

II CORINTHIANS

You, God, and a KJV Bible

By Eric Neumann

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Quotations

The only material quoted in this book is the Word of God in the King James Version. No commentaries or scholars are quoted, because God's Word is important, not man's word. As such, I encourage all readers to be good Bereans by searching the scriptures to see if what I have said is true (Acts 17:11). It is okay if you do not agree with what I say, but it is not okay if your disagreement is not based upon the Word of God in its proper context, which involves "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Goal

The goal of this Bible study guide is to cast "down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and [bring] into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5) so that members of the body of Christ may "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4).

Contact the author

Therefore, the author encourages any disagreements be brought to his attention so that future versions of this Bible study guide can be changed if deemed necessary.

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Books by Eric Neumann

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II Corinthians Introduction – Physical Suffering for Spiritual Maturity

I Corinthians corrected a failure by the Corinthians to have the practical application of Romans 6-8 doctrine demonstrated in their lives. Since “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12), if the Corinthians apply I Corinthians and live godly, they need the doctrine of **II Corinthians** to help them not to abandon sound doctrine when they suffer.

Thus, chapter 1 of II Corinthians talks about the comfort that God provides for those suffering for serving Christ. Chapter 2 warns of the danger of being legalistic to those who have sinned and come back to the fellowship, having turned from the sin. Chapter 3 talks about how the grace, that we enjoy in the body of Christ, is much better than the law that Israel was under. This is important to understand because the danger is to become legalistic, thinking there is power in that. Chapter 4 shows how suffering in the flesh is how God draws people to Himself. Thus, the suffering should be welcomed. Chapter 5 gets their focus on the spiritual by showing that we are part of the new creature in Christ. Thus, if the Corinthians suffer, or are even killed, for walking in the Spirit, they should not be concerned over it. Chