New purpose

## a. Ambition is to please the Lord.

- 1) Understanding the inevitable destruction of our physical bodies takes away our ambition for earthly things.
- 2) Instead our ambition becomes living for our spiritual Lord who will resurrect us and with whom we shall live eternally.

## b. Do good in preparation for judgment

- 1) We will all face judgment based on the good and bad we do in the body.
- 2) Therefore the purpose of our body is to be used for doing good.

## 3. 5:11-17: Better judgement

## a. How Paul hopes the resurrection changes their judgment

- 1) Paul hopes they will judge him to be faithful
  - a) His purpose is to persuade people to fear the Lord.
  - b) He hopes that this is evident to the Corinthians.
- 2) Paul hopes they will no longer trust those who judge based on the flesh
  - a) There were the proud leaders who judged based on the flesh.
  - b) They judged themselves to be great and Paul weak by fleshly standards.
  - c) Based on what they've learned about the resurrected body, Paul hopes they will no longer trust ministers who boast in the flesh.
- 3) Paul hopes they will recognize true ministry
  - a) Because Christ died and was raised for us, we too, also ought to die and live for Him.
  - b) This is what ministry truly is, no matter how radical it seems.

## b. True spiritual judgment

- 1) Because people's flesh is made irrelevant by the resurrection, we no longer judge anyone based on the resurrection.
- 2) EX: We no longer judge Christ based on His human flesh because He is resurrected.
- 3) Our spiritual resurrection begins at conversion and that's when our flesh passes away. So we should not be judging any brother based on the flesh.

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<sup>4</sup> NOTE: This verse reveals another key concept of "walking by faith" which echoes 4:18. The gospel is eternal and unseen, so we need to have faith in it. The motivation for ministering the gospel is the hope of our resurrected body, something else that is both unseen and therefore eternal. Without willingness to "walk by faith", none of us can minister.

## F. II Cor 5:18-19: Back to ministry

1. God gave us all these things:
  - a. Promise of resurrection
  - b. Reconciliation in Christ
  - c. Ministry of reconciliation
2. God made us to be ministers of reconciliation
  - a. Reconciliation:
    - 1) What reconciliation is: God doesn't count our sins against us.
    - 2) How God reconciles: in Christ.
  - b. We are ministers of this reconciliation
    - 1) He has given the word of reconciliation.
    - 2) We share that word.

## II. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN WRITING THIS TEXT

## A. Comfort in affliction

1. Many texts about comfort in affliction (II Cor 1:3-11; 2:1-4; 6:4-10; 7:5-7; 8:2).
2. This implies there was a need for comfort
  - a. The Corinthians
    - 1) We don't know what specific affliction they were suffering. For instance, it seems as if they were free from persecution early (Acts 18:9-10).
    - 2) However, every Christian certainly is in need of God's comfort throughout their life. Perhaps they need comfort because of all the constant church drama.
  - b. Paul
    - 1) We *do* know some of Paul's specific afflictions:
      - a) Persecutions suffered throughout his ministry (I Cor 4:11-13).
      - b) Specifically recently in Asia (II Cor 1:8-11).
      - c) Suffering emotionally in working with the difficult Corinthian brethren (II Cor 7:5; 11:28-29).
    - 2) Perhaps Paul is writing about comfort in affliction because *he* is the one who has been in great need.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> NOTE: Regardless of the specific need, it is obvious that comfort was something that Paul felt very compelled to write about, and therefore we should expect that his discussion about ministry will also relate to this need.

3. How the truth of our bodies relates to comfort in affliction
  - a. Our suffering in the physical body is not in vain (II Cor 4:7-12, 15)
    - 1) The minister is destined to suffer affliction in the body
      - a) The minister carries of the treasure (the death of Jesus) in their body (4:10).
      - b) They share this treasure at the cost of suffering as Jesus did, and present it by suffering the way Jesus did (4:8, 11).
    - 2) However, suffering to preach the gospel is worth it
      - a) Provides life to those who hear (4:12).
      - b) Results in more giving of thanks and thus more glory to God (4:15).
  - b. Suffering in the physical body is temporary and incomparable to the glory of our spiritual body (II Cor 4:16-5:5).
    - 1) Yes, our physical bodies suffer affliction
      - a) The outer man decays daily
      - b) Our body can be torn down (die)
      - c) In our physical body we groan, long, feel naked (insufficient), burdened
    - 2) However, the truth about our spiritual body puts this affliction into context
      - a) How this affliction is described:
        1. “Momentary light affliction” (4:17).
        2. Incomparable to the “eternal weight and glory” our willingness to suffer for Christ produces (4:17).
      - b) Conclusion:
        1. There is no affliction in the body so bad that we can’t endure it temporarily.
        2. There is no affliction in the body so bad that it won’t be worth it in the end.
  - c. Death of the physical body is irrelevant (II Cor 4:13-14; 5:8-10)
    - 1) Death is the ultimate enemy (I Cor 15:26).
    - 2) And yet, to the Christian, death is ultimately irrelevant because we will be raised up after (4:14).
    - 3) We now prefer to be dead and with the Lord
      - a) We would rather be absent from the physical body and home with the Lord (5:8).
      - b) Paul sees death as gain because it is better to be with Christ (Phi 1:21-23).
    - 4) Rather than suffer the from fear of death (Heb 2:15), we live in expectation of judgement (5:10).

- d. Result:
  - 1) Endurance (4:8)
  - 2) Comfort (4:16)
  - 3) Courage (5:6-8)
- B. Address boasting in the flesh
  - 1. Many texts about fleshly judgment
    - a. The proud leaders:
      - 1) They would boast in their own flesh (II Cor 5:12; 11:18).
      - 2) They would discredit Paul based on fleshly “weaknesses” (II Cor 10:10; 11:5-6).
    - b. The Corinthians would follow along with their judgments (I Cor 3:1-4).
  - 2. Paul needs them to change their fleshly / physical form of judging
    - a. Paul needs them to realize that leaders aren’t meant to compete against one another and boast in their physical qualities (I Cor 4:6-10).
    - b. Paul needs the Corinthian brethren to stop evaluating each other in this way (I Cor 4:3-5).
    - c. He needs them to have the right and proper spiritual judgment (I Cor 1:10; 2:14-15).
    - d. So Paul writes to them about the truth of our physical body and resurrected body so that they will learn to no longer pass fleshly judgments (II Cor 5:12).
  - 3. How the truth of our bodies addresses boasting in the flesh
    - a. The treasure is the message, not the messenger (II Cor 4:7-12)
      - 1) The message (the dying of Jesus) is the treasure.
      - 2) The messenger is an earthen vessel
        - a) What earthen vessels are like
          - 1. Ordinary
          - 2. Functional (for serving a purpose, not decoration) (some functions are lowly such as urinals Rom 9:21)).
          - 3. Replaceable
          - 4. Breakable
      - 3) The flesh of the minister is weak
        - a) The suffering of the minister manifests the suffering of Christ (4:11).
        - b) The weakness of the flesh is what manifests the greatness of God (1:8-9; 3:3; 4:7)
    - b. The flesh is temporary, unimpressive, and insufficient (II Cor 4:16-5:5)
      - 1) Anything impressive about your flesh is temporary and will soon decay (4:16).

- 2) Anything impressive about your flesh is not worth being compared to the glory of our new resurrected bodies (4:17).
- 3) No matter how impressive our flesh is, it's still insufficient and leaves us longing for something better (5:2-4).
- c. Your nature of your body doesn't matter, what you *do* with your body is what matters
  - 1) Rather than the appearance of the flesh bringing merit, it's manifesting the dying of Jesus in our bodies that matters (4:11-12, 15).
  - 2) We won't be judged based on our bodies, but rather our actions done in the body (II Cor 5:10).
- d. Our flesh is irrelevant (II Cor 5:16-17)
  - 1) Even before we receive our resurrected bodies, every believer has died to the flesh and been resurrected into a new spiritual creature (5:17)
  - 2) Just as we no longer judge Jesus based on His human flesh because He has now resurrected, we should no longer judge brethren based on their flesh (5:16).
- e. Result:
  - 1) Brethren are no longer recognized or judged based on their flesh (5:16).
  - 2) Boasting in their own flesh is irrelevant.
  - 3) Discrediting others (like Paul) based on the flesh is irrelevant.<sup>6</sup>

## II. WALKING BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

### C. About the text (II Cor 5:7)

1. Ignored context
  - a. It's such a powerful concept that these few words were given their own verse.
  - b. And it's such a large encompassing concept that it can be applied to almost any context.
  - c. Since it is so easily applied to other contexts, it's original context is often unknown and overlooked.
2. Concept is key to *this* context
  - a. However, if it was written in this particular context, it must be a key concept to this original context.
  - b. How it fits in the original context:

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<sup>6</sup> NOTE: By Paul addressing boasting in the flesh in this way, he completely invalidates the boasts of the proud leaders as well as their criticisms of Paul. This both lessens the influence of these leaders as well as strengthens their trust in Paul. Instead of interpreting the "weakness" of Paul's flesh as being weakness of his personhood, they will instead see that rather than Paul being occupied with boasting about his physical flesh, he renders his flesh as an earthen vessel to carry the message of Christ's death, and that is this mark of a true minister.

- 1) Every reasoning that Paul is using to change their manner of thinking is based on an unseen eternal truth.
- 2) Therefore, it is necessary for them to accept and walk by faith.
- 3) EX:
  - a) 5:6-10: When speaking about his anticipation of being apart from his physical body and home with the Lord, Paul needs to interject the foundation of his reasoning: it's by faith not by sight. He has not seen the afterlife nor his resurrected body, but he is assured that it is far better. Only someone walking by faith not only accepts, but anticipates being apart from this physical body.
  - b) 4:16-18: Paul doesn't look at the visible temporary decaying body, instead he has faith in the unseen renovated eternal body. So only by faith in that can he not lose heart upon experiencing physical affliction.
  - c) The mindset of the Corinthians will only change to that of Paul's upon also believing the unseen things that Paul preaches and believes in.

D. What does it mean to walk by faith?

1. Seeing by faith: believing the unseen
  - a. Seeing that isn't focused on visible seen things:
    - 1) We ought not to focus on the things that are seen because they are temporary, and thus ultimately irrelevant (II Cor 4:18).
    - 2) This was the problem of the proud leaders who focused on physical appearance (II Cor 5:12).
  - b. Seeing that *is* focused on invisible things:
    - 1) Comparison between II Cor 5:12 and I Sam 16:7
      - a) II Cor 5:12: the proud Corinthian leaders would focus on physical appearance rather than the heart.
      - b) I Sam 16:7: God tells Samuel to not look at the appearance of David's older brother because God had rejected. God explains that He looks at the heart, rather than physical appearance.
  - c. Visible and invisible things
    - 1) The natural world: we live in a physical natural world that we can see. This is obviously a reality because we see it. However, since it is the only reality we can see, we are tempted to believe it is the *only* reality.
    - 2) The spiritual world: however, the Bible makes it clear that there is also a spiritual reality in which dwell and act spiritual beings, God and demons for instance (Eph 2:6; 6:12). The fact that this reality is unseen doesn't make it any less real (EX: we don't see cell signals, but that doesn't mean this unseen information isn't being transferred in reality (this is Scott Smelser's example)).

- d. Seeing by faith is accepting and believing in the reality of these unseen spiritual truths.
2. Walking by faith: basing daily decisions on the reality of these unseen truths.
  - a. Walking
    - 1) Walking is how we choose to live our life based on each decision we make.
    - 2) Example verses: Eph 2:10; 4:12; 5:2; Phi 3:17; I Jn 1:6-7
  - b. Walking by what we see:
    - 1) This means we make each decision based only on what we see and know in this natural world.
    - 2) This is living for this world (reality) only.
  - c. Walking by what we don't see:
    - 1) This means my decisions are based on unseen spiritual realities I believe to be true.
    - 2) Living for the next world (reality) primarily.
3. The faith we walk by isn't blind
  - a. God expects us to believe, but not without reason.
  - b. Throughout the Bible, God gives various visible and verifiable proofs of why we should believe in the invisible and unverifiable (Ex 4:1-9; Mat 8:5-13; Jn 10:37-38).
  - c. Evidence for faith in this text:
    - 1) God promises that He will give us new resurrected spiritual bodies in the future (II Cor 4:14; 5:1).
    - 2) To prove that He will fulfill this future promise, He gave us His Spirit to dwell with us in the present. The present indwelling of His Spirit in our physical bodies serves as a down payment and assurance of the future reception of our resurrected spiritual bodies (II Cor 5:5).
    - 3) The reality of the indwelling was a verifiable proof.
      - a) God promised that He would send His Holy Spirit by Jesus (Isa 44:4; Mat 3:11).
      - b) The coming and reception of the Holy Spirit isn't exclusively miraculous abilities, but was generally verified by miraculous abilities.
        1. God promises in the Old Testament that miracles would accompany the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-31).
        2. God fulfills this promise in Acts 2:14-21.
        3. The apostles speaking in tongues was proof that Jesus had poured forth the Spirit and that it could be received by faith in Him (Acts 2:33, 38).

4. Cornelius and company speaking in tongues was proof that they also could receive His spirit (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18).
  - 4) The Corinthians had miraculous abilities (I Cor 12, 14) which served as proof that they had received the Holy Spirit. That verifiable proof was then evidence that testified they would also receive new spiritual bodies. God did not expect the Corinthians to believe in unseen things without proof.
  - 5) Neither does God expect us to believe without evidence.
- E. Unseen things in this text believed by faith:
1. That the greatest treasure is Jesus dying for His people (4:7)
  2. Jesus gives us life (4:12)
  3. Jesus resurrected (4:14)
  4. God will resurrect us (4:14)
  5. Our inner man is being renewed (4:16)
  6. The glory of our resurrected body will surpass all we know (4:17)
  7. This physical body will never be our perfect home (5:1-4)
  8. Our resurrected body is our true home (5:1-4)
  9. There is an upcoming judgment we must all face (5:10)
  10. We are new creatures after conversion (5:16-17)
  11. Christ death reconciles us to God (5:18-19)
- F. How faith in the truth of our bodies impacts the way we walk
1. Regarding suffering (II Cor 4:16-17)
    - a. There is no suffering so great it won't be worth it; therefore those who walk by faith are more willing to subject themselves to suffering if the task requires. Where others would not be willing to fulfill such a task, those of faith will.
    - b. There is no sacrifice so great it won't be worth it; therefore those who walk by faith are more willing to sacrifice whatever is required of them to be more useful in ministry. Those of faith realize the best is yet to come, so there is no comfort in this life so great that they aren't willing to give it up.
  2. Regarding death (II Cor 5:6-8)
    - a. We have no fear of ceasing to exist
      - 1) The fear of death and nonexistence has plagued man throughout generations so that those in power have used all their efforts to immortalize themselves in hopes to reverse the inevitable. Those who walk by faith are assured that they will never cease to exist, so rather than dreading inevitable demise, they accept death as a passage that leads to a better existence in a more perfect home with Christ.
      - 2) The fear of an unfulfilling and insignificant life is also a strong force in this world. People desperately seek to accomplish great things and feel as if every moment is worth living because this is the only life we have.

It's similar to the pressure a child feels to have as much fun as possible on their birthday. What might be a completely sufficient amount of enjoyment for any regular day doesn't meet the expectations of a birthday, and thus the child is ultimately unhappy and disappointed. Those who walk by faith aren't worried about living their "best life now", for that would mean the next life is in hell. Instead they are completely content living normal mediocre lives (II Thess 3:12), anticipating greatness in the next.

3. Regarding investment (II Cor 5:1-5)

a. Expectation

- 1) Because we have brief moments of sheer joy and ecstasy, we mistakenly hope that prolonged sublime is sustainable in this life. We see it in movies and commercials, where the sun is setting, and the music is moving, and there's no feelings or pain or preoccupations, and all the decorations are perfect and you didn't have to take the time to set them up. So many endlessly strive to attain this thinking that it can be achieved with money, possessions, relationships, or accomplishments. It is however impossible, and leads to unending want and persisting dissatisfaction.
- 2) However, those who walk by faith understand that this body and this earthly life are designed by God to be imperfect, continually flirting with satisfaction, but never delivering. Rather than being exceedingly frustrated by this, those of faith accept it, content themselves with what they have, and expect the best in the life to come.

b. Earthly investment

- 1) Those who believe this life can deliver satisfaction invest heavily in their physical bodies and this earthly life:
  - a) Physical body
    1. Skinny
    2. Muscles
    3. Cool clothes
    4. Super healthy
  - b) Earthly life
    1. Perfect job
    2. Good income
    3. Cool car
    4. Big house
    5. Talents and hobbies
    6. Impressive accomplishments
- 2) However, these things won't deliver satisfaction
  - a) Rarely anyone can actually accomplish and obtain all that they desire.
  - b) Those that do find they don't satisfy.

1. Every earthly blessing comes with a draw back.
  2. No earthly blessing is so great to actually satisfy
- \* EXAMPLE: Investing in this earthly life is like someone who goes on vacation to a distant exotic city, but upon arriving at his hotel room, he realizes he doesn't like the curtains, so he goes to buy new ones to replace them. However, he then realizes the bedspread doesn't match the curtains, so he returns to the store to replace bedspread as well. Each time he returns to his hotel room he finds another way in which he can improve it to make it exactly how he wants it, going as far as painting and buying a new TV, etc. Soon his two weeks of vacation are spent. He loses all of his investment in the hotel room and never even got a chance to visit the city like he planned.
- c. Eternal investment
    - 1) Those who walk by faith understand that satisfaction is not within this life, but the next, and therefore heavily invest in their eternal life anticipating their resurrected spiritual bodies.
      - a) They make it their ambition to please the Lord rather than self (5:9).
      - b) Each decision is made with eternal judgment in mind (5:10).
    - 2) This provides as much satisfaction as this life can offer, as well as the incomparable glory to come.
4. Regarding judgment (II Cor 5:16-17)
    - a. Earthly judgment
      - 1) Natural tendency is to evaluate and judge based on what we see.
        - a) We judge the value of a girl by her beauty.
        - b) We judge the leadership of a man by his stature.
        - c) We judge the quality of a preacher by how entertaining he is.
        - d) We trust celebrity political views because they sing well or are impressive athletes.
        - e) Proof of how susceptible we are to this is that TV commercials for medications will use actors who are know for their roles as doctors.
      - 2) This judgement is completely inaccurate because people's physical bodies are irrelevant to their quality and character.
    - b. Spiritual judgment
      - 1) Those who walk by faith understand that the physical body does not indicate the value someone does or doesn't have.
        - a) The example of Christ (5:16):
          1. We knew Christ in the flesh. Based on His flesh, Christ was an insignificant nobody, weak and humiliated like the rest.
          2. However, we do not judge Christ based on His physical body because He has since resurrected and ascended to heaven to rule as our spiritual king in His true divine form.

- b) In the same way, those who walk by faith know that saints are new spiritual creatures and will therefore not discredit someone one something so irrelevant as their physical body (5:17). For the saint...
  - 1. Stature is irrelevant to leadership.
  - 2. Gender is irrelevant to intelligence.
  - 3. Race is irrelevant to worth.
  - 4. Age is irrelevant to importance.
  - 5. Beauty is irrelevant to everything.
- 2) Those who walk by faith understand that a saint's value comes from being a new creature in Christ.
  - a) Christ makes His people new creatures by renewing their inner man and this is what makes them valuable.
  - b) Therefore changes in the inner man, such as character and conduct, and the condition of the heart are the things that matter to those who walk by faith.
- 5. Regarding evangelism (II Cor 4:13-15)
  - a. There are many earthly reasons to not want to evangelize
    - 1) Fear of rejection
    - 2) Fear of persecution
    - 3) Feelings of inadequacy
    - 4) Etc...
  - b. Those who walk by faith have one sufficient reason to evangelize: they believe.
    - 1) Belief in the resurrection
      - a) Those who walk by faith believe that Christ resurrected; therefore, it's true.
      - b) Therefore, they believe they also will bodily resurrect; therefore, it's worth it.
    - 2) Those who walk by faith understand that none of the troubles that come with speaking the gospel negate the reality of it, therefore they never have a reason to quit speaking about it, so they always do.
      - a) Faith is the most essential element in evangelism. If we truly believe, then we will readily speak.
      - b) A TEST: Have you ever imagined the scenario where the resurrected Christ appeared to you? Do you imagine yourself being forever changed and more fully committing yourself to evangelism after that great visitation? That reveals that currently you are failing in evangelism because you don't fully believe. We shouldn't need to see the resurrected Christ in order to be convicted to evangelize. Our faith in Him should be sufficient.

6. Regarding purpose (II Cor 5:13-15)
  - a. How these verses relate this application to the body:
    - 1) This application actually is not related to how knowledge concerning our body impacts our walk. This application is much bigger than that. This text is about how the knowledge of our Savior impacts the way we walk.
    - 2) However, Paul connects this application to the context of our bodies by emphasizing the death and resurrection of Christ and our subsequent spiritual death and resurrection. Making connection to the death and resurrection of physical bodies, it actually speaks about the death of our old manner of life, and our resurrection to newness of life.
    - 3) This text then explains *why* those who walk by faith invest in the life to come rather than this earthly life now.
      - a) Paul
        1. Paul's devotion to Christ would've seemed fanatical and extreme to most (5:13).
        2. So Paul explains *why* he goes to such extreme measures for the sake of the gospel.
      - b) Christians
        1. In the same way, those who walk by faith will lead seemingly fanatical lives for the sake of the gospel.
        2. This text explains *why*.
  - b. We live for Christ because Christ died for us.
    - 1) The love of Christ controls us
      - a) Love, not guilt
        1. It isn't guilt and debt that moves us to act.
        2. It is the love that Christ has shown us that truly moves us.
          - a. We don't obey in with a desperate hope of repaying.
          - b. We obey with the desire to show thanks.
      - b) Controls us
        1. Upon understanding the extent of the love shown to us in Christ, our spirits within are constrained and compelled to act.
        2. It isn't a removal of our freewill, but rather a love that overcomes our freewill so that there is nothing else we can imagine doing.
        3. EX: I break down on the highway, and I call my friend to come pick me up. The next day he breaks down and calls me. No one is forcing me to go pick him up, but I feel obligated simply because of what he did for me previously.
    - 2) Because Jesus died, we all must die
      - a) Jesus' death obliges

1. Why Jesus' death obliges (5:15)
    - a. Jesus went through the pain and difficulty of living and dying
    - b. He did that on our behalf (died in our place).
  2. Obligation in our spirit (this is the same as the point made previously)
  3. Obligation by nature:
    - a. We didn't ask for the gift of Jesus' life, but we desperately needed it, so God gave it to us regardless.
    - b. Since we have been offered such a great gift, it would be a great offense to refuse it.
    - c. Thus, we are obligate to receive this gift or else face the consequences.
- b) How those who walk by faith die for Jesus
1. Ways that they don't die for Jesus
    - a. Spiritually: Jesus died physically so that we would live spiritually. Clearly dying spiritually would be counterproductive.
    - b. Physically: Our physical death marks the end of journey and testing and the beginning of our judgment (II Cor 5:10; Heb 9:27).
  2. They die for Jesus by living for Him (5:15)
    - a. Ironically, we die for Jesus by living for Him.
    - b. We die to self: living for Jesus is a killing our own will and desires (Lk 14:27; Rom 12). Rather than living this life to its earthly potential, those who walk by faith sacrifices comforts, pleasures, and opportunities.
    - c. And we live for Him: living for Jesus is committing to spend a life pleasing Jesus rather than self. Those who walk by faith do this because they believe in the unseen God who gave His life, and they would rather spend a life thanking Him, believing that this will result in spending eternity with Him.

### III. THE POWER WILL BE OF GOD, NOT OURSELVES

#### G. About the text (II Cor 4:7)

1. This text repeats a very common theme in Corinthians: the weakness of men reveals the greatness of God.
2. Paul relates this theme to the context of the body.

#### H. About the theme

1. God has made man weak for two purposes:

- a. God is the one who *can*: our weakness proves God's power because success cannot be attributed to our human limitations, but rather God's divine power.
  - 1) OT examples:
    - a) The Exodus (Ex 14:14)
    - b) Gideon's victory (Judges 7:2)
  - 2) Examples in Corinthians
    - a) I Cor 1:26-31: God chooses the weak and humble to reveal that we don't save ourselves by our own human power, but rather we are saved by His love and choosing.
    - b) I Cor 1:17: Paul doesn't preach with human wisdom or clever speech to ensure that people don't trust in *his* ability, but rather *Christ's* cross.
    - c) I Cor 2:3-5: Paul's demeanor was physically weak, but by the Spirit powerful. This was so that their faith would rest on God, and not on Paul.
- b. God is the one we *need*: our weakness leads us to trust in God because we recognize that we can't succeed with our human limitations and therefore need His divine power.
  - 1) Examples in Corinthians:
    - a) II Cor 1:8-9: Paul's near death experiences in Asia made him understand how little power he really had, so all He could do was trust in God.
    - b) II Cor 3:5: The task of ministry is beyond Paul's human ability, so he needs to rest on God to be adequately equipped.
    - c) II Cor 12:7-10: Paul was given a thorn in the flesh so that he would learn to trust in God's grace as being sufficient. Here Paul learns that human weakness makes us more powerful because it leads us to stop trusting in self, but rather in God.
    - d) II Cor 1:12: This is why Paul trust's God's methods more than his own.
  - 2) Conclusion:
    - a) When we realize our weakness, we stop trusting in ourselves and begin trusting in God instead, through prayer and obedience. In *this* way, we can accomplish infinitely more because we are allowing God to work through us. This is how our weakness leads to greatness and reveals God's greatness.
    - b) Example: A boxer is tempted to swing with all his might with his arms, but with this bad form he doesn't strike forcefully and quickly tires. Instead, a boxer needs to punch from his core. This delivers a harder blow, and conserves less energy. When we stop trusting in what seems obvious (ourselves), and begin trusting in what seems somewhat counterintuitive (an invisible God), then we will have more success.

- c. We will consider how God reveals His strength and how he leads us to trust in Him more because of the weaknesses of our bodies.
- I. God even displays His power through physical weakness in Christ.
- 1. God's dilemma
    - a. We learn the principle that a sacrifice needs to cost something in order to have value (II Sam 24:24).
    - b. Yet, how can a God with infinite power show the extent of His love for us if nothing costs Him anything?
  - 2. The solution
    - a. God subjects Himself to human weakness and limitation. In this state He suffers and is tempted just like us (Phi 2:5-8). In this state all His victories cost Him as much as it costs us.
    - b. By making Himself weak, and ultimately dying, God managed to provide us a sacrifice that cost Him a lot. The weakness He subjected Himself to manifested the greatness of His love (II Cor 13:4).
- J. How this text relates this theme to the body:
- 1. The gospel is the treasure, not the the messenger (I Cor 4:7)
    - a. Treasure: the truth about Jesus' death that bring us life.
    - b. Earthen vessels:
      - 1) Greek
        - a) Earthen = ostrakinos: made of earth, i.e. clay.
        - b) Vessel = skeuos: a vessel to contain liquid, instrument by which anything is done (ex: anchor).
      - 2) Other uses of vessels
        - a) Rom 9:21: vessels of honor and common use.
        - b) II Tim 2:20: there are vessels of honor and dishonor. To be an honorable vessel we need to be purified and sanctified. Thus, the value of the vessel is not in the strength of the body, but the quality of character.
      - 3) How our bodies are like earthen vessels
        - a) Breakable: our earthly tents are susceptible to injury, illness and death. How can the gospel depend on something so frail?
        - b) Replaceable: if one vessel breaks, simply use another. They are easy to come by. The gospel doesn't depend on one individual, instead, God has employed millions.
        - c) Useful, not valuable: the value of the vessel is in it's usefulness, but not in the inherent value of the vessel itself. We can do good work for the gospel, and therefore our use is valuable, but our value is not within our body or personhood. Ex: some vessels are urinals. That is a very valuable vessel, but because of it's use, not because of how it was manufactured.

- c. Conclusion:
  - 1) The gospel is valuable beyond measure because it saves. Ministers are charged with sharing this treasure.
  - 2) Therefore the minister is useful, but not valuable like the treasure. Therefore we need to stop valuing people and their abilities. Don't glory in someone's looks or intelligence. Instead glory in the gospel that they are sharing.
- 2. God sustains man (II Cor 4:8-9)
  - a. Paul was suffering immensely because of the task of ministry, and yet God was sustaining.
  - b. We aren't here as long as our physical bodies can last, we are here as long as God wants us to stay and keep working (Phi 1:23-26).
  - c. So our work isn't to the praise of our great human capabilities, but rather to the God who permits us to live and sustains our lives.
- 3. The suffering of the minister in the flesh reveals the gospel (II Cor 4:10-12)
  - a. Christ: God manifests His love by suffering for us.
  - b. The minister:
    - 1) The suffering of the minister emulates the suffering of Christ to the world. When others see how a minister is willing to suffer for the sake of Christ, they see a first hand example of how Christ was willing to suffer for us.
    - 2) The suffering of the minister reveals the extent of his conviction. Someone who is willing to suffer for Christ is certainly sincere and can be trusted. This also reveals to others the extent of conviction and what discipleship really is.
- 4. The weakness of our physical bodies leads us to set our hopes above (II Cor 4:16-5:10)
  - a. Our bodies are vain because they are weak.
    - 1) Outer man is decaying daily (4:16)
      - a) Our bodies steadily decrease in value on a daily basis, regardless of how much we care for them. So there's only so much we can invest into it.
      - b) Ex: it's like buying a brand new car. It will only get worse. So there is a limit to the value of investing in it.
    - 2) Our bodies will die (5:1)
      - a) Ultimately our earthly tent will be torn down and destroyed completely. This will likely happen earlier than we expect.
      - b) So even if we are in top shape, we can still lose all of our investment in our bodies.
    - 3) Our physical lives are always disappointing (5:2-4)

- a) No matter how much we thrive and prosper, we are still groaning and longing to be clothed with something better. Life will never be so perfect that we no longer want.
  - b) If we can't be satisfied in this earthly life, then we should invest more into something else.
- b. So we invest in spiritual things
- 1) We invest in the inner man and become more valuable vessels based on our character rather than physical strength (4:16).
  - 2) We focus on in the incomparable glory to come rather than the corruption of physical bodies (4:17-18).
  - 3) We look to find fulfillment in our relationship with God and life with Him in heaven (5:2-8).
  - 4) We therefore invest in pleasing Him knowing that we will be judged (5:9-10).
5. We no longer praise man for the "strength" of his flesh (II Cor 5:12, 16-17)
- a. People will take pride in their physical strength, but once we properly understand the weakness of man and how incomparable he is to the greatness of God, we will no longer be impressed with or focus on that. We understand they are nothing without Christ, and nothing compared to Christ, so there is no use being impressed with them instead of Christ.
  - b. Ex: Picture frames can be very ornate and beautiful, even so, no one really cares about them when they are holding a Picasso, because the value of the frame doesn't compare to what it contains.

#### IV. DEEDS DONE IN THE BODY

##### K. How does God judge / view us?

- 1. Lot's of misconceptions
  - a. Corinthian misconceptions
    - 1) I Corinthians 6: Our bodies are designed to be evil, so it's only natural that we do evil things, and thus evil deeds done in the body aren't significant. "The stomach is for food, and food is for the stomach". So rather than judging us based on what our bodies do, God will judge us based on our Spirit.
    - 2) I Corinthians 7: Our bodies are designed to be evil, so we need to punish the body and achieve a higher form of spirituality by abstaining from all forms of pleasure.
  - b. Modern misconceptions: Similar to I Corinthians 6, many today claim that God only judges the heart, and doesn't take our actions into account. Our evil deeds can be justified by our good intentions.
- 2. The truth: God judges / views us based on our actions committed in the body (II Cor 5:10)
  - a. What we are:

- 1) Human beings consist of at least two things: body and spirit / soul (Mat 10:28; I Thes 5:23).
  - 2) Body
    - a) We are not our bodies.
    - b) We are given bodies that we inhabit (II Cor 5:6-8).
  - 3) Soul / spirit
    - a) I don't know the difference, so I'll speak of them as being the same (Heb 4:12).
    - b) We are persons with desires and choices. This aspect of us is more linked to our soul or spirit (Deut 4:29; 6:5; Ps 84:2).
    - c) Our soul / is are also more profoundly connected to our essence and identity (Mat 16:26).
- b. God does not judge us based on our bodies
- 1) Thus, the nature or form of our bodies is irrelevant and doesn't affect or determine how God views or judges us (II Cor 5:16-17).
  - 2) If our bodies are only vehicles that God has created and given to us to inhabit and use, our bodies themselves are merely tools, and not who we truly are.
- c. God judges us based on our deeds committed in our bodies
- 1) Rather than judging us on the nature of our bodies, God judges us on who we *really* are.
  - 2) Our actions are what define us.
    - a) Our bodies are vehicles and tools that our souls / spirits inhabit.
    - b) Two types of actions:
      1. Our bodies have natural desires. We can decide to let the desires of our flesh / body influence and determine what our spirits choose to do with our bodies.
      2. God speaks to our spirit by His Spirit (through the Bible). We can decide to let God's Spirit influence and determine what our spirits choose to do with our bodies.
      3. The first choice is walking by the flesh, and the second choice is walking by the Spirit (Rom 8:4).
  - c) The choice between these two types of actions is the constant war of humanity:
    1. Mk 14:38: Our spirits want to what God tells us to do, but we are weak and easily give in to the desires of the flesh instead.
    2. Rom 7:22-23: We agree that the Law is good and desire to obey, however, our bodies have contrasting desires which "wage war" against our spirit that knows and desires to do right.

3. Rom 8:12-14: Rather than being a slave to the desires of the flesh, with the help of God's Spirit, our spirits can decide to put an end to living according to our fleshly desires.
- d) Thus, what we choose to do is who we *really* are
1. We have many simultaneous conflicting desires.
    - a. I want to lose weight. I want to eat ice cream.
    - b. I want to obey God. I want to satisfy my flesh.
  2. However, we ultimately do what we want to do, and what we do reveals who we truly are.
    - a. As previously stated, our souls /spirits are more closely linked to what we want and desire and who we really are as people.
    - b. Thus, the victorious conflicting desire reveals who we are.
      1. A part of me wanted to lose weight, but a bigger part of me wanted to eat ice cream, so I ate ice cream. The fact that I ate ice cream reveals to me which desire was greater, and thus what desire more accurately represents who I was at that moment, and likely who I am right now.
      2. A part of me wanted to please God by overcoming temptation. A bigger part of me wanted to satisfy the flesh, so I gave into temptation. The fact that I sinned reveals that my desire to serve the flesh was greater than my desire to serve God, and thus more accurately represents who I was at that moment, and likely who I am right now.
- 3) God views and judges us based on how our deeds because that reveals what we ultimately want, and thus who we truly are.
- d. The significance of the body
- 1) Comparison of II Corinthians 5 & I Corinthians 15:
    - a) II Cor 5: a completely new and different body?
      1. Based on the text of II Cor 5, it would seem as if our physical bodies are destroyed, and God produces completely new and different bodies.
      2. Examples:
        - a. The outer man decays (II Cor 4:16).
        - b. Earthly tent is torn down (II Cor 5:1)
        - c. We long to be clothed with something else entirely (II Cor 5:2-4).
      3. It might seem as if our soul will resurrect and be given a new and different upgraded body. However, based on other texts, this is not truly the case.

- b) I Cor 15: a transformed body
  - 1. I Corinthians certainly speaks to the stark contrast between our earthly body and our resurrected body (I Cor 15:42-49).
  - 2. However, this new body is revealed to be, not a new separate body, but rather a *transformation* of our original bodies (I Cor 15:50-53).
  - 3. So we are not given completely different bodies, but rather our earthly corrupting outer man is upgraded into an eternal spiritual body.
- 2) What we do in this body is significant because it's the same body we will have in heaven.
  - a) Yes we can be forgiven of sin, but I think scripture gives us additional reason to use these bodies properly because these are the bodies we will bear in heaven. This gives me additional motivation to truly render it as a tool for Jesus, not for Satan (Rom 6:12-14).
  - b) My body is already the body of Christ, so there is great spiritual ramifications if I use it for sin in this life (I Cor 6:15).
  - c) The illicit use of my body affects my spirit (I Cor 6:17).
  - d) Thus sins with my body are especially self-destructive (I Cor 6:18).
  - e) For this reason there is additional need for me to make my body my slave, rather than vice versa (I Cor 9:27).
- 1.

## Conclusion:

### I. Summary of points:

- A. This whole text relates the implications of our earthly a resurrected bodies to our ministry.
- B. Paul's purpose in writing this text was to provide comfort for the difficulties of ministry as well as draw our attention away from the flesh of the minister, and instead treasure the gospel message they bring.
- C. We need faith to believe in these unverified truths about the body, and thus allowing these implications to impact how we live our lives will require walking by faith.
- D. We need to embrace the weakness of our physical bodies because that leaves room for God to make known His great power, and leads us to trust in His great power rather than in ourselves.
- E. In the end, God judges us based on how our spirits choose to use our bodies, because our choice of actions reveals who we really are.

### II. Purpose of this text:

- A. The more we understand our earthly and resurrected bodies, the more we understand who we are as human beings. The more we understand who we are, the more we understand our ministry. The more we understand ministry, the more we will conduct ourselves as

proper ministers, and that leads to the “spreading [of] more and more people ... giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God” (II Cor 4:15).

- B. As Ephesians makes it clear, everything is ultimately about glorifying God. The Corinthians needed to learn the true nature of their bodies so that they would be in a better state of mind to bring glory to God, and the same is just as true for us today.

Tim Bunting  
87 Hamilton Pl. #7E NY NY 10031  
[HermanoTim@gmail.com](mailto:HermanoTim@gmail.com)

EndTimBunting

## “Unequally Yoked” *Andy Diestelkamp*

**Text: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

**Introduction:** A general outline leading up to the text helps to place Paul’s command in its proper context. When so done, it is apparent that the command is in connection with a larger appeal made in response to the conflicts Paul was having with some in the church in Corinth. Certainly the principles that Paul uses to make this specific appeal and the command itself could be applied to other circumstances, but our purpose will be to first understand Paul’s primary application before considering secondary applications. The outline directly below is arranged to highlight our text in its larger context. Only here will it be noted that some critics question whether our text belongs in this context or even genuinely to Paul. This is not due to textual variants but due to some seeing it as disruptive to Paul’s flow of thought. Specifically, because Paul’s call for openness straddles our text, it is erroneously assumed that this is not original. However, we believe that our text confronts a threat to Paul’s relationship with the saints in Corinth and, therefore, fits well in Paul’s ministry of reconciliation in Christ, especially when considering the specific nature of those threats (paganism and Judaism).

- I. Paul’s service as an Apostle relative to the saints in Corinth (1-7)
  - A. Sharing in trials and comfort (1:1-11)
  - B. Explanation of motives (1:12-2:17)
  - C. A commendable ministry (3:1-6:10)
  - D. Paul’s appeal (6:11-7:3)
    1. Be open (6:11-13)
    2. **Do not be unequally yoked (6:14-7:1)**
    3. Be open (7:2,3)
  - E. Paul’s joy (7:4-16)
- II. The collection for needy Saints (8,9)
- III. Paul’s defense and offense against false apostles (10-13)

## **Body: Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers**

### I. Understanding the text in its context

#### A. Defining Terms

1. *unequally yoked - heterozugeo* - the verb is a compound word (*zugos* = a yoke, serving to couple two things together + *heteros*= another of a different sort)
  - a. This is the only place the word is used in Scripture, and some suggest that it was created by Paul.
  - b. It is used here as a participle connected with the present tense imperative *be not*, and the range of meaning would forbid both becoming unequally yoked and remaining in

the unequal yoking.

- c. An opposite term - *sunzugos* - (*sun* = together) is used in Philippians 4:3.
  - 1) It is translated *yoke-fellows* or *fellow workers* in describing those who had been of assistance to Paul in the spread of the gospel.
  - 2) Paul uses this term as he appeals to Christians to be of the same mind (v. 2) and to help one another.

2. *unbelievers - apistoi* (*pistos* = faith + *a* = negative)

- a. Lit. it means *without faith* and can be translated *unbeliever* or *unfaithful*.
- b. The word family is used in reference to both Jews (Romans 3:3; 11:20) and pagans (1 Corinthians 10:27):
  - 1) the unconverted - (1 Corinthians 6:6; 7:12-15; 14:22-24)
  - 2) the apostate - (Titus 1:12-16; Hebrews 3:12-19)
  - 3) Besides being in this immediate context, it is also used in 2 Corinthians 4:4.
    - a) Here it is equivalent to those to whom the gospel is veiled (vs. 3).
    - b) This is most directly speaking of Jews who had rejected Jesus and/or those who were binding the Law of Moses on Gentile saints (cf. 3:7ff).

B. Paul's Concern & Reasoning (6:14-16a)

1. Paul's immediate concern is those with whom the saints in Corinth are potentially working together.
  - a. That there were "some" (3:1) trying to undermine Paul's work and influence as an apostle of Jesus Christ (though more subtle in this section) becomes clearer toward the end of the letter.
    - 1) 10:2 - "Some" of these placed their emphasis on external, fleshly, worldly values (vs. 7).
      - a) This emphasis on flesh is typical of the carnal/pagan thought and practice, and it might even be assumed/charged by "some" that Paul was behaving similarly (cf. 1:17).
      - b) However, this fleshly mindset among "many" would also include Judaizers themselves (cf. 11:18ff; Galatians 6:12,13; Philippians 3:2,3).
      - c) Consider 5:16 as being a reference to how Jewish minds once conceived of the Christ, to how they should now view Him, and to the implications of that on any efforts to bind the Law of Moses in Christ.
    - 2) 11:3,4 - These are actually preaching "another Jesus."
  - b. It is these who were veiling the gospel in concert with "the god of this age" (4:3,4) and who, like Satan, transformed themselves into "ministers of righteousness" (11:13-15).
  - c. Of course, this concern for the influence of those who were promoting something other than "our gospel" (4:3) was not limited to the church in Corinth.
    - 1) Galatians 1:6-9 - This other gospel had much to do with returning to the Law of Moses, and he was concerned about those who zealously sought to teach this doctrine (4:17) being leavening agents (5:8-12).

- 2) 1 Timothy 1:3 - Again, this pertains to those seeking to be teachers of the law (vs. 7) and to anyone who taught anything other than the doctrine of Jesus Christ (6:3).
- d. It is to both the Judaizing and pagan values and traditions that Paul is telling them not to be yoked.
  - 1) These unholy influences were making inroads, in part, by discrediting Paul and his gospel.
  - 2) Paul is calling upon them to be open with him as he has been open with them (6:11-13; 7:2).
    - a) The direct address to them by their geographic identity makes this specific and personal (cf. Galatians 3:1; Philippians 4:15).
    - b) Paul is saying that the tension in their relationship has not been because of his failure to openly communicate and reach out to them but because they were listening to the lies of false apostles which caused them to neither defend him nor adequately communicate with him.
    - c) What inevitably happens when people begin to drift into apostasy? They quit communicating with those aligned with their “old way of thinking,” mock them from a safe distance, accuse them of being what they are not, etc.
  - 3) Paul is calling upon them to quit working with these ungodly influences.
2. A series of rhetorical questions follows the command in order to illustrate the incompatibility of being yoked together with unbelievers.
  - a. *What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?* None!
    - 1) *fellowship* - *metoche* - partnership, a sharing, communion
    - 2) *righteousness* - the character or quality of being right or just, whereas *lawlessness* means literally without law. These are opposites and have nothing in common.
      - a) However, it is also interesting to consider how *righteousness* is used by Paul earlier in this letter to refer to the general plan whereby God would justifiably make man righteous through Christ (cf. 3:9; 5:21).
      - b) The gospel of Jesus Christ is not lawlessness (Indeed, we are under law in Christ - 1 Corinthians 9:21.), and, therefore, can have no partnership with such.
  - b. *What communion has light with darkness?* None!
    - 1) *communion* - *koinonia* - (from *koinos* meaning common, for example Koine Greek) it means sharing in common, fellowship, association, community, joint participation, etc.
    - 2) *light* (which is often used to stand for that which is good) and *darkness* (which is often used to stand for that which is evil) are opposites and have nothing in common.
    - 3) Yet consider that, in this letter, *light* is used in reference to God’s revelation and specifically the gospel of Jesus Christ (4:4,6) and is used as being parallel to righteousness in describing the efforts of Satan and his minions to disguise themselves (11:13-15).
  - c. *What accord has Christ with Belial [or Beliar]?* None!
    - 1) *accord* - *sumphonesis* - (from *sun* = with, together + *phone* = a sound) (cf. Eng.

*symphony*). It means literally a sounding together, harmony, agreement.

- 2) *belial* is a word used in the Old Testament (26x) of worthless, lawless, evil, people
    - a) worthless men in positions of power and wealth (Eli's sons - 1 Samuel 2:12 - Nabal - 25:17,25)
    - b) false witnesses (1 Kings 21:10,13; Proverbs 19:28)
    - c) trouble-makers (Proverbs 6:12-14; 16:27; 19:28)
    - d) those who gave the Lord's anointed trouble (Psalm 18:4)
    - e) Nahum 1:15 is interesting to consider in light of the gospel vs. idolatry.
    - d) In the period between the O.T. and the N.T., it came to be a proper name for Satan in Jewish literature.
  - 3) In Paul's couplets of contrast, Christ is equivalent to righteousness and light and Satan is connected with lawlessness and darkness. These contrasts then point to their followers.
- d. *What part has a believer with an unbeliever?* None!
- 1) *part - meris* - an assigned part, a portion, a share.
  - 2) *Believer* and *unbeliever* are opposites, and from a spiritual perspective, they share nothing in common which explains why Paul is telling them not to be yoked together.
  - 3) What does a follower of Christ share in common with a follower of Satan?
- e. *What agreement has the temple of God with idols?* None!
- 1) *agreement - sunkatathesis* - a putting together or joint deposit (as in votes); hence approval, assent.
  - 2) From the beginning of Scripture to its end is the affirmation that there is only one true God. Jehovah God Almighty is the antithesis of dumb, impotent, idols, and, therefore, they have nothing in common with one another.
  - 3) Idols in the temple of God would raise painful memories for those wishing to glance back through Jewish history. Saints being yoked to unbelievers (Judaizers or pagans) is the equivalent of bringing idols into the Jewish temple.

### C. Paul's Application and Appeal (6:16b-7:1)

1. For *we* are the temple of God
  - a. Paul quotes from Ezekiel 37:21-28 and implies that its fulfillment is that *we* are the temple of the living God.
    - 1) Saints comprise God's building - 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 (cf. Ephesians 2:19-22).
    - 2) This has individual application - 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.
    - 3) We are the dwelling place of the true God. In this relationship we have fellowship. It is with *us* that He walks. He is *our* God and *we* are His people.
      - a) Thus, how can we give place to any false gods in our lives?
      - b) Thus, how can we be partners in that which is contrary to Christ?
  - b. Applying this logic to the other rhetorical questions gives us more reasons.

- 1) We practice righteousness. How can we at the same time practice lawlessness (1 John 3:4-10)?
  - 2) We are the lights of the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and we walk in light. How could we at the same time commune with the darkness (1 John 1:5-7)?
  - 3) We belong to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:23; 15:23). How could we at the same time be in harmony with Satan (10:21)?
2. Therefore ... in light of the foregoing temple claim (The following is a compilation of ideas expressed throughout God's Word.)
- a. The call: *"Come out from among them and be separate ... do not touch what is unclean ...,"* cf. Isaiah 52:11
    - 1) Here the faithful are told to depart (separate themselves) and not touch what is unclean in response to God's gracious deliverance.
    - 2) This foreshadows the gospel which proclaims redemption from sin by God's Servant (52:7-53:12).
  - c. The promises: *"... and I will receive you.*
    - 1) These all harmonize with the promises of vs. 16 regarding God's fellowship with us.
    - 2) *"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters ..."* cf. 2 Samuel 7:8-14
      - a) The similarity in wording makes it impossible to disregard the likelihood that Paul is intentionally using this passage to make a point.
      - b) Of course, the promise made to David about his son Solomon is a type of God's eternal plan to bring all of us into a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.
  - d. *"Having these promises ... let us cleanse ourselves"*
    - 1) This text is essentially a restatement of vs. 17, and they are both restatements of Paul's call to not be unequally yoked.
    - 2) Paul's emphasis makes it clear that we have personal responsibility.
      - a) Of course, without Christ such cleansing would be impossible.
      - b) However, our hope of the promises should drive us toward purity - 1 John 3:3.
    - 3) *"from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"* - Man is both, and defilement is possible in both; both conscience and action must be cleansed and presented for God's use and glory (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20).
    - 4) *"perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*
      - a) It is to holiness, sanctification, and separation from that which is unclean which we must turn if we are to enjoy the eternal hope.
      - b) God's people are those who are ready to walk in a way pleasing to Him (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). We have been called to holiness!
      - c) God's people are those who are willing to be nonconformists when it comes to worldly ways (Romans 12:1,2).

- 4) It is to the old but enduring concepts of God being faithful to His promises and our need to respond to His holiness with personal holiness that Paul turned to in order to encourage us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

## II. Practical Application

### A. What does being unequally yoked mean?

1. Being *unequally yoked together with unbelievers* is any circumstance wherein a believer:
  - 1) fellowships lawlessness
  - 2) communes with darkness
  - 3) works in symphony with Belial
  - 4) shares in another's unfaithfulness
  - 5) gives approval to idolatry
2. Being *unequally yoked together with unbelievers* does not mean:
  - a. having any association with unbelievers at all.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 - This would be virtually impossible and is contrary to Jesus' own example (e.g. Matthew 9:13; 11:19).
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 - Paul became all things to all men so as to save some.
  - b. marriage to an unbeliever
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 7:10-14 - This passage commands that the believer *stay* in the marriage to an unbeliever!
    - 2) If being married to an unbeliever = being unequally yoked, then Paul would not have said this.
    - 3) This does not mean that a Christian is wise in marrying an unbeliever. (This is another issue.) It does mean that being married to an unbeliever is not a sinful relationship.
    - 4) However, there are marriages which are contrary to God's will, and such *would* be an unequal yoking.
- B. To be yoked together is to be brought into conformity with another.
  1. Positively, this is found in our relationship with Christ - Matthew 11:29,30
    - a. As the offspring of God (Acts 17:28,29), we, too, bear this image (Genesis 5:1-3), and it thus becomes our purpose in life to live up to that image.
    - b. However, it is our God's eternal plan for us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).
  2. Negatively, this is found in our being yoked with unbelievers.
    - a. Romans 12:1,2
    - b. James 4:4
  3. Doing what *we* want in the name of Christ is still conforming to this world.
    - a. Consider the golden calves built by Aaron and Jeroboam
      - 1) Both built these calves just after leaving Egypt (Exodus 32:1-4; 1 Kings 12:2).

