

Paul's Second Letter to the CORINTHIANS

My Dear Friends:

This is Paul again, one chosen by God to be a messenger of Jesus Christ. Together with our brother Timothy, I am writing to you friends who gather together as God's people in Corinth, and to all in southern Greece who are truly dedicated to God.

²May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord bless you far beyond what any of us deserve. And may that include true and deep peace of mind and heart.^a

Paul's Thanks to God

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He's a most compassionate Father. He's also our God, who calls us to come near to Him, and then inspires, urgently admonishes, and encourages us.

⁴He encourages us in the very midst of all our troubles, so that we will be able to comfort others also, in whatever trouble they may be in. We can offer them the same encouragement that we ourselves have received from God.

⁵This very thing is happening to us right now. Some of the same sufferings that Christ went thru are now overwhelming us.^a And because Christ already went thru them, He is now so able to powerfully and effectively encourage us.

⁶So when we go thru deep trouble, the end result is to bring you encouragement, so that your salvation^a may be nurtured and preserved. What I'm saying is, our hardships and trials should result in encouraging you to be willing to endure the same sufferings we endure. And when we are encouraged, it's that you might also be encouraged, and finally saved.^a

⁷So we have a confident, unshaken hope concerning you, because we know that as you willingly endure suffering for Christ,^a you will also be greatly encouraged by Him.

⁸For that reason, dear brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be ignorant about the dreadful

trouble we experienced in western Asia Minor.^a We were weighed down under great pressure, way beyond our power to cope. We even gave up hope that we would live thru it.

⁹In fact, when we knew we were about to die, we knew we couldn't survive by our own strength, so we put our trust completely in God, because He can raise even the dead.

¹⁰And He did indeed save us from a terrible death, and He continues to save us. Furthermore, we have confidence that in future perils He will continue to keep us safe.

¹¹But we also need you to continue to work with us in earnest prayer. Then as a result of the many of you praying, there will be many who will later be thanking God for what He is doing for us and thru us.

Paul's Change of Plans

¹²Because our boast is this: Our conscience assures us that we have behaved in the world, and especially toward you, in godly uprightness and sincerity. We haven't relied on worldly means or wisdom to reach our goals, but have relied only on God's undeserved help.

¹³Also, we never write you anything that you can't read and easily understand. And I hope that to the very end, you will acknowledge our open sincerity.

¹⁴I appreciate the extent to which at least some of you have accepted us, and have expressed your pride in us. I will also be proud of you on that great Day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

¹⁵Because of this confidence I have in you, I had meant to visit you again before now. That would have allowed me to be a double blessing to you.

¹⁶My plan had been to visit you on my way to northern Greece, and again on my way back. Then you could have helped in sending me on my way to Judea.

¹⁷Was I shallow in my purpose when making those plans? Or when I make plans do I do so in a worldly manner, trying to please everyone by say-

1:2a ... as you sincerely surrender your will to Him, and put your full trust in Him.

1:5a ... as we now witness to a hostile world ... See 1 Peter 4:12-13 and note.

1:6a 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 1:18.

1:7a Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:12; 3:12.

1:8a Which is now western Turkey.

ing both “Yes” and “No”?

¹⁸As surely as God always speaks the truth, our message to you was never both “Yes” and “No.”

¹⁹Because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom Silas, Timothy, and I have been telling you about, is never One who says both “Yes” and “No,” so that you don’t know what to believe. No! When He speaks, He means exactly what He says!

²⁰Because whatever promises God has made, His promises are absolute.^a So also, when God speaks thru us and says, “This is the way it is going to be,” to His glory we give you His exact message.

²¹Now it is God who has enabled both you and us to continue to stand firm in our dedication to Christ. And it is He who has anointed^a us for His service.

²²He also put His seal of ownership^a upon us, when He gave us His Spirit in our hearts as a very small down payment.^b

²³On the other hand (and I call upon God to witness against me if I am not telling the truth), the reason I have not yet returned to Corinth was that I might spare you severe and painful discipline.

²⁴It’s not that we are determined to lord it over you in regard to your faith. But as your fellow workers, we are concerned about promoting your joy, because it’s by means of your genuine faith that you are able to continue to stand firmly secure.

2 But I made up my mind not to come your way again if I could bring you only sorrow.

²Because if I were to make you sad, who would there be to make me glad—only the very ones I had made sad.

³That’s why I wrote you as I did, so you would get things straightened out before I came, so that when I came, I wouldn’t be made to grieve over those in whom I should rejoice. I was sure that what would bring joy to me would bring joy to you as well.

⁴It really tore my heart out to write you as I did. I wrote with great distress and anguish, shedding many tears. It was not my desire to cause you grief, but to let you know how immensely deep my love is for you.^a

Paul Urges Forgiveness

⁵I don’t want to be too harsh in condemning the one who sinned. But if he has caused anyone grief, he has done so to all of you, to some extent, more than to me.

⁶The punishment given to this person by the majority of you is enough.^a

⁷Now, however, you should forgive and encourage him, so that he doesn’t get so overwhelmed with sorrow that he gives up in despair.

⁸I urge you therefore to let him know again how much you love him.^a

⁹Another reason I wrote, was to test you, to see if you would be obedient in everything.^a

¹⁰Now if you forgive him, I forgive him too. If I forgive him, it’s because it has been your decision to do so. And I feel certain that Christ is looking on with approval.^a

¹¹It’s indeed important that you forgive him now so that Satan doesn’t take advantage of us, because we’re not ignorant of how he lays his hideous traps.

¹²Well, as I was on my way to northern Greece, I

1:20a This is also true of God’s warnings.

1:21,22a The Holy Spirit is given to all true followers of the Lord as a *seal of ownership*. God then clearly witnesses to us (Romans 8:16) by His Spirit, assuring us that we now belong to Him. Then as we ask God for His Holy Spirit in further measure (Luke 11:13; John 3:34) He is given as an *anointing* with power to serve God. Acts 2:6-8. His Spirit is also an *earnest payment* on all that God promises He will do for us and thru us thruout eternity.

1:22b ... *giving us but a tiny, glorious taste of the great and unspeakable fulfillment that awaits us when we are finally welcomed home into His glorious presence.* Luke 11:13; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-18; Romans 8:16. The *earnest payment* is both the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit within the believer upon our conversion to Christ, and the *infilling* or *baptism* of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have asked the Lord for the *infilling*

or *baptism* of the Holy Spirit when they became believers (Acts 19:1-2), or following that time (Luke 11:13; 18:1-8), and have received, can testify to the glorious truth of this *earnest payment*. However, Paul appears to refer here to the presence of God’s Spirit in the *heart* of each believer, the *indwelling* of His Spirit.

2:4a It is cruelty to allow a brother to continue in his sin and not warn him. No one gives greater proof of his love for another than the one who kindly but firmly warns one of his sin and danger. James 5:19-20.

2:6a 1 Corinthians 5:5.

2:8a Their discipline was because of their love for him, to restore him to holy living and a sure hope. Now that he had been disciplined and had repented, they were to bring him back into fellowship, in love.

2:9a ... *even in discipline, so that the Church*

came to Troas. My plan was to stay there for a while and preach the Great News about Christ. The Lord had indeed opened up great opportunities for me there.

¹³But when I didn't find my brother Titus there, I had no peace of mind. So I said good-bye to the Lord's followers there and went on to northern Greece to look for him.^a

¹⁴Praise be to God! He constantly leads us from one victory to another as we tell people about Christ. Thru us, He is spreading the fragrance of what there is to know about Christ everywhere we go.

¹⁵Because to God, we are like fragrant incense being offered to Him by Christ. And that fragrance is reaching out into the minds and hearts of both those who are being saved and those who are dying in their sins.

¹⁶To those dying, the fragrance of our testimony is offensive, and smells putrid, like death.^a But to those who are being saved, it has the fragrant aroma of Heaven and of life.^b But who is really capable of handling such vital responsibilities?^c

¹⁷Because we are not like many who twist and change God's message^a for their own temporary financial benefit. But in all sincerity, as faithful servants of Christ, we preach the whole truth that God has given, knowing that He is always watching and listening to our message.^b

God's New Agreement

3 Does it sound as if we're again trying to gain your confidence? Or, like some others who have come to you, do we need letters of reference

may be pure and strong, under God's blessing.

2:10a It is assumed that the man had repented, and had renounced and forsaken his sin.

2:13a Paul had evidently expected a report from Titus in Troas about how his first letter to the Corinthians had been received. He finally found Titus in northern Greece.

2:16a Their rejection of the message only increases their guilt and condemnation, resulting in an even more terrifying and awful second death. Revelation 20:11-15.

2:16b Their full and sincere acceptance of it will result in a blessed eternal life.

2:16c A minister of Christ can be truly effective only by—

- living a holy life
- always living with eternity's values in mind
- daily feeding his soul by reading God's Book
- having deep concern for lost and straying people, and doing all that's possible to lead them to

for you, or from you?

²No, you yourselves are the only letter we need when we go to others, and you have indeed written yourselves on our hearts. And from my heart your letter is being read and understood by people everywhere.^a

³It's very clear that your letter was written by Christ—not with ink, nor did He chisel it in tablets of stone; but by employing us as His ministers, and by means of the Spirit of the living God, He made His vivid and penetrating impressions upon the tender pages of your hearts.^a

⁴So if we seem sure of ourselves, it's only because we are so sure of what God can do thru Christ.

⁵We're not claiming that those changes have taken place in your lives because of any abilities we have to change you, because anything we can do for you is taking place because of what God is doing for you thru us.

⁶He is the One who has given us the ability to clearly explain His new agreement with mankind—not an agreement of written rules, but an agreement whereby God has promised that His Spirit has come to live within us.^a The old agreement, containing written laws, only resulted in death.^b But with the promise that God is living within us by His Spirit, to guide us in the way we should live and serve Him, we can joyfully look forward to everlasting life!

⁷The old agreement was carved on stone tablets. And when Moses brought the tablets to the people from God,^a his face glowed so brilliantly (even though it was even then fading away) that the peo-

Christ and right living

· and by spending much time with God, seeking His leading, wisdom, and power.

And with love, he must also carefully lead and instruct his own family and congregation in the same pursuits.

2:17a ... *in order to please their listeners, instead of God* ...

2:17b 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11.

3:2a ... *as I tell them of the miracles God has performed in changing your heathen hearts.*

3:3a The *heart* actually refers to the emotional and governing center of a person. The heart of our emotions can indeed be tender and impressionable.

3:6a See John 7:37-39; 14:15-17.

3:6b ... *by its numerous rules we were unable to fully obey* ...

3:7a Exodus 34:29-35.

ple of Israel couldn't look steadily at him.

⁸If the Law, which brought only death, came with such glory, how much more glorious will the work of God's Holy Spirit be in our lives!^a

⁹Because if the system of justice that condemned us was glorious, the system of love, compassion, and mercy that now makes us right with God is far more glorious.

¹⁰In fact, the new agreement is so amazing and wonderful that, by comparison, the old agreement is no longer glorious at all.

¹¹Because if God's old agreement that is now cancelled out was glorious, of how much greater glory is His new plan for our salvation, which will remain in effect from now on?

¹²So because we now have such an outstanding hope, we're very bold in speaking to everyone about it.^a

¹³We're not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from staring at him as the brilliance there began to fade away.

¹⁴In fact, the minds of those who received the old agreement became hardened. And even now, when they read the agreement in the Old Testament, that same veil blurs their understanding. It's only when they come to understand and accept what Christ has done for them that the veil is removed.

¹⁵So even today when the Law of Moses is read in their synagogues, a veil is still over their hearts that keeps them from understanding the true meaning of what is read.

¹⁶But whenever any of them sincerely turn to the Lord God to investigate the Lord Jesus, the veil is taken away.^a

¹⁷Now the Lord we speak of here is the Spirit who lives within us.^a And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom^b from the old Law.

¹⁸So now, without any veil over our faces to darken our understanding, we can all see the glory of the Lord. Then we begin to reflect His glory, as from one degree of glory to another, we are being transformed by the Spirit of the Lord to become just like the Lord Himself.

Treasure in Clay Pots

4 So for these reasons, and because God has been so merciful in appointing us to tell everyone the Great News, we never get discouraged and give up.

²But we reject all shameful and deceitful ways of getting out the message. We don't use any tricks or gimmicks,^a nor do we claim that God says things He doesn't say.^b But we seek to convince the conscience of every listener by presenting the full truth, without compromise, knowing that God sees and hears everything we do and say.^c

³But even if the meaning of our Great News is hidden or unclear to some, it's unclear only to those who are being led to utter destruction.^a

⁴The culprit in their situation is Satan, the god of those who live only for this present brief time. He's the one who has blinded their minds so that the brilliant splendor of the Great News about Christ, who is exactly like God,^a won't shine on them and give them light and understanding.

⁵We don't preach about ourselves, but about the necessity of surrendering to Christ Jesus as Lord. We're only your servants, for Jesus' sake.^a

3:8a ... "which results in our heart and life being renewed, and our soul saved."—Barnes

3:12a Romans 10:9-10.

3:16a ... and they see the true nature of their own religion and its meaning, that it is intended as an instructor to lead them to Jesus as Messiah.

3:17a John 14:15-17,23.

3:17b Not freedom to sin, but freedom from needing to obey the old ordinances in order to obtain right standing with God.

4:2a ... to get people to confess Christ as Lord and Savior before they have considered the cost ...

4:2b ... in order to gain converts to ourselves.

4:2c ... and that we will one day be judged by God for every message we have preached. 1 Corinthians 3:5-17.

4:3a ... because they don't wish to believe the message enough to be obedient to it. This is in the present passive, meaning, present action by a power outside themselves that is leading them to the

future punishment in Hell and the Lake of Fire, which is reserved for all who live to please themselves instead of God.

4:4a ... and who has perfectly portrayed for us what God is really like ...

4:5a ... We are wholly dedicated to building you up to faithfully obey and serve Him.

4:6a Genesis 1:3.

4:7a That is, in these fragile, weak, and decaying bodies. We are altogether unworthy to hold a treasure of truth so priceless.

4:10a Galatians 6:17; Colossians 1:24.

4:11a By this time, many had already been martyred because of their faith in Jesus.

4:12a The sufferings and self-denials of the apostles were for the good of others, and would result in their benefit and salvation. Our willingness to live for and serve others, even to the point of suffering and death, also results in others being saved.

4:13a Psalm 116:10.

⁶Because it's the same God who said, **Let light shine out of darkness!**^a who has now caused light to shine in our hearts. And it was by means of the radiance of the person of Jesus Christ that we received our knowledge of the glory of God.

⁷But because we possess and carry this treasure of knowledge in such fragile clay pots,^a we fully realize that the unsurpassing greatness of the power to convict and convince men of the truth is from God, and not from ourselves.

⁸As for ourselves, we are continually hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed. Time after time, we are perplexed, but we never give up.

⁹We are continually being persecuted, but we're never abandoned by God. We are continually being struck down, but never destroyed.

¹⁰The scars on our bodies bear witness to the fact that we constantly face the threat of death as we witness for the Lord Jesus,^a so that our life as we live it in this body may also picture for you how and for what purpose Jesus lived.

¹¹In fact, those of us who still survive the attacks of Satan, because of our stand for Jesus,^a are constantly being exposed to death, so that the life Jesus lived may be clearly seen by others as we live for Him in these perishable bodies.

¹²So then, while death is constantly working to conquer us, the result for you is eternal life.^a

¹³And since we have the same kind of faith as the one who said, "I believed, and for that reason I spoke out,"^a we also believe, and continue to speak out.

¹⁴Because we know^a that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us up

because of what Jesus has done, and is continuing to do for us and in us. Then together with you, He will bring us into His presence.

¹⁵Now all that Christ and we apostles have done has been for your sakes, so that the rich mercy of God, that is reaching more and more people every day, will result in a mighty crescendo of thanksgiving and praise to the glory of God.

Living By Faith

¹⁶That's why we never get discouraged and quit. It's true that our bodies are getting older and weaker, but our inner self is being renewed by the Lord every day!

¹⁷Because the trivial troubles we are willing to endure for the Lord are so temporary, and are resulting in our obtaining an eternal glory of such magnitude that it is far beyond all comparison with anything we now know or can even imagine.^a

¹⁸So we're not greatly concerned about all the things that can be seen, but our concern is for those things that cannot be seen as yet. Because the things you can now see are temporary, but the things that cannot yet be seen are eternal.

5 Because we know that even if this temporary house that's made for living on earth, this tent body in which we now live, is destroyed, we have a house in Heaven—not a house made by human hands, but an eternal one that God has made for us.^a

²Yes, it's true, in our present body we groan,^a earnestly desiring that our body from Heaven should envelop us.

4:14a He *knew with absolute certainty* that God had raised Jesus from the dead. He had seen Him (1 Corinthians 9:1) and had also talked to Peter and others (1 Corinthians 15:5-8) who had seen and talked to the risen Lord. He also knew what a miracle Jesus had performed in changing his own life.

4:17a See 12:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:8. Paul considers the *troubles* of this life—even persecutions—to be *trivial* when compared with the tremendous eternity promised us. They are *so temporary* compared with an eternity with God that will never end! And these troubles are working for us by turning our minds and hearts to the future, which is not only for a moment but forever.

So the more dissatisfied we become with this life because of its troubles, problems, etc., the more we will tend to become occupied in our Lord and in His business. The result of this shift in affections will be an even greater and more glorious resurrection.

Also consider the ages upon ages during which

the lost will endure extreme suffering, with absolutely no hope that it will soon, or ever, end. *So for that reason, my brothers and sisters, be most diligent to make your calling and election to eternal life with God a sure thing!* 2 Peter 1:10.

5:1a One day these earthly bodies of ours will be dissolved. If we die before Christ comes back, our bodies will return to dust. But whether we live or die, God has prepared for each of us a *new house*.

The *house* He speaks of here is not our home in Heaven. John 14:1-2. He is speaking of the new body that God will give to each of His people. It will be a body that will never die—an *eternal* body—a body like Christ's glorified body.

5:2a All humankind *groans* under a heavy load. There are always problems with the body, disasters of life, and concerns of one kind or another. But the Christian's delight is to look forward to the time when life as we know it will be exchanged for a life lived in a glorious and eternal body, in a glorious

³And if God will clothe us in this way, we won't be mere spirits without bodies.

⁴It's also true that while living in this earthly tent, we groan, being constantly weighed down.^a It's not that we desire to be without a body, but our desire is to be clothed with our new body, that this perishable body may be overwhelmed by Life that is everlasting.^b

⁵Now God is the One who has prepared us for the very purpose of inheriting all of this. He has even now given us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee payment.^a

⁶That's why we are always cheerfully confident, knowing that every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is only a brief time spent away from our true home and away from the Lord.^a

⁷So we continue to live by faith, not by what we can see.

⁸We say we are always cheerfully confident. Yes, but we would much rather be gone from the body and home in Heaven with the Lord.^a

⁹So our greatest concern is always to do and say

and eternal place, with our glorious Lord.

5:4a ... *by all the troubles, trials, and disasters of life.*

5:3-4b No Christian wants to leave this life and become a floating spirit somewhere. No, our desire is not to *be without a body* (to be free from our mortal body). Rather, it is to receive our new body, which will be able to experience and enjoy the Lord in a way we have never known before.

5:5a ... *as a guarantee of all He has promised and prepared for us in His presence.* See 1:21-22, and the note.

5:5-6a God made us for Himself, that we might be with Him. To the true Christian, God has already given *the guarantee payment of the Spirit*, which is just a portion of what He plans to give us of Himself when His children arrive *home* with Him. So considering the fullness of life that awaits us on our arrival home, it should be understandable that we sometimes become very homesick. In fact, that's a very healthy symptom for a Christian.

5:7-8a The Christian life is a life of *faith*. But, oh, what great proofs we have to back up that faith. 1) Fulfilled prophecy is one proof. 2) There is God's creation all around us, which, when analyzed, could never have evolved out of nothing. 3) The Lord Jesus and His marvelous life on earth—all that He did and said—are the greatest proofs of all.

These are just three proofs, and there are many more. So, though we *live by faith*, we are absolutely *confident* in the One in whom we have placed our faith. The proofs He has given are sufficient to

what is pleasing to the Lord, both while here in this body and also when we arrive home with the Lord.

¹⁰Because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.^a There we will each receive Christ's verdict, as He considers how we have lived in these mortal bodies. And Christ's decision will be based on the good, or worthless and evil, quality of each life.

About Turning to God

¹¹So because we know from past experience what it is to be terrified at the prospect of standing before the Lord for judgment, we continually persuade everyone to prepare for that Day by faithfully obeying and serving Him. God sees our heart,^a and He knows that our only motive is to promote His glory and save the souls of others. And I trust that you are also convinced in your consciences of the integrity and uprightness of our aim.

¹²But when we say this, we're not trying to prove again to you how sincere and concerned we are.

show that what He has promised, He will surely fulfill.

5:10a Read why this trial must take place. See Appendix 213, page 479.

5:11a Always remember that the Lord will not judge by our standards, but by His word. John 12:46-50. So make certain that you read and study His word, always praying that God will help you to live it.

God sees our heart. All we do, are, think, plan, and desire is clearly seen by God. 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3. He even knows our motives. It is certain that nothing about our lives will be hidden from God's eyes when our time comes to stand before Him for judgment. Read of the concern King David had in this regard, in Psalm 139:23-24.

5:13a ... *when we live and witness as we do, ...*

5:14a ... *and needed to be resurrected back to life, if we were to escape the judgment of the ungodly, the second death.* We had all died spiritually (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1), and there was need of the same divine power to give us new birth spiritually as there will be to raise up dead bodies to live forever. Christ's death for us (dying in our stead) now makes it possible for God to offer us forgiveness and new life. v 17.

5:16a ... *according to his nationality or color, or whether he's rich or poor, slave or free, educated or uneducated. We are only concerned with whether or not he has yet found new life thru Christ.*

5:16b ... *We now recognize Him mainly as the*

We're simply giving you reason to boast about us and defend us when we're insulted by those who revel in how well they dress and how smoothly they speak, but have no real loving concern in their hearts for you.

¹³If it's charged that we're insane, well, all I can say is that all we are doing and saying is for God's sake. But if we're in our right mind,^a it's because we have your good at heart.

¹⁴It's the love that Christ has shown for us that now continues forcibly to cause us to compress all of our energies into one channel. Because we realize that if Christ died for the sake of all of us, it was because all of us had died.^a

¹⁵And He did die for everyone. So now it's only fitting that those who come to life again thru Him should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them, and then rose again.

¹⁶So from now on we no longer judge anyone by human standards.^a Though we once looked forward to the Messiah as an earthly prince and conqueror (as King of the Jews), that's no longer the

main way we think about Him.^b

¹⁷So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person!^a His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!^b

¹⁸And it is God who has accomplished all this change in us, from being His enemies to becoming His friends. He did it by having Jesus Christ suffer and die for us. And now He has given all of us the assignment of bringing others from their enmity into friendship with Him.^a

¹⁹Our message to everyone in the world is to be that God now offers to bring them back into friendship with Himself because of what Christ suffered for them. Now He won't need to charge them with their sin. We are also to tell them that God has now given to every one of us the solemn responsibility of telling everyone else in the world how they too can now be brought back into friendship with Him.^a

²⁰So all of us are now authorized messengers for

Savior of the world!

5:17a See John 15:1-10; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:21-32.

5:17b Every person who is truly born again, and thereby becomes a Christian, undergoes such a change in his views and feelings that it's proper to say of him that he is an altogether new person. He becomes an altogether new person in a moral sense. He has new views, new motives, and new principles. He has a new purpose for living, with new goals for his life.

Unless there is this total change, he is still a rebel against God, and under His judgment. No other moral change takes place so deeply, so radically, and so thoroughly as the change in a person who is truly converted to Christ.

True, you cannot bring all of this about by yourself. You need God's help at all times. But still, your sincere desire and aim must be to be all that God, with His help, wants you to be and do. See references listed at Hebrews 2:18, and the notes.

A Christian has new views of God and of Jesus Christ, new views of this life and of the life to come, new views of truth and duty. He has new hope, new joy, new friends, and new interests. Yes, a Christian is altogether different than he was when he lived for what he could get out of this life and out of others. Now his great concern and desire is to obey God and give of himself in service to both God and man. See Ephesians 2:10; 4:21-24; Galatians 6:15; Romans 6:1-23.

* * *

Some translations omit the word "all" (or "everything" in this translation) in regard to the new life. But it's in the Greek Received Text, and the "everything" agrees with all the teachings of Christ and the apostles. They never taught that selective obedience was acceptable with God.

But from Adam and Eve down to the most recent rebels against full obedience to God, both within the organized church and outside it, they all want Heaven when they die, but on their own terms. They want freedom to disobey God at least in some things. Well, it didn't work for Adam and Eve, and it won't work for you either if you're also one of those refined rebels.

Cheating on God is cheating on God, whether it's a so-called small sin or a big one. Don't play Russian roulette with your soul! That one sin you are cuddling will earn for you a place in Hell! Romans 6:1-23. Come clean with God and give Him all of you, and do all that He commands you to do. Then you will have the joy and assurance that all is well. Do it! And we'll see you in Heaven, where God has promised us riches, glory, and pleasures forever!

Never say, "It will cost too much." Is anything worth going to Hell for? Choose to live! Read *The Amazing Story of God*—Appendix 247, page 520.

5:18a See Appendix 214, page 480.

5:19a Our work is not finished when we have told people what Christ has done for them. We must then challenge them about their solemn responsibility to now warn others of the judgment to come and of the new life there is for them in Christ, if they

Christ. God now makes His appeal to the world thru us! So we beg the lost, as Christ would plead, "Turn from your enmity toward God and surrender to His terms and conditions for mercy,^a and receive His forgiveness."^b

²¹Because God made Jesus, who never sinned, to be a sin-offering for us, so that thru all He has done and will yet do for us, we might become as righteous in God's eyes as Christ is.

6 So then, as workers together with Christ, we also plead with you not to receive God's gracious offer of peace and pardon without responding in an adequate and effective way.^a

²Because God says:

I heard your cry to Me at a time when I was willing to listen. At the time when My salvation was being offered, I helped you.^a

Listen to me! NOW is the time when God is willing to listen to you! NOW is the time when God's salvation is being offered you!^b

³We are doing our very best to make sure that we are not a stumbling block to any of you in any way, so that you won't lose confidence in our witness among you.

⁴But in everything we do, we try to make it very clear that we are sincere servants of God. So we patiently endure grievous troubles, hardships, and distressful situations.

⁵We have been beaten, jailed, and mobbed. We have worked hard, even during times of sleepless watching and going without food.

⁶We have shown our sincerity by our wholesome lives, by our knowledge of God's word,^a and by our patience and kindness. It has also been seen by the way the Holy Spirit has worked thru us, and by our sincere love for you.

are to live!

If every person won to Christ was convincingly made to see the responsibility they now have to personally tell the Great News to every person they contact from day to day, the resulting chain reaction would be utterly astounding. Matthew 28:18-20.

5:20a Some claim there are no conditions for receiving God's forgiveness, that God's offer of forgiveness is unconditional. Read what Jesus told Paul about this in Acts 20:21 and 26:18-20. See also Galatians 5:4 note, and Hebrews 5:9.

5:20b . . . and allow Him to make a new person out of you.

6:1a Paul here pled with the Corinthians to examine their own hearts to see if they really were born again. One believes the Great News in an inade-

⁷We have always spoken the truth. And you have seen the power of God at work in our ministry. We have met every opposition, whether on the right hand or on the left, in an honest and honorable way.

⁸We have been defamed as deceivers, yet we have remained true to God and man whether we were honored or dishonored, whether praised or cursed.

⁹We're considered unknown and unimportant, but God knows all about us.^a We're considered by some to be almost dead, but we're very much alive. It's true that we've been severely beaten and left for dead, but still we weren't killed.

¹⁰We're continually facing situations that cause us sorrow, but still, we're always rejoicing. We're considered poor, but we're making many rich. We don't have anything, and yet we own everything.^a

¹¹We've been very frank with you, and I want you dear friends in Corinth to know that our heart is wide open to you.

¹²We have not closed our hearts to you, but you have closed your hearts to us.

¹³Now in return for the open hearts we offer you (I speak as one correcting his children), why not also open your hearts to us?

Run From Union With Unbelievers

¹⁴Don't be unequally united with unbelievers! Because what common interest can those who practice doing what's right and honorable have with those who practice dishonesty, injustice, and every other kind of sin? What can light and darkness ever have in common?

¹⁵When did Christ ever come to an agreement with Satan about anything? So how can one who lives to please Christ and one who lives to please

quote, ineffective way if he has not given his entire will to God so that God may make a new person out of him. Our faith must be a belief not only of the mind, but from the heart. Romans 10:9-10. A genuine faith from the heart will produce lasting holy living.

Paul warns to guard against self-deception. Are you willing and wanting to obey God in everything? Are you praying for and allowing God's Spirit to work in you to produce good works?

6:2a Isaiah 49:8.

6:2b Satan isn't against religion, he just wants you to wait until tomorrow to get right with God. And tomorrow he'll say the same. But it will be just as difficult to die to your pride and your favorite sin tomorrow as it is today. Today, *NOW*, is when God

himself ever agree?

¹⁶Or what agreement can there ever be between a house of God and idols? And don't forget: Each of us is a house of the living God. As God has said:

I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.^a

¹⁷But the Lord also says:

You must come out from among those idolaters and unbelievers. Tear yourselves away from all that so fascinates them! Have no part in their evil deeds and ambitions. Then I will welcome you to Myself.^a

¹⁸**“And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters.”^a**
So says the Lord Almighty!^b

7 So, my dear friends, since we have these marvelous promises from God, let us do our part in cleansing ourselves from everything that pollutes our body and spirit, using every strength we have to perfectly please Him, realizing the awesome fact that we are always in the presence of God.^a

Paul's Joy

²Open your hearts to us. We haven't wronged or corrupted or cheated anyone.

³I'm not saying this to condemn you. I've said before that you've so firmly attached yourselves within our hearts that we would gladly die with you, or live the rest of our lives with you.

⁴I've been very frank in what I've written you here. But I want you to know that I've done a lot of bragging to others about you as well. You have literally filled me with encouragement, so that I overflow with joy even in the midst of all our troubles.

is willing to save you. Don't put it off!

6:6a Paul had taken the time to immerse himself deeply in the Scriptures, so that he could share real truth with others.

6:9a ... and has intense interest in each of us.

6:10a Those who belong to Christ do indeed own everything. We are heirs of everything God is and has. Romans 8:16-18; 1 John 3:2.

6:16a Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27.

6:17a Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34,41.

6:18a 2 Samuel 7:14.

6:18b The implication of these verses is that God will receive us as His sons and daughters, and live within us, and bring us to be with Himself eternally only if we will leave the evil ways of the world and

⁵The truth is: When we arrived here in northern Greece, we got very little sleep, because there was trouble everywhere. There was the usual opposition from the heathen and the Jews,^a and on top of that, the deep fears and concerns for the various problems of the churches.

⁶But God, who comforts those who are downcast, gave us great comfort by the arrival of Titus.

⁷And it wasn't only his coming that gave us such a great lift. But when he told us of the comfort and encouragement he had experienced when you told him of your earnest desire to see me, and of how you had mourned over the sin that had occurred, and how zealously you agreed with my charge to you—well, I could hardly contain myself for the joy that welled up within me.

⁸So even if I hurt you deeply with my last letter, I'm not sorry I wrote it. But still, at the time I wrote, I was in deep sorrow that I had to write it. Now, however, I realize that although that letter deeply disturbed you and caused you much grief, it was only a temporary grief.

⁹Now I'm extremely glad, not because I brought you such sorrow, but because your sorrow led you to a change of heart. Because your sorrow led you to do what God wanted you to do in that situation, and as a result, you weren't harmed by us in any way.

¹⁰Because when you are faced with the fact that you are displeasing to God, and you turn from your sin and obey Him, the result is salvation. And that result is not something to be sorry about. But when people of the world are sorry about being caught in sin, there is still only God's judgment and the second death ahead for them.

¹¹But look at what happened when you allowed your sorrow to lead you to please God. What dili-

obey Him. Only then can we honestly claim, *we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ!* Romans 8:17.

7:1a Literally, we are to do so *in the fear of God*. God is always with us and watching us (Psalm 33:13-15,18-19; 34:15; 94:8-10; 139:1-24), because He knows all things, and because He dearly loves us.

But we must realize that unless we are willing to clean up our act and stay clean for God (with His help), we cannot continue as sons and daughters of the Father. Colossians 3:5-17. The fact that no one but Christ has ever lived perfectly does not weaken our obligation to continually strive for that perfection. See Matthew 5:48.

7:5a See 11:24-28.

gence it produced in you! What eagerness to clear yourselves and be restored to favor with God! What anger against the one who had sinned, what fear of what God might do, what passionate desire to please God! What zeal to now get to the heart of the matter and deal with it! What readiness to pronounce judgment! You have now entirely cleared yourselves of blame in this matter.

¹²My main purpose in writing that letter was not only that this incestuous person should be punished, or that the one wronged might be helped, but that your diligence in dealing with this sin might be seen by everyone. It was also that you might know that I must give an accounting before God about my real concern for your spiritual welfare.^a

¹³We are indeed encouraged by your attitude in the whole matter. But we had even greater cause for rejoicing because of the joy Titus experienced when all of you so refreshed and encouraged him.

¹⁴You have fulfilled every bold claim I ever made to Titus about you. You didn't cause me shame in any way for speaking to him about you as I did. Just as I always spoke the truth to you, Titus found that my bragging about you was also the truth.

¹⁵And his love for you continues to grow as he remembers how earnest all of you are about obeying God, and how you received him with fear and trembling as a messenger of God.

¹⁶So I'm indeed happy that I have such good reason to have full confidence in you.

Generous Giving Encouraged

8 Now, my brothers and sisters, let us tell you how God has poured out His blessings on the churches of northern Greece.

²In spite of a great trial that severely tested them, they had such joy in the Lord that even from the depths of their poverty, they gave so unselfishly that the result has been a most generous gift.

³I can testify that they indeed gave according to their ability, and yes, their generosity extended far beyond their actual ability. They gave because they really wanted to give.

⁴Actually, they kept urging us most earnestly to accept a gift from them, and allow them in this way to help the Lord's followers in need in Judea.^a

⁵And when we agreed, they didn't do only as we

had hoped, but first they rededicated themselves to the Lord. Then they agreed with our wishes and followed our directions.^a

⁶So we encouraged Titus, who had already talked to you about this need,^a that he should return to you and complete his leadership among you over this matter.

⁷So now, in the same way that you excel in everything—in faith, in preaching and teaching, in knowledge, in your earnest diligence, and in your love for us—see that you now also excel in being a blessing to those in need by giving generously.

⁸I'm not commanding you to do anything, but I am allowing you to test the sincerity of your love^a by comparing your faithfulness in giving with that of others.

⁹Think of how undeserving you are of all that your Lord Jesus Christ has given you. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor so that by His becoming poor you might become rich.

¹⁰So this is my advice in this matter: A year ago you wanted to give toward this need, and you made a good beginning in collecting the funds.

¹¹Now you need to finish what you started. You were eager to get involved. Now you need to be just as eager to complete the project by giving according to your means,

¹²because your gift is acceptable to God when you give gladly in relation to what you have. He, of course, doesn't expect you to give what you don't have.

¹³Now I don't mean that you should so generously free others of their poverty that you become poor yourselves.

¹⁴But you should work for equality. Your present abundance can help them get on top, while at a later time, you may be down and will need them to supply you from their abundance. We should each be concerned that others may be as blessed as we are.

¹⁵As the Scripture says,

The one who gathered much didn't have any left over, and the one who gathered little didn't have too little.^a

Titus Sent to Corinth

¹⁶I thank God that He has put the same earnest

7:12a We each have that same responsibility in regard to the spiritual (and therefore eternal) welfare of others. 2:4.

8:4a Acts 11:27-30.

8:5a ... in regard to the contribution to be

made.

8:6a ... among the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea ...

8:8a Christianity is the religion of love! And that love is to be demonstrated by doing good to anyone

concern for you into the heart of Titus that I have.

¹⁷Because he not only accepted our challenge that he return to you, but he was eager to do so. So he's coming to you of his own accord.

¹⁸And we're sending along with him the brother who is so highly praised among all the churches for his preaching of the Great News.

¹⁹Not only that, but he has also been chosen by the churches here to travel with us when we bring their gifts of kindness and love to Jerusalem. This relief and service will not only bring glory to the Lord Himself, but will also be a witness of your eagerness to help where there is need.

²⁰Now, we want to avoid any suspicion on the part of anyone about the way we administer this generous gift.

²¹The Lord knows our honesty, but we also want everyone else to know that everything will be done honestly.

²²So in addition to the two, we are sending along another brother who has often proved to be an enthusiastic servant of the Lord in many ways. He's especially interested in going along because of all the good reports he's heard about you.

²³If anyone asks about Titus, he's my partner and fellow worker on your behalf. In regard to the other two brothers, they are messengers sent by the churches here, men who are truly an honor to Christ.

²⁴So show these men the proof of your love, and the reason for my bragging about you. That will really inspire the other churches.

Some Instructions About Giving

9 It's really quite unnecessary for me to write anything more about your meeting the needs of our fellow followers of the Lord.

²I know how eager you are to help. I've enthusiastically told the followers here in northern Greece that you people in southern Greece were ready with your gifts a year ago. And your eager desire to give has inspired most of the people here to do the same.

³But I've sent these brothers to you, ahead of me, so that you can be sure to have your gift ready. I surely wouldn't want my bragging about you to be mere imagination.

⁴It would embarrass me, and, of course, you as

well, if some people here in northern Greece should come with me, only to find that my confident bragging about you was false, if you weren't ready with your gift.

⁵So I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you, ahead of me, to challenge you to prepare the big-hearted gift you had earlier promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift when I arrive, and not as a grudging obligation.

⁶Let me remind you: If you plant sparingly, you will also harvest sparingly, but if you plant generously, you will also reap a generous harvest.^a

⁷Each of you should give as your heart prompts you to give. Don't give grudgingly or because you feel you must, because God loves the one who gives cheerfully.

⁸And always remember, God is able to cause blessings of every kind imaginable to flow to you, so that you will at all times have all you need of everything. As a result, you will always have an abundance from which to give to every good work.

⁹As the Scripture says:

When the good man scatters his gifts abroad to the poor, the good he has done will be remembered by God forever.^a

¹⁰Now may God, who supplies seed for the one who plants, and bread for food, give you a good supply of seed for planting and a great harvest. May He in that way increase your ability to do good.

¹¹And as you continue doing so, you will continue to be enriched in every way, enabling you always to be generous in helping to meet every need. And the generous gifts you send thru us will result in thanksgiving to God on the part of those who receive them.

¹²Because when you serve God in this way, you not only supply the needs of your fellow followers, but you also cause an outpouring of grateful thanks to God on the part of many.

¹³These people will praise and glorify God for the proof they see that you are indeed living in obedience to the faith you say you have in the Great News about Christ, shown clearly by the liberal way you have communicated your love to them and to everyone else.

¹⁴You will also benefit from their prayers for you, as they beg God to bless you because of the great

and everyone whenever and wherever we have a chance. The most solid proof of that love is our willingness to part with our funds or property, our time, or whatever else is valuable to us (even our very life, if that should be necessary), in order to

bring salvation and happiness to others. John 15:13.

8:15a Exodus 16:18.

9:6a Luke 6:38; Philippians 4:19.

9:9a Psalm 112:9.

proof they see of His goodness working in and thru you.

¹⁵Thanks be to God for the utterly indescribable gift^a He has given us!

Paul Defends His Work for Christ

10 Now with all the meekness and gentleness of Christ Himself, I appeal to you. Yes, this is I, Paul, the one who is said to be very bold when far away from you, but humble and meek when facing you.

²But I beg you not to force me to be bold and severe toward you in the way that I intend to face up to some of you. Some think we are ruled by self-serving goals, which we plan to achieve by clever means.

³It's true that we live in these weak, human bodies. But we're not fighting a physical battle.

⁴And we don't use earthly weapons in our warfare. We tear down strongholds of every description^a by God's mighty power.

⁵And by His power we're demolishing the arguments of various systems of false philosophy, and every high opinion that men have of themselves, who resist the knowledge that God reveals about them. As a result, we are capturing their minds and turning all their thoughts toward desire to fully obey Christ.

⁶As soon as those among you who are sincere have given proof of your obedience, we will be ready to deal severely with those who still rebel against obedience to Christ.^a

⁷You who oppose us are looking only at our physical appearance. If anyone is convinced in himself that he has been sent by Christ to preach His Great News, let him again do some self-examination and see that in the same way that he has been sent by Christ, so have we.

⁸Maybe I brag too much about my authority. But the Lord gave me this authority for the purpose of building you up, not to tear you down.

⁹And I'll not be shamed by those who claim that I write these letters merely to frighten you.

¹⁰Because the one opposing me says, "His letters are severe and powerful, but when he's here in person he's weak, and his spoken messages are pitiful and worthless."

¹¹Let this person be fairly warned that there will be no difference between the words of the letters we have written while absent from you and our actions when we arrive among you.

¹²But we wouldn't dare to classify ourselves or compare ourselves with those who think so highly of themselves. They're stupid when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with each other.

¹³But we won't brag about being more effective than we have been. God is the One who assigns duties and gives the necessary abilities, and my assignment certainly included working there with you.

¹⁴So we are not extending ourselves beyond our area of duty when we now come to you, because we were the first ones to come to you with the Great News about Christ.

¹⁵I'm not trying to take credit for what's happening in other areas, where other men are working. But I do hope that as your faith continues to increase, you will be able to help me in a great way to accomplish the work that God has assigned me.

¹⁶Then we will be able to preach the Great News even in the regions beyond you, because we don't want to be rejoicing only in what someone else has done in his area.