- a) Egypt was to Israel what the present world is to Christians—a pagan, ungodly influence.
  - b) As Lot’s wife illustrated years before, it is difficult to leave behind what has influenced us for so long.
- 2) Both declared that they were worshipping Jehovah who had brought them out of Egypt through something of their own creation (Exodus 32:5; 1 Kings 12:28).
- a) The worship they established was fashioned after the world and not after God.
  - b) They were ostensibly worshipping God while actually being conformed to the world.
  - c) This mixing and blending of pagan ideas with true worship to Jehovah (syncretism) is idolatry despite protests to the contrary.
  - d) Even the great reformation of King Jehu (which he performed to show his zeal for Jehovah) did not go so far as to remove the golden calves at Dan & Bethel (2 Kings 10:16-31).
- b. Religious syncretism (a form of yoking) is a real temptation even to Christians as made evident by the numerous warnings about apostasy throughout Scripture.
- 1) Colossians 2:8
    - a) The various philosophies of the world compete with God’s wisdom.
    - b) They offer nothing of value that God’s Word does not already offer.
    - c) Rather, anything that is of this world and not in accord with Christ is a threat to our freedom.
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:14-21
    - a) We are not to flirt with idolatry but to flee from it.
    - b) Of course idols are not real, so what harm is there in blending Christ with that which is fictitious?
      - i) What harm is there in blending that which is false with that which is true?
      - ii) Behind the nothingness of idolatry is something demonic and real.
      - iii) So, while an idol may be reasoned to be technically benign, there *is* something malignant behind it.
      - iv) Thus we are told in no uncertain terms that “*you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons.*”
    - c) We may *say* that what we are doing is “*to the Lord*” (Romans 14:6) just as Aaron did, but if it is more about eating, drinking, and playing (Exodus 32:6), then we are taking the Lord’s name in vain. It didn’t work for Aaron and it won’t work for us.

**Conclusion:** Religious syncretism masquerades as fellowship, communion, unity, agreement, and good conformity when it is, in fact, an unholy filthiness that leavens, defiles, and pollutes. Those who are a part of the true temple of God desire to have no partnership in such an unequal yoking. If we truly want God to dwell among and walk with us, then we need to come out, be separate, and not touch that which is unholy and be content with being yoked and conformed to Jesus Christ.

Andy Diestelkamp 323 E Indiana Ave, Pontiac, IL 61764 [andydiestelkamp@gmail.com](mailto:andydiestelkamp@gmail.com)

EndDiestelkamp

## Paul and His Detractors

*Kieran Murphy*

### Introduction:

- I. Teachers (likely Judaizers – 11:18-22) had come to Corinth preaching “another Jesus,” a Jesus different than the one proclaimed by Paul.
  - A. Paul told the brethren that those who accepted this other Jesus received “a different spirit which you have not received [and] ... a different gospel which you have not accepted....” (11:4)
  - B. These teachers, therefore, were jeopardizing the salvation of this church through their false message. (cf., Galatians 1:6-9)
- II. Paul “defense” is so that the Corinthians might have an answer to these men who sought to discredit him and his message of Jesus. (5:12; 12:19)
  - A. He expects them to separate themselves from these teachers – not to stand with them. (6:14-7:1)
    1. Otherwise, he would be forced to use the courage which he would bring in dealing with these false teachers upon them too. (10:1-2)
    2. Paul did not want to come to them with a rod. (cf., 1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2)
      - a. But he would if they did not deal with this problem and separate themselves from these men. (13:10)

### Body:

- I. There are several allusions to the accusations being made by Paul’s detractors in the earlier chapters.
  - A. A charge of fickleness due to a change of plans. (1:15-24; cf., 1 Corinthians 16:5-7)
  - B. Paul had no letters of recommendation only self-commendations. (2:15-3:1; 5:9-12)
    1. There are further allusions to this in chapters 10:11, 18 and 12:11.
- II. Paul focuses his entire attention upon these teachers and their attack upon him in chapters 10-13.
  - A. He does not directly address the false teachers, but he does answer them through what he writes to the Corinthian saints.
  - B. Paul’s tone in this part of the letter changes to such a degree that some to think these final chapters could not be a part of the original letter. I will not get into this except to say that Paul was expecting the Corinthians to deal with the problem before he arrived. (cf., 2 Corinthians 12:19-21) The ball is in their court. Their salvation was a stake.
- III. What Paul wants for the Corinthians.
  - A. Separate yourself from these false teachers. (10:1-6; cf., 6:14-7:1)

1. Paul knows that he will have to confront them, but he does not want to include any of the Corinthians in this operation and so begs them not to force him to use his courage upon any of them. (vss. 1-2)
  - a. "... Paul was ready to wait until his exhortations and rebukes had had time to work. He would not 'come to them in heaviness' (ch. 2 Co 2:1). He called 'God to witness that if he did delay to come to Corinth it was to spare them' (ch. 2 Co 1:23). He wrote while absent that he might not have to use sharpness when present (ch. 2 (2 Co 13:10). But when all had been done that could be done, it was his intention to come and 'not spare' those who refused to listen to his voice (ch. 2 Co 13:2). (Lias, 2 Corinthians 10:6)
- B. "Look at what is before your face." (10:7-16) Though this is one of the alternate translations given in a footnote in NASB, it preferred. The ESV places this translation in the actual text: "Look at what is before your eyes.
  1. What **was** before their eyes?
    - a. Paul is a Christian. (vs. 7)
    - b. Paul is an apostle. (vss. 8-11)
    - c. Paul was the first to come to Corinth with the gospel. (vss. 12-16).
- C. To present them to Christ "as a pure virgin." (11:2)
  1. Paul sees himself in "the father's role in the betrothal of a bride ... Paul had played the father's (cf. 1 Car. 4:14) in the betrothal of the Corinthians to Christ, with the responsibility to protect the purity of the bride until the marriage has been consummated." (Mott, 102)
  2. As Eve was deceived through the serpent by his craftiness, these teachers were attempting to poison the minds of the Corinthian saints, leading them away "from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (vs. 3) by preaching "*another* Jesus whom we have not preached." (vs. 4)
    - a. They weren't preaching a "*different*" Jesus, but "*another* Jesus" who ends up not being the Jesus proclaimed by Paul and his companions.
      - 1) They speak of the same person and use the same name but make him altogether "other" than the Jesus proclaimed by Paul. "Such a Jesus would send 'a different spirit' who would employ 'a different gospel.'" (Lenski, 1243)
- D. Their "edification" (NKJV), their "upbuilding" (NASB), their "strengthening" (NIV). (11:19)
  1. "Paul corrects two false impressions with regard to this letter. First, his defense of himself might give the impression that he had set the readers up as judges over him or felt himself accountable to them. Second, they might also get the impression that his self-defense was due to self-interest." (Mott, 121)
  2. He was afraid that when he arrived they would not be like what he wished they were and that he would not be as they wished him to be. (vs. 20; cf., 22:10)

#### IV. The Detractors

- A. Who were they?.
  1. Jews. (2 Corinthians 11:22)

- a. Probably Judaizers. (cf., Acts 15:1, 5)
    - 2. They were not Christians.
      - a. They preached “another Jesus.” (11:4) Those who embraced their message
        - 1) ... received “a different spirit.
        - 2) ... accepted “a different gospel.”
      - b. They are “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” (vs. 13)
        - 1) They are servants of Satan dressed as “servants of righteousness.” (vss 14-15)
    - 3. They were self-promoters.
      - a. Commending themselves. (10:12)
        - 1) They measure themselves by themselves.
          - a) “Imagine a boy standing against a wall and making a mark at the top of his head. He steps away for a moment, then comes back to the wall and stands up against it, exclaiming: ‘My! How tall I am! I come right up to the mark! His excitement is silly, of course. He has used no real standard of measurement at all, and has done no real measuring. He has only deceived himself.’” (Mott, 96-97)
        - 2) Boasting in other men’s work. (vss. 13-15)
  - B. Their attacks against Paul
- V. A Little Foolishness—Paul’s Boasting/Glorying. (11:1-12:13)
  - A. Paul introduces boasting in 10:8, 13, and 15.
    - 1. The only appropriate glorying is to boast in the Lord – in what He has accomplished. (cf., Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)
    - 2. The Corinthians’ toleration of false teachers made boasting necessary for him (12:1a). Instead of commending him – defending him (which they should have done (vs. 11), they did nothing.
      - a. “It was not just Paul’s reputation and personal standing that were at stake. It was the truth of the gospel, and the salvation of the Corinthian disciples that hung in the balance. ... He had to defend himself or see the message resting upon his apostolic authority swept away.” (Mott, 11-12)
    - 3. His opponents exceed him. (vss. 16-21a)
    - 4. Paul matches his opponents. (vss. 21a-22)
    - 5. Paul exceeds his opponents. (vss. 23-33; 12:7-13)
  - B. , boasting not in his strengths, but in his weaknesses.
    - 1. Paul pleads with the Corinthians to “bear with [him] in a little foolishness.” (11:1)
    - 2. He explains why it is necessary. ( vss. 2-15)
- VI. Paul’s third coming – a final appeal to deal with the problem. (12:19-13:10)

## Conclusion:

Kieran Murphy  
241 S 49<sup>th</sup> St, Apt 202, Philadelphia, PA 191  
Kieran.murphy@protonmail.ch

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EndMurphy

## Why Boast of Paradise? *Daniel T Bunting*

Text: Paul's Vision — 2 Corinthians 12

### Introduction

- I. The nature of Paul's boasts
  - A. Against his own better judgment, Paul boasts to the Corinthian Christians about his heritage and credentials associated with his labors — 2 Corinthians 11.16-33
  - B. He then boasts of visions and revelations given by the Lord — 2 Corinthians 12.1-6
  - C. Connected to the greatness of these revelations, is a thorn — 2 Corinthians 12.7-10
- II. Throughout his boasting, Paul repeatedly references weakness
  - A. .Despite all he is able to boast of, he is still a man of weakness
  - B. Because of what he can boast of, he is a man with weakness
  - C. Because of Christ his weaknesses have value
- III. The result of Paul's boasts
  - A. Criticism is answered and a foundation for Paul's authority is established
  - B. The greater value of weakness and humility is taught, something the Christians in the church in Corinth church needed to learn

### Body:

- I. Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 12.1-10
  1. 2 Corinthians 12.1-4 — Considering some complicated ideas
    1. Visions & Revelations: are these one and the same?
      - a. Paul's reference to visions and revelations is not two separate ideas, but to a single event being described with two views in mind
        - 1) In a similar way, Paul uses 3 words to describe the same ideas in 2 Corinthians 12.12 and Ephesians 5.19
        - 2) Luke's description of Paul's experience in Acts 18.9 confirms the unity of visions and revelations: "And the Lord *said* to Paul one night in a *vision*, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent,'" (emphasis mine)
      - b. While visions and revelations are not unheard of, they are not the common material on which the gospel was taught
        - 1) For instance, apostles and elders answered an entire doctrinal controversy in Acts 15 without the use of visions and revelations
        - 2) New Testament examples of Paul's Visions (Acts 9.3, 16.9, 18.9, 19.26, 22.17, 27.23)

- 3) Examples of the visions of others (Acts 7.56, Acts 10.11, 1 Corinthians 14.26)
  - 4) Paul's vision of Third Heaven & Paradise stands out in the text as a unique moment and grace to Paul, which must have had an effect on his faith and work
2. "I 'Noah' guy" — Who is the other man?
- a. Is the "man" Paul himself, someone else, or two different people?
    - 1) The man is Paul
      - a) The overall purpose of the letter is to change the Corinthians' mindset regarding their practices and their view of Paul and his teaching
      - b) On the defensive for the entire letter, Paul already began boasting about his credentials in the preceding paragraphs
      - c) Ignoring chapter divisions gives a clear view of Paul continuing to refer to himself in these verses
      - d) Since Paul spends the letter defending his authority & credentials with the Lord, it does not follow that he would now refer to someone else's vision
      - e) 2 Corinthians 12.7 is the clearest key to connect the known "man" with Paul
        1. God gave the thorn to Paul because of the revelations
        2. Surely Paul was not in danger of being conceited because some other man saw and heard something, but because *he* saw and heard from God himself
    - 2) That the "man" is some other person or two people does not fit the text
      - a) The best case for this interpretation is the simple fact that the text reads this way on the surface. Many, if not most, readers see this idea on the first reading of the text.
      - b) Zerr divides the visions and revelations into two events: that it refers to two different incidents and two different men
      - c) He says that in receiving the revelations, Paul alone was under threat of conceit and alone received the thorn. Zerr offers no opinion on who the other man was, or why Paul mentions him. (Zerr, 67)
  - b. Why does Paul speak of himself in the third person?
    - 1) While Paul feels compelled to answer critics and defend his teaching, he is uncomfortable with boasting
      - a) 2 Corinthians 11.17 — What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool.
      - b) 2 Corinthians 11.21 — ... But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that.
      - c) 2 Corinthians 11.23 — ... I am talking like a madman ...

- d) 2 Corinthians 11.30-31 — If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.
  - e) 2 Corinthians 12.1 — I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it. I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.
  - f) 2 Corinthians 12.11a — I have been a fool! You forced me to it ...
- 2) Apparently, the visions were of such greatness and magnitude they make Paul even more reluctant to boast about them (2 Corinthians 12.7)
- a) His solution is to use the third person to distance himself from them
  - b) Rather than boasting in them as his own, he refers to receiving them in the third person: “I know a man ...”
  - c) Thus, he is able to use the greatness, magnitude and significance of the visions to underscore his authority and credibility without letting himself be over inflated in the eyes of others (2 Corinthians 12.6) or in his own eyes (2 Corinthians 12.7)

### 3. Third Heaven & Paradise

#### a. What are they?

##### 1) Third Heaven

- a) Most easily understood as the highest of the heavens where God dwells
  - 1. 1 Kings 8.27 — “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!
  - 2. Psalms 148.4 — Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!
  - 3. Ephesians 4.10 — He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.
- b) Paul was caught up to “the heaven of the blessed, above the aerial heaven, in which the fowls fly, above the starry heaven, which is adorned with those glorious orbs: it was into the third heaven, where God most eminently manifests his glory” (Henry, 641)
- c) Hebrew teachers had varying ideas of levels of heaven (2, 3, 7), ideas of which Paul was most likely aware

##### 2) Paradise

- a) A Persian word to describe enclosed parks or a pleasure ground (Robertson, 264)
- b) The LXX uses the word to refer to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.8-10, 13.10)
- c) Jesus uses the word in Luke 23.43 and Revelation 2.7
- d) “The key characteristic ... [of paradise is,] as always in the NT, fellowship with Christ” (Acts 7.56, 69) (Bromiley, Vol III, 661)

#### b. Are they the same thing?

- 1) Paul uses the words interchangeably, each focusing on a different aspect of the single place, just as when Paul referred to visions and revelations in 2 Corinthians 12.1
  - a) Kistemaker offers a strong argument from the structure of 2 Corinthians 12.2-4. This structural pattern of repetition cements the unity third heaven & paradise (Kistemaker, 407)

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago	I know such a man
(whether in the body or outside the body I do not know, but the Lord knows)	(whether in the body or outside the body I do not know, but the Lord knows)
was caught up as far as the third heaven and hear words too sacred to utter	was caught up into paradise

1.

- b) Apocryphal writings connected the third heaven and paradise together
  - 1. II Enoch 8:1, II Enoch 42.3 (Kistemaker, 409)
  - 2. Apocalypse of Moses 40:2, Slavonic Enoch 8.1 (Thompson, 170)

c. Can we enumerate Paul’s cosmology?

- 1) Apocryphal texts do demonstrate a connection between the terms third heaven and paradise
- 2) Some critics feel “the conception of a *series* of heavens is found in the Scriptures” since both the Old and New Testament speaks of heaven in plural form (Deuteronomy 10.14, 1 Kings 8.27, Psalm 148.4, Ephesians 4.10) (Hastings, 321)
  - a) However, these statements neither confirm nor deny the concept of a series of heavens. One must look at these words with a only a literal mindset to find a doctrine of a series of heavens.
  - b) The only concrete evidence of a series of heavens is found outside the scriptures in the writings of the Babylonians, Persians, Zoroastrians and Pseudepigraphal writings of Jews and Christians (Hastings, 322)
- 3) The simple use of poetic devices makes them words of God’s majesty, common themes in the passages in which they are found
- 4) Paul’s simple use of a third heaven is most easily explained as the heaven above the heavens one can see on earth
  - a) He makes no clear connection to writings or ideas found outside of scriptures
  - b) We cannot determine if Paul had a specific doctrine of a series of heavens in mind

B, 2 Corinthians 12.5-6 — Paul’s Boasting in Context: a sticky business

1. Paul was required to boast of his visions & revelations because of the trouble he received from his critics
2. Paul used the third person to direct the boasting away from himself in order to focus the Corinthians' attention to his weaknesses
3. While he desperately needed to establish his credentials and authority, he is reticent to provide any opportunity for the Corinthians to see more in him than they should
  - a. He did not want anyone to see too much in him — 2 Corinthians 12.6
  - b. He has no desire to join the “in crowd” — Galatians 2
  - c. He has no desire to appear as a god — Acts 14.8-18

C 2 Corinthians 12.7-10 — Paul's thorn: a weakness because of greatness

4. What was Paul's Thorn?
  - a. The word is used for anything as small as a splinter or as large as a stake or cross and “can indicate something ... physical or mental” (Bromiley, Vol IV, 843)
  - b. Most hold the thorn to be some physical ailment or problem “in the flesh”: poor eyesight, migraines, malaria, etc.
  - c. Other options divide the thorn into the following spiritual troubles:
    - 1) Temptation (another interpretation of the phrase “in the flesh”)
    - 2) Grief suffered at the hand of critics and enemies (a theme in the letter)
    - 3) Demonic troubles (pointing to the angel or messenger of Satan)
5. What is the angel of Satan?
  - a. The word *aggelos*, universally translated in this passage as “messenger” is more commonly translated “angel” throughout the NT
    - 1) Angel — 179 times
    - 2) Messenger — 7 times (Matthew 11.10, Mark 1.2, Luke 7.24, Luke 7.27, Luke 9.52, 2 Corinthians 12.7, James 2.25)
  - b. This messenger could be Paul personifying his physical affliction (Robertson, 265)
  - c. It could be that the person of Satan sent one of his own to afflict Paul, just as in the case of Job (Job 2.7) and the woman with a disabling spirit (Luke 13.16)
  - d. It is hard to deny this to be the work of Satan's angel
    - 1) While there is little information of the nature of God's interaction and permission of Satan's work among men, the evidence is there
    - 2) That being said, it doesn't make sense that Satan would send a thorn to keep Paul from conceit
6. Why did Paul have the thorn?
  - a. The thorn is specifically linked to the “surpassing greatness of the revelations”, which can be translated “By reason of the exceeding greatness” and “by the excess” (Robertson, 265)
  - b. Paul received the thorn to keep his conceit in check: his unique revelation warranted a unique thorn

7. Christ's power made perfect in weakness
  - a. Paul's thorn was not some passing illness, but a severe issue directly connected to Paul's revelations
  - b. Paul's prayer to have the thorn removed, answered verbally by the Lord, taught a great lesson: the surpassing power found in/despite weakness
    - 1) Jesus' grace was already sufficient: whether his saving power or revelations and visions
    - 2) What we receive in Christ is greater than anything we have (boasts) or suffer under (thorn) while on earth: this is a difficult lesson to learn and understand
    - 3) Paul learns to submit under Christ, and to struggle on with/despite his weakness: demonstrating Paul learned the lesson
    - 4) God works with imperfect vessels and by this it is apparent that the power is from God alone
  - c. Paul's great personal lesson is, in turn, directed to the Corinthians
    - 1) His original boasting was always directed toward his weakness
      - a) 2 Corinthians 11.23-27 — painful experiences
      - b) 2 Corinthians 11.28-29 — weak with others in weakness
      - c) 2 Corinthians 11.30-33 — humiliation
    - 2) His latter boasting is also surpassed by his weakness (2 Corinthians 12.9-10)
    - 3) Weaknesses and needs stimulate humility and submission
      - a) Matthew 5.3 — Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
      - b) The opposite is seen in Matthew 19.16-30, with the Rich Young Ruler (vs. 26 — With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible)
    - 4) Boasting of weakness is not self deprecating, but an honest acknowledgment of one's personal state and one's need for Christ: *this* empowers Christ
  - d. Paul is thus personally content with "weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities" (2 Corinthians 12.10), because of their great result found through Christ

## II. Why do the Corinthians need to hear this?

### A. Paul: apostles must be heard

#### 1. Paul had to defend his authority & credentials

- a. In his defense, he boasts of his heritage, experiences and spirituality
  - 1) 2 Corinthians 11.22-23a — Boasts of his heritage
  - 2) 2 Corinthians 11.23b-27 — Boasts of his physical labors
  - 3) 2 Corinthians 11.28-29 — Boasts of his spiritual labors
  - 4) 2 Corinthians 12.1-6 — Boasts of his spiritual visions

## 5) 2 Corinthians 12.7-10 — Boasts of his thorn

## b. If Paul is so uncomfortable with boasting, why does he do it?

1).2 Corinthians 11.17, 11.21, 11.23, 11.30-31, 12.1, 12.11 — Boasting is equated with foolishness and uselessness

2).2 Corinthians 12.2-4 — Speaking about “another man”, not himself

## c. By this boasting, the Corinthians are able to see that all of his qualifications demonstrate he is as good as, or better than, his enemies &amp; critics

## 2. Metaphor for Paul’s relationship with Corinth: Paul’s need to boast illustrated

a. As a teacher to the church in Corinth, Paul’s relationship with the Christians was not like a Master & Apprentice, but as a Ewe & Lambs

b. A master invests time and effort to bring up an apprentice in his trade. If the apprentice drifts away, the master is able to demand reparations for the loss of time and money invested. The apprentice is thus in a lower state, while the master can continue. Though the master may feel personally insulted, he is nevertheless able to receive compensation for the loss.

c. This is *not* the relationship Paul had with the Corinthians. Anyone drifting is not able to repay Paul for his time and effort — one cannot imagine Paul asking or demanding such a thing.

d. Rather, Paul was like an elder ewe to many lambs. While he was not the shepherd himself, he was wise enough to know how and why to follow the shepherd. The wise ewe seeks to impress upon the lambs the importance of the shepherd. The loss of any lamb is felt by both the Shepherd and the ewe. The ewe, hurt by this loss, is powerless to save such a lamb.

## 3. Paul’s need to win the Corinthians Christians and his limited means by which to do it

a. Paul is desperate to keep the lambs with the shepherd, but cannot hold them together with his own hands or by his own will

b. He is gravely concerned over their desire to listen to false teachers and drift from the Shepherd

c. While Paul has no desire to make himself great, his *message* was of complete importance: trusting Paul’s words to be the words of the Shepherd

1).He exhorts the Corinthian Christians to trust his words because of his labor for the Lord — boasts about physical and spiritual labors and weaknesses

2).He exhorts the Corinthian Christians to trust his words because of who they are from — boasts about visions & revelations

d. Paul’s words are from God and his credentials prove it: the Corinthian Christians *must* to listen to what Paul has to say

## B. Christians in Corinth: proud hearts must learn humility

## 1. Weakness — Paul’s continuous message

a. The theme of weaknesses is plain throughout his boasting, and though he boasts of great things, he continues to draw out the weaknesses inherent in them

1. In boasting of his physical labors, he speaks of setbacks and pain

2. In boasting of his spiritual labors, he speaks of sorrows on account of others
3. In boasting of his spiritual visions, he connects it to his thorn of weakness
- b. 2 Corinthians 11.32-33 — The central story of Paul's escape from Damascus emphasizes this weakness
  - 1) His first great evangelistic work ends in humiliating escape
  - 2) Though he enters town a free man, he escapes in a basket, humbled in the service of God
2. Service — Paul's continuous effort
  - a. If the Corinthian Christians were attracted to boasting, Paul was happy to engage in the practice as long as it established his credentials and authority
  - b. Notwithstanding, the manner of Paul's boasts continually hammers the point of weakness, humility and submission
  - c. Even while indulging the proud in their favorite pastime, Paul teaches the lesson of how he learned humility
    - 1) 2 Corinthians 11.32-33 — Humiliation right from the beginning
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 12.7 — Possible conceit answered with a thorn
    - 3) 2 Corinthians 12.8-9 — Pleas for mercy denied on account of present grace
  - d. Paul's concluding statement in 2 Corinthians 12.10 is a battle cry for the meek and an exhortation for the proud
    - 1) Humiliation for the sake of Christ
    - 2) Contentment in the face of difficulty
    - 3) Strength because of weakness
    - 4) Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, and those reviled on Christ's account — Matthew 5.3, 5, 11
3. Humility is an essential predecessor to learning

## Conclusion:

- I. The first aim of Paul's boast
  - A. Paul's boast defended his credentials and placed him as well as or in better standing than his critics
  - B. However, the Corinthian Christians knew enough of Paul to appreciate his credentials as an apostle
    1. 2 Corinthians 12.12 — The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.
    2. 2 Corinthians 3.2 — You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.
- II. The second aim of Paul's boast
  - A. Paul taught the Corinthians the failure and vanity of boasting

8. Paul references weakness 5 times: (2 Corinthians 11.21, 11.29, 11.30, 12.9, 12.10)

9. Even his great boasting of seeing the Paradise of God required a thorn

B. Paul taught the Corinthians to acknowledge their weaknesses as the very things that demanded their connection to Jesus in order to survive

1. 2 Corinthians 12.9-10 — ... Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me ... For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. Matthew 5.3 — Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

III. The need or self examination before the test

A. The spiritual state of the Corinthian Christians was what motivated Paul to write the entire letter as well as engage in boasting

B. Preparing the Corinthians to seek humility, rather than boastful pride, was Paul's aim

1. 2 Corinthians 12.15 — I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. ...