¹⁷But **Let the one who brags, brag about what the Lord is doing.**^a

9:15a While we can bless others with our love thru giving, God has given us the indescribable gift of His love! He even loved us when we existed only as a mere thought in His eternal mind. His love for us is so great that He sacrificed His incomparable Son for us, thru whom He now offers us forgiveness and eternal life. That means acceptance into the Royal Family of God, and a future that no human eye has ever seen, nor ear ever heard of, nor mind ever imagined. Truly, it is a gift so great that no human words even come close to being adequate enough to fully describe!

10:4a Some of those strongholds are: 1) Love for the things of this brief, uncertain life; 2) Human passions; 3) False religious beliefs; 4) Organized

religious opposition; 5) World opinion; 6) Subtle arguments, etc.

10:6a John 3:36; Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 2:10; 1 John 2:3-4,17.

10:17a Jeremiah 9:24.

11:2a This must be the great concern of each of us, both for ourselves and for each fellow follower of the Lord. Pastor, even as Paul, this must be your most intense concern regarding every member of your congregation! Romans 15:16; Hebrews 12:14.

11:3a The implication is that if they abandoned their pure lives as followers of Christ, they would experience the same spiritual disaster that Eve did.

11:4a *Warning!* Test every minister (1 John 4:1) to make sure he is preaching the truth. Is he teach-

¹⁸So we shouldn't be looking for the approval of others by bragging about what we've done. It's God's approval that counts.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I trust you'll be patient with me as I indulge a little in some foolishness. Indeed, you already have.

²Because you see, I continue to be intensely jealous for you, in the same way that God is. I've promised you in marriage to a Man—to Christ. And I want so earnestly to present you to Him as a virgin who has kept herself pure.^a

³But now I'm afraid that somehow, in the same way that Satan, by means of that snake, was able by his cunning to trick Eve, that your minds may be polluted, and that you will abandon your pure and sincere devotion to Christ.^a

⁴Because if someone comes along and preaches about another Jesus than the one we told you about, or if he encourages you to accept a spirit different from the Holy Spirit you had already received, or a different great news than you had earlier accepted, you seem quite willing to listen to him.^a

⁵But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to those "super-apostles" of yours.

⁶Even if I'm not a smooth speaker, I'm not lacking in knowledge. I've certainly made that clear to you in every way and in all matters.

⁷But did I make a mistake by lowering myself in your opinion when I lifted you up by preaching the Great News to you, and not charging you for my services?

⁸I robbed other churches, accepting support from them in order to serve you.

⁹Even when I was with you and in need, I was not a lazy burden to anyone. What I needed was supplied by the brothers who came from northern

Greece. I wasn't a burden to you in any way, and never will be.

¹⁰As surely as I speak the truth because Christ is in me, no one can stop me from bragging about my work among you in southern Greece.

¹¹Why? Because I don't love you? God knows I do.

¹²And the way I've worked in the past, I'll continue to work, in order to cut the ground out from under those who continue to falsely brag that they're doing God's work in the same way we are.

¹³Such men are false messengers, lying about their work, disguising themselves as messengers of Christ.

¹⁴It's no surprise that they do this, because even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

¹⁵So it's not surprising, then, that men who serve him disguise themselves as ministers who do what's right. But their final destiny will be exactly what their actions deserve!^a

Paul's Sufferings for Christ

¹⁶I say again: Don't let anyone take me for a fool! But if you must, at least listen to me as you would to a fool, so that I also may do a little bragging.

¹⁷Of course when I speak in this confident, boastful way, I'm not speaking as the Lord would speak, but as a fool speaks.

¹⁸But since many brag in order to satisfy their own selfish desires, I will too.

¹⁹And since you yourselves are so wise, you gladly listen to fools!

²⁰In fact, you even put up with anyone who orders you around and takes for himself whatever you have, or takes advantage of you in other ways, or promotes himself, or strikes you repeatedly in the face.

²¹To my shame, I must confess that I was too weak to be as bold as all that! But in whatever way

ing the whole truth, as revealed in the Bible? Or is he substituting something else as the meaning of various Scripture, in place of the obvious truth? Does he explain away the warnings? Does he skip over words or sections that may get him in trouble with some of the people? If so, he is in deep trouble with God; and so are you (2 Timothy 4:1-5) if you allow such to be preached to your young people and others.

We must take a stand against the useless trivia that's being preached in so many churches these last days, or we will share the guilt and the judgment from God! Your eternal life and the lives of others depend on what you accept and live by and

allow as truth! In love, but with firmness, you must deal with such cases as Christ has commanded in Matthew 18:15-18.

A challenge! Pray for your pastor. When he preaches the truth (even bringing you under conviction) thank him. Let him know you're behind him when he preaches the whole truth. He needs encouragement, just as you do. Don't only thank him, but allow God to use your pastor's faithful preaching to change your life. He must answer to God for the way he preaches, and you must answer to God for what you do when the truth is revealed to you.

11:15a See Matthew 7:15-23.

anyone else may be bold in speaking out—I'm speaking like a fool now—I will be just as bold.

²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

²³Are they servants of Christ? I'm speaking now as if I were out of my mind, but I'm a servant of His in a far greater way. I have worked much harder, have been beaten with whips more times than I can number because of my stand for Him, have been in prison more often, many times facing death.^a

²⁴Five different times, the Jews gave me their frightful 39 lashes with a whip.

²⁵Three other times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. I've been shipwrecked three times, and once I spent a day and a night in the water.

²⁶In my many travels for Him, I've often been in great dangers while crossing or navigating flooded rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, the Jews, and dangers from the ungodly. I've also met serious dangers from mobs in the city, from hunger and thirst in the desert, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from those who claimed to be followers of Christ, but were not.

²⁷I have worked and toiled, often going without sleep. I've been hungry and thirsty, often fasting. I've been cold from not having enough clothes to keep me warm.

²⁸Besides all these external things, there is the constant pressure of daily concern for the care of all the churches.

²⁹Whenever anyone reveals weakness, I become weak with concern for him. When someone is lured into sin, intense anger burns within me against the seducer.

³⁰So if I must brag, I will brag about things that show how weak I am.

³¹The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is worthy of praise forever, knows I am not lying.

³²In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had guards placed at the city gates to arrest me.

³³But I was let down by rope in a basket thru a window in the city wall, and thereby escaped his clutching hands.

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 It seems, however, that bragging won't do me any good; but let me tell you about several visions and revelations from the Lord.

²I know a certain follower of the Lord who was caught up to the third Heaven. This happened 14 years ago. Whether he was in his body during this happening, or out of it, I really don't know. Only God knows.

³Now, I know this man very well. But, as I said, I don't know whether he was in his body or out of it when this happening took place. Only God knows.

⁴But he was caught up into Paradise, and heard such astounding things that there are no human words that even come close to adequately describing what he heard. In fact, he hasn't been allowed even to try to explain what he heard.^a

⁵I will continue to be highly elated and jubilant about such an experience. But I'll not brag about myself, except about my weaknesses.

⁶But even if I should wish to brag about the visions and revelations I've had, I wouldn't be a fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I'll refrain from that, so that no one will have a higher opinion of me than he gains from the things he sees me do and hears me say.

⁷And then, to keep me from becoming conceited because of the incredible revelations I had received, I was given a thorn in my flesh. This was a messenger from Satan, that constantly tormented me, to keep me from being proud.

⁸Three different times I begged the Lord that He would remove it.