2. 2 Corinthians 13.5 — Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

3. 2 Corinthians 13.9 — For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.

Daniel T Bunting

17 Mare Ln Ext  
East Berne, NY 12059

[dantbunting@gmail.com](mailto:dantbunting@gmail.com)

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**Dan Bunting**

17 Mare Ln Ext

East Berne, NY 12059

[dantbunting@gmail.com](mailto:dantbunting@gmail.com)

EndDanBunting

## Paul's Emotive Language in 2 Corinthians *Stephen Rouse*

**Text:** No assigned text. Key texts: **2 Cor 2:4; 5:13; 6:11-13; 7:2-4; 12:15**

### Introduction:

- I. The Emotional Nature of 2 Corinthians
  - A. Even a cursory reading of 2 Corinthians reveals a particular style difference from Paul's other letters, namely that it is characterized by overtly emotional language.
  - B. Questions this lecture will try to answer:
    1. How can we identify and classify this emotive language?
    2. Why would 2 Corinthians be more emotive than Paul's other letters?
    3. What are we to make of this emotive language? What lessons can be learned?

### Body:

- I. Types and Examples of Emotive Language
  1. Oath language - Calling on God as witness
    1. Examples:
      - 1:18** - "As surely as God is faithful..."
      - 1:23** - "But I call God to witness against me..."
      - 5:11** - "What we are is known to God..."
      - 11:10** - "As the truth of Christ is in me..."
      - 11:11** - "...God knows I do!"
      - 11:31** - "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying."
    2. This language is emotive in that it is emphatic. One does not casually invoke the name of God merely to strengthen their point.
    3. This is fairly rare in the other Pauline epistles. "God as witness" appears in: **Rom 1:9; 9:1; Php 1:8; and 1 Th 2:5**. "I am not lying" appears in **Gal 1:20** (God's name invoked) and **1 Tim 2:7**.
    4. The phrase "in the sight of God" also appears in **2:17; 4:2; 7:12; and 12:19**. This is perhaps not as strong as the language mentioned above, but it still calls to mind the idea that God is watching, and He knows Paul's sincerity.
    5. "...by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" appears in **10:1**, but is probably not included in the same category.
  - B. Describing emotional experiences / openness about personal emotion
    1. Examples:
      - 1:8-9** - "...we felt that we had received the sentence of death..."
      - 2:4** - "I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many

tears..."

**2:12-13** - "...my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there"

**6:11-13** - "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, our heart is wide open."

**7:5-7** - "...our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus..."

**7:8** - "I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while."

**7:13** - "...we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus..."

**7:16** - "I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you."

**12:8** - "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this..."

2. Paul discloses his personal experiences and emotions a few other times in his letters (see letter J in this section) but nowhere as frequently or passionately as in 2 Corinthians. We have a great deal of insight into Paul's mental state at several points in his trip leading up to meeting Titus as well as his emotional state when he actually writes 2 Corinthians.

C. Uses name of group:

1. Examples:

**6:11** - "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians..."

2. This is a more personal way to address someone. Using someone's name or title can express sincerity, warmth, or alternatively a stronger rebuke (cf. when parents use a child's middle name).

- a. This only occurs twice more in letters to churches:

**Gal 3:1** - "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?"

**Php 4:15** - "And you Philippians yourselves know..."

- b. Paul refers to Timothy twice by name:

**1 Tim 1:18** - "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child..."

**1 Tim 6:20** - "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you."

D. Sudden unexpected shifts in subject / apparent non-sequiturs

1. From **1:11** to **1:12** (?)

- a. This is not as unexpected, as Paul has finished his introductory blessing and gratitude for the comfort shared by the Corinthians.

- b. Paul then somewhat abruptly introduces one of the main subjects of the letter: the "boasting" of Paul/the apostles and their relationship to the Corinthian church.

2. From **2:13** to **2:14** (picks up in **7:5-7**)

- a. This is abrupt. Paul introduces the tension he had in Troas, begins to talk about Macedonia... and then suddenly gushes about the wonderful fragrance of the gospel, not to pick up his story for another 5 chapters. Why?

- b. Perhaps this is an emotional transition. When Paul began to write **2:13** about coming into Macedonia, he mentally began re-living finding Titus and the overwhelming comfort given through his report, and instead of finishing the

thought he breaks into thanks to God (**2:14**). This gets him on to his subject about the ministry of the apostles which continues for the next 5 chapters.

- c. It is also noteworthy to follow the subject changes in this letter—the “I” sections and the “we” sections.
- 1) “We” - **1:3-14**
  - 2) “I” - **1:15-17**
  - 3) “We” - **1:18-22** (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy)
  - 4) “I” - **1:23—2:13** (“we” in **1:24**)
  - 5) “We” - **2:14—6:13** - This shift occurs at the sudden transition, and “we” is the subject of almost every sentence in this lengthy section.
  - 6) “You” - **6:14—7:1** - (“we” in **7:1**) - Paul’s style abruptly shifts here as well
  - 7) “We” - **7:2-7a**
  - 8) “I/We” - **7:7b-16** - This section shifts back and forth several times
  - 9) “We/I” - **8:1—9:15** - This section shifts and is different in style and tone
  - 10) “I” - **10:1-2**
  - 11) “We” - **10:3-7**
  - 12) “I” - **10:8-10**
  - 13) “We” - **10:11-18**
  - 14) “I” - **11:1—13:4** - This is the lengthy “I” section as Paul’s defense becomes more personal and he talks extensively of his own sufferings/credentials.
  - 15) “We” - **13:4-9**; “I” - **13:10**
3. From **6:2** to **6:3**
- a. Paul suddenly transitions from talking about the gospel ministry into a defense section (**6:3-10**) that resembles his longer personal defense (**11:22-29**).
  - b. Paul did begin some defense in **5:11-12**, but this transition is still sudden.
4. From **6:13** to **6:14** and from **7:1** to **7:2**
- a. This interruption in flow is particularly interesting. If **6:14—7:1** were cut out of the text, there would be no break in thought from **6:13** to **7:2**: “In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. . . . Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one...”
  - b. One possible reason for the placement of the “unequally yoked” rebuke is that Paul realizes one major reason for their distance from him is their participation in sin with unbelievers. The closer they are to the darkness, the more they pull away from the light. So Paul’s bookending this harsh rebuke with strong words of affection is an effort to pull them away from the world’s influence.

- c. Another possibility is that Paul has been emotionally building up to this exhortation. He has laid out his heart in **6:3-13** in showing how much he's willing to go through for them, and so he encourages them to open their hearts in him in return. Paul places this tough rebuke at an emotional climax in the letter—the point at which the Corinthians would be most receptive to it.

E. Extended, poetic lists:

1. Examples:

**4:8-9** - "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed..."

**6:4-10** - "as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities..."

**7:11** - "For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment!"

**11:21-29** - "But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I..."

- a. While not every list is overtly emotive, there are times when Paul seems to get carried away and give vent to some deeply felt emotion by giving an extended list on the subject.

- b. Some of these lists are poetic in that they employ parallelism:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_, but not \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What \_\_\_\_\_, what \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Are they \_\_\_\_\_? So am I.

2. Other examples:

**Php 3:4-6** (interestingly parallel to **2 Cor 11:21-23**)

**Rom 8:31-39**

F. Enamored with God's glory and plan in Christ / use of superlatives

1. Examples:

**3:7-11** - "...the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory."

**3:18** - "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image..."

**4:15** - "...as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God."

**4:17** - "an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison..."

**5:20—6:2** - "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God... Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

**9:15** - "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"

- a. There are times when Paul seems to become overwhelmed with the surpassing glory of the spiritual truths he's talking about. These are truths worth our emotion and passion!
- b. One of the themes in these emotive sections is *glory*.

2. Paul speaks specifically about being overcome with emotion for spiritual things in **5:13** - "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you."
  - a. "Beside ourselves" - ἐξίστημι - existēmi - G1839
    - 1) This is the only use of this word in the epistles—all others in gospels/Acts
    - 2) This word carries the idea of something "standing out (of its place)," being displaced or thrown out of position. (Thayer's via [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org))
    - 3) Usually translated "amazed" or "astonished." Once used in a similar sense to **5:13** in **Mk 3:21** "He is *out of his mind*."
    - 4) This may be a reference to an accusation that Paul was crazy (like **Acts 26:24**), parallel to **2 Cor 11:16**—they thought him a fool, well let him act like a fool for a moment. Paul may be saying, "Well, if you think I'm crazy, I'm crazy for God!"
    - 5) Is there a distinction between being "crazy for God" and "in our right mind for you"?
      - a) It could be lumped together and mean "whether we seem crazy or sane—it is for God, and it is for you."
      - b) Or, Paul could mean his emotive displays were only for God, and his control of these emotions was solely for the sale of his hearers.
      - c) However, most likely a balance is needed, similar to a "not / but" construction. The two ideas are distinct, but not mutually exclusive. When Paul seemed to be out of his mind—it is because this is *GOD* we are talking about! These are truths worth looking like a fool over! But when we controlled these emotions, it was for the benefit of reasoning with the Corinthians so they would understand and listen.
      - d) There is a similar construction in **1:6** "If we are... and if we are..."

G. Direct expressions of love/openness:

1. Examples:
  - 2:4** - "not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you."
  - 6:11-13** - "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open."
  - 7:3-4** - "...I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together"
  - 8:7** - "as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you..."
  - 8:16** - "But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you."
  - 11:2** - "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband..."
  - 11:11** - "And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!"
  - 11:29** - "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?"
  - 12:14-15** - "I seek not what is yours but you. ... I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?"

- a. Paul is apparently facing an increasing coldness from (some of) the Corinthians as a result of the false teachers. Perhaps in reaction to this, and certainly in spite of this, Paul openly and frequently expresses his love for these brethren.
  - b. These expressions of love are particularly fervent in **7:3-4** and **11:2**.
2. **7:1; 12:19** - Paul uses the term “beloved” of the Corinthians, as he often does of brethren.
  3. Other appearances of “beloved” in Paul’s letters: **Rom 1:7; 11:28; 12:19; 16:5,8,9,12; 1 Cor 4:14,17; 10:14; 15:18; Eph 5:1; 6:21; Php 2:12; 4:1; Col 1:7; 4:7,9,14; 1 Th 2:8; 1 Tim 6:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Phm 1,16**
- H. Feeling driven to boast or act foolish / self-consciousness
1. **11:1** - “I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me!”  
**11:16** - “I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.”  
**11:21b** - “But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that.”  
**11:23** - “Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors...”  
**11:30** - “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.”  
**12:1** - “I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it...”  
**12:5-6** - On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses...”  
**12:11** - “I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you...”
  - a. This is perhaps the most openly self-conscious section in any of Paul’s letters. He is having to walk a very fine line between reacting to the fleshly boasting of the false teachers, while not inadvertently rebuilding the Corinthians’ over-reliance on himself (the problem they were prone to in **1 Cor 1-4**).
  - b. Paul feels the constant need in this section to clarify that he is acting out of character with his humility. He is not modeling an example they should follow. But he feels compelled to do it for their sake—for they only seem to listen to braggarts, and Paul has more than enough credentials in the Lord.
- I. Sarcasm / hyperbole:
1. Examples:  
**11:7-8** - “Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God’s gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches...”  
**11:19-21** - “For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you... To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!”  
**12:13** - “For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!”
  - a. Paul uses sarcasm to highlight the ridiculousness of the charge against him that he did not accept money from them because *he did not love them* (**11:11**). “Oh, I’m *so sorry* for not taking your money, do please forgive me!”