⁹But His firm and unyielding answer was, "My desire to greatly bless and use you is all you need. Because My power is brought to perfection in those who realize how utterly weak they are in themselves." So for that reason, I would rather most gladly brag about how powerless I am, so that the

11:23a ... because of my bold stand for Christ and His true message.

12:4a See 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:8.

12:10a ... thru my faith in what Christ can and will do!

12:12a ... In spite of the opposition I met in Corinth, I patiently continued to give proof that my message to you was indeed from God.

12:21a That surrender to the rule of sin is spiritually fatal is clearly implied here.

13:1a Deuteronomy 19:15.

13:3a ... both in His blessings (1 Corinthians 1:4-7) and in His judgments (1 Corinthians 11:30-31).

13:5a Paul uses the present indicative thruout these statements. In Greek, the present indicative usually means continuous or repeated action in

power of Christ may work thru me.

¹⁰So I take pleasure in various weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties, all for Christ's sake. Because when I know how weak I am, then I am powerful!^a

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹I'm acting like a fool the way I'm bragging. But you forced me to it, because you should be the ones speaking up for me. Because I'm certainly not inferior in any way to those "super-great-apostles" of yours, although I'm nothing in myself.

¹²Surely you agree that my ministry was accompanied by all the signs of one truly sent to you by God; not only by signs, wonders, and miracles, but by my patient endurance as well.^a

¹³In what way then did you receive an inferior ministry, compared to other churches, except that I wasn't a lazy burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

¹⁴Now I'm ready to come to you for the third time. Again I won't be a burden to you, because I'm not after your money. All I want is you. After all, the children shouldn't be expected to provide for the parents, but the parents for the children.

¹⁵And I will gladly spend everything I have and use all the energy I have for the sake of your souls, although it seems that the more intensely I love you, the less I am loved.

¹⁶No matter what you say about that, I have not been a burden to you. Still, some seem to feel that I'm a sly person, and that I've continued to take advantage of you by deceitful means.

¹⁷But did I take advantage of you thru any of the messengers I sent you?

¹⁸I urged Titus to go to you, and sent the other Christian brother with him. Titus didn't take advantage of you in any way, did he? Haven't Titus and I acted in the same spirit, and behaved in the same way?

¹⁹So why must we again defend ourselves before you? With Christ as my witness before God, let me assure you that everything I have done for you, dear friends, I have done that I might build you up

spiritually.

²⁰Frankly, I'm afraid that when I come, I'll not find you as I would like you to be, which would result in you not finding me as you would like me to be. I'm afraid I may find quarreling, jealousies, hot tempers, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

²¹I'm also afraid that when I come again, my God may humble me among you, causing me to deeply mourn because of the many who lived in sin before, who have not even yet repented and turned from their impurity, their sexual sinning, and other corruptions in which they indulged.^a

Final Warnings and Greetings

13 The Scripture says:
The testimony of two or three witnesses must verify every accusation.^a

And this is the third time I'll be coming to visit you.

²I warned you before, when I was with you on my second visit, and although I'm absent, I'm now writing to forewarn those of you who were living in sin before, and to all the rest of you, that if I come again, I will spare no one.

³Since you always demand proof that Christ is speaking thru me, you shall have it. Christ hasn't been weak in His dealings with you. He's been powerful in your midst!^a

⁴Although He appeared weak when He allowed Himself to be crucified, yet by God's power, He's now very much alive! We also appear weak as we serve Him, but we shall act for Him with God's power as we deal with you.

⁵Examine yourselves to see whether or not you are indeed a true Christian—genuinely born again (living now as God would have you live), while trusting in Jesus as your Savior. You must examine yourselves and make sure that you stand the test. Do you have the witness in your spirit that Jesus Christ is living within you? This witness will indeed be there—unless, of course, you fail the test.^a

present time, and especially if the context so indicates. And the context certainly indicates necessary, continued action in this warning and challenge from Paul. We *must* continue to examine ourselves so that we will know what spiritual state we are in.

The way to make that examination is to read God's word daily. We need constant reminders of how God wants us to live, and for what purposes.

We need God's word to point out to us what our

thoughts and ambitions really are. What does our conduct tell others? How interested are we in spending time with the Lord in prayer and in searching the Scriptures? Only as we feed on the Scriptures and spend time with the Lord in prayer will we be strengthened spiritually and directed in the way we should live.

* * *

If a businessman needs to keep in close touch

⁶But I hope you will see that we are not failing the test.

⁷Now I pray to God that He will help you to keep from doing any evil. Not so it will be obvious that we are approved by God,^a but that you will do what is right even if it should appear that we are worthless and have failed the test.

⁸Because it's a fixed rule with us to do absolutely nothing that is against what is right and true, we will do and say only that which will promote the truth.^a

⁹So we will be glad indeed if God does not use us to show His power against you, if you are standing strong in the faith. But also, our constant prayer for you is that you will go on to perfection.^a

¹⁰The reason I'm writing these things while absent from you, is so that when I come, I won't need to be harsh with you in the use of the authority the Lord has given me. Because He gave me

this authority to build you up, not to tear you down.

¹¹Finally, my brothers and sisters, always rejoice and be glad! Aim to live exactly as God would have you live, and may you be extremely encouraged.^a Lay aside all your differences and be at peace with one another in true unity. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹²Greet one another with sincere Christian affection and love.^a

¹³All of God's people here send you their warmest greetings.

¹⁴May the Lord Jesus most richly bless all of you, way beyond what you deserve. May God's love enfold you, and may you be constantly strengthened as you partake of the gifts and influence of the Holy Spirit. So be it.

Most sincerely,
Paul and Timothy

with his books to know the status of his business, certainly a Christian needs to continue to allow God's Book to examine his life in order that he may know just how he stands in the sight of God. By self-examination, we may search out and remove those things that are offensive to God. The sins which seem to trip us up so easily must be known and abandoned!

Likewise, we will also be reminded of what God wants us to be doing, in positive action. God is not only concerned with what we must not be doing, but also with what we must be doing, in obedience to His many commands in the New Testament. The more closely we conform to the life of Christ the greater assurance and joy we will have that all is well between us and God.

Just remember always that you are not on your own. God is more interested and concerned about your salvation than you are yourself. He is always with you to help you. Philippians 2:13.

13:7a ... *because of the way we have turned you from your sinning* ...

13:8a Paul's blessing of power from God was for

the purpose of proclaiming the truth, and also to reveal error. If he had compromised the truth, or allowed some error, some sin, he would have lost God's blessing and failed God's test.

No one in the church at Corinth had anything to fear from Paul if they were living to please and obey God. But they had much to fear if they were compromisers, because Christ will never compromise in regard to right or wrong, and neither would His servant Paul.

Let us do likewise for the glory of God and the glory of His true Church. To do less is to fail and be disqualified. It is sad indeed to realize that many people today have the reputation of being real Christians, but they are spiritually dead because of their sinning. Revelation 3:1-6. Awake to righteousness!

13:9a See 7:1 note.

13:11a ... *because of God's expressed great love for you, and by all of His great promises to you, both for this life and for eternity.*

13:12a Literally *with a holy kiss.*

So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person! His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!

—2 Corinthians 5:17