- b. He also highlights how well he has treated them in comparison to the false teachers taking advantage of them. "Oh, we were *too weak* to enslave you and slap you in the face. How pathetic."
    - 1) **11:19-21** bears an interesting resemblance to **1 Cor 4:8-13**, where Paul seems to be addressing a similar problem. After addressing an *over-emphasis* on teachers in **1 Cor 1:10—4:5**, he addresses an *under-emphasis* on teachers in **1 Cor 4:6-21**. This section of 1 Corinthians is in some ways a "mini 2 Corinthians," bearing similarities to tactics Paul uses in 2 Corinthians (sarcasm, long listing of sufferings).
- J. Emotive language in Paul's other letters (this incomplete list included for further study)
1. Romans
    - a. Rhetorical questions followed by "By no means!" or "God forbid!" **3:4; 3:6; 3:31; 6:2; 6:15; 7:7; 7:13; 9:14; 11:1; 11:11; (1 Cor 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14)**
    - b. Law section - **7:7-25** - Wretched man that I am! Thanks be to God!
    - c. Extensive lists, enamored with God's plan: **8:31-39**
    - d. Sorrow over Jews: **9:1-2; 10:1-2**
    - e. Overwhelmed with God's wisdom: **11:33-36**
  2. 1 Corinthians
    - a. Emotional experiences: **2:3**
    - b. Longer lists: **3:21-22** - all things are yours; **4:10-13** - suffering list, similar to **2 Cor 11; 13:1-13** - The way of love
    - c. Sarcasm: **4:8,10** - similar to **2 Cor 11**
    - d. Strong rebuke: **5:1-2; 6:7-8; 6:15; 8:11; 10:21-22; 11:21-22; 15:29-34; 16:22**
    - e. ("Do you not know?" - **3:16; 5:6; 6:2; 6:3; 6:9; 6:15; 6:16; 6:19; 9:13; 9:24**)
    - f. Desire to preach / not be a burden - **9:15-16**
    - g. Overwhelmed with resurrection glory: **15:50-58**
  3. Galatians
    - a. Strong rebuke: **1:6-9; 3:1-6** - string of questions; **5:2-4; 5:7-12**
    - b. Oath language: **1:20**
    - c. Emotional experiences: **2:11-14; 4:12-20**
    - d. "God forbid!" **2:17; 3:21; 6:14**
    - e. Use of name "O foolish Galatians!" - **3:1**
    - f. Emotional openness of fear/concern: **4:10-11,19-20**
  4. Ephesians

- a. Enamored with God's blessings/plan/power/love: **1:3-14,18-23; 3:8; 3:14-21; 4:13**
  - b. Rebuke: **4:20**
5. Philippians
- a. Affection: **1:8** (oath language); **2:20,22; 4:1**
  - b. Rejoicing: **1:18,20-21,25-26; 2:17-18; 4:4**
  - c. Emotional experiences: **2:25-30** - Epaphroditus' illness; **4:10** receiving support
  - d. Warning/rebuke: **3:2; 4:2-3**
6. Colossians
- a. Hymn to Christ: **1:15-20**
  - b. Rejoicing in suffering: **2:24**
  - c. Struggling for them: **1:29-2:1; 4:12**
7. 1 Thessalonians
- a. Affection/emotional investment: **2:7-8,11-12**
  - b. Labor/toil: **2:9**
  - c. Emotional experiences—torn away/good report: **2:17—3:13**
  - d. Put them under oath: **5:27**
  - e. Prayers: **3:11-13; 5:23-24**
8. 2 Thessalonians
- a. Description of judgment: **1:5-10**
  - b. Labor/toil: **3:8**
  - c. Prayers: **1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5; 3:16**
9. 1 Timothy
- a. Urgency: **1:3**
  - b. Gratitude for grace: **1:12-17**
  - c. "O man of God"/"O Timothy" - **6:11,20**
  - d. Put under oath/praise to God: **6:13-16**
10. 2 Timothy
- a. Emotional experiences: **1:4** remember tears; **1:15** abandoned - **4:9-18**
  - b. Put under oath: **1:14; 4:1-2,4**
  - c. Approaching death: **4:6-8**
11. Titus
- a. Urgency: **1:5**

- b. Sharp rebuke: **1:13**
- c. Enamored with God's grace/plan: **2:11-14; 3:4-7**

## 12. Philemon

- a. Appeal: **v8-10**
- b. Affection for Onesimus: **v12,15-16**
- c. Self-intercession: **v17-20**

## II. Why More Emotion in 2 Corinthians?

### A. The occasion of the letter: **1:23—2:4; 2:12-13; 7:5-6,8**

1. Paul deeply cared for these Christians. He genuinely wanted to see them repent, and was tremendously nervous about how they would receive his harsh letter.
2. If you've ever had to communicate a harsh rebuke over letter or electronic message, you know how agonizing it can be to wait for a response. The "what if's, visualizing the worst-case scenarios, thinking about what to do if they don't take it well.
3. We don't know how long Paul had to wait before finding Titus, but this letter seems to represent the releasing of a long period of pent-up emotion. The emotive language of the letter is very fitting to the occasion.

### B. Emotional hurt of being slandered and falsely accused

1. Some of the implied attacks against Paul in 2 Corinthians—some are clearer than others:
  - a. **1:15—2:4** - "Paul changed his plans to come visit us. He's always changing his mind—yes, then no. You can't trust him."
  - b. **3:1-3** - "Paul doesn't have the credentials we do—look our letters of recommendation."
  - c. **5:13** - "Paul is out of his mind."
  - d. **7:2** - "Paul is just trying to take advantage of you."
  - e. **8:20-21; 12:16-18** - "Paul is going to use that contribution for personal gain."
  - f. **10:1-2,10-11; 11:6** - "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."
  - g. **10:14-15** - "Paul takes credit for work he didn't do."
  - h. **11:7-11; 12:13** - "Paul doesn't accept money from you because he doesn't love you."
  - i. **11:16** - "Paul is a fool."
2. It is difficult not to react emotionally when you are slandered. Paul certainly has control of his emotions in this letter, but his sarcasm in particular (**11:7-8,19-20; 12:13**) seems to indicate a righteous indignation at these wildly false accusations. The emotive language of the letter fits the frustration Paul must have been feeling.

### C. Feeling emotional distance from his brethren because of damage from false teachers

1. It is difficult when you feel emotionally distant from someone you love deeply. It is all the more difficult when that distance is through no fault of your own, but because of outside influence of those seeking your hurt.
  2. You can hear Paul's frustration and hurt in **6:11-13**: "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also."
  3. Paul repeatedly affirms his love for them in this letter (see I. G. 1.). His statement in **7:3** is particularly strong: "I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together." Paul meets their increasing coldness with increasing warmth.
- D. Open their hearts to receive tough rebuke
1. Paul rejoices greatly at the positive response of the Corinthians after his harsh letter (**7:6-9**), but there are still many in Corinth who need to hear harsh rebuke (**10:2; 12:21; 13:10**).
  2. It is far easier to make a "withdrawal" of rebuke when there have already been many "deposits" of love, confidence, and camaraderie. Paul needs to do both in this letter. His emotive language seems to fit what is needed to build the Corinthians up so that he can give the needed rebuke as well.
  3. This seems particularly true in the placement of the tough rebuke in **6:14—7:1**. As noted previously, this rebuke seems to come at an emotional climax in the letter. Paul's appeal in **6:3-13**, particularly his openness in **6:11-13**, pave the way for the rebuke. Paul's strong affection for them in **7:2-4** softens the harsh blow after it has landed.
- E. Paul *really* believes the gospel message, and is moved by God's love
1. This is certainly true in all Paul's letters, but notable here in 2 Corinthians where he spends a good deal of time describing his ministry.
  2. **4:13-14** - "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence."
    - a. Paul *really* believes this, and it changes everything about his life.
  3. **5:11** - "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others."
    - a. Paul *really* believes there will be a judgment, and his speaking can affect the eternal destiny of others.
  4. **5:13-15** - "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."
    - a. Paul *really* believes that God's plan and Christ's love are real. It moves him to completely deny himself and live all-out for Christ. Paul's emotive language fits his conviction of the truth of his message.

### III. Practical Applications

- A. Emotion is not a bad thing - "If we are beside ourselves, it is for God" (5:13)
1. We usually connect the word "emotional" with irrational, unstable thinking and acting. Paul's emotive language shows us the value that strong, controlled emotion can have in gospel work.
  2. Also consider that examples like David and Peter, some of the greatest *men* in Scripture, were very passionate and emotional. Emotion is not just a female thing. Being stoic is not necessarily a male virtue.
  3. As a side note, Paul's particular display of emotion in this letter tells us something about the nature of inspiration. God uses the style and the emotion of the author, along with his personal circumstances, to enhance the impact of the letter—both for its original audience and future readers.
- B. Emotional investment in the gospel - "I believed, and so I spoke." (4:13)
1. The more familiar we are with gospel (or at least with studying and teaching), the easier it is to become calloused to the glory and wonder of its message. We need to see the love of Christ with fresh eyes and hearts and let it move us to action. We need to really *believe*.
  2. The more we *believe*, the more we will *speak*. And the more we will speak with emotion and passion. Sometimes our lack of motivation in evangelism is a lack of conviction in the gospel message. Build the conviction and motivation, and the action will follow—both in ourselves and those we teach.
  3. Paul is an incredible mix of being both emotional and tough. We tend to see these qualities as mutually exclusive, but in Paul's case they fueled each other. He was able to endure the unthinkable challenges he faced because he *cared*. The more emotionally invested we are, the less we will let stand in our way.
- C. Emotional investment in the people we're teaching - "You are in our hearts, to die together and to live together." (7:3)
1. It is easy to become emotionally disconnected with the people we're teaching. It is easy to view them more as problems to be solved than people to be loved (and, of course, there is some of both). Paul taught the Corinthians, but he also had a deep personal care for them.
  2. It is particularly difficult to cultivate this affection for people who are not doing well spiritually, who cause us more grief and frustration than encouragement. Remember, Paul is so emotionally invested, and he's talking about the brethren in *Corinth*.
  3. Paul tried to put the very best light he could on these brethren (7:4,16). He held them to a high standard and helped them to live up to those expectations. Our children and our students will often live up or down to our expectations of them.
  4. It is also notable how Paul talked about the Corinthians to other groups (9:1-2). He built them up and gave them a reputation to live up to. It is easy to talk disparagingly about those who are not doing well—this does not help them or us.

- D. Emotional vulnerability in strained relationships - "Our heart is wide open... widen your hearts also." (**6:11-13**)
1. Our tendency (my tendency) when someone is pulling back in a relationship is to pull back in return. When others clam up, we clam up. Paul was facing this on multiple levels from the Corinthians, yet he responded by making himself more emotionally vulnerable and open to them.
  2. Why do we pull back?
    - a. We are scared of being hurt or rejected. Showing more love makes us more vulnerable.
    - b. We are scared of appearing weak or foolish.
    - c. Sometimes we do not love them enough to begin with.
  3. Paul's goal in being open is to give them an example of what he wants them to do in return. He takes the initiative to restore the relationship. This opens him up to be further hurt and disappointed by them, but it is worth the risk because he loves them. May we do the same.
  4. This is also applicable in areas of confession and accountability. There are times where it is extremely helpful to confess our sins to one another (**James 5:16**), but it is difficult to get others to open up. One of the best ways to encourage openness in others is to open up ourselves.
  5. It is also valuable to avoid becoming one-sided in our counseling/teaching. There are certainly different types of relationships, and we need to both give and receive. It is dangerous to always be the "teacher" or the "giver" in every relationship. Becoming open and vulnerable ourselves helps us empathize and more effectively help the people who are being open and vulnerable with us.
- E. Preparing a heart for strong rebuke - "Widen your hearts also. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers." (**6:13-14**)
1. If all we do is show others where they're wrong, we should not be surprised to find most people unreceptive. To be clear, we need to correct each other regardless—a lack of relationship is not an excuse for lack of rebuke when rebuke is needed. But a "withdrawal" of rebuke is far easier when there have been many "deposits" of love, concern, and encouragement beforehand.
  2. We need to develop a habit of building up others regularly so that when correction is needed there is an ongoing relationship and trust to help the rebuke be effective.
- F. Sincerity and openness as contrast to tactics of false teachers - "By the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience." (**4:2**)
1. False teachers do their best work in secret, slow steps. They plant seeds of bitterness, resentment, and pride. Often deviant positions are not proclaimed boldly at first, but introduced privately to a few people at a time.
    - a. Jesus did not do this: "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret." (**John 18:20**)

- b. Paul did not do this: “But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.” (4:2)
2. May we be forthright and clear in our teaching and in the positions we take. There is a place to say “I’m not sure,” and a time to study and consider. But let us never use “I’m still thinking it through” as an excuse to hide what we know to be divisive teaching. May we be people of “the open statement of the truth.”

## **Conclusion:**

- I. Paul’s emotive letter teaches us the value of controlled emotion in gospel work and life.
- II. May God grant us grace to follow Paul’s example and be more emotionally invested in His work, His people, and His glory.

Stephen Rouse  
2914 Harvard Ave.  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
stephen.rouse@gmail.com

## Selected Bibliography

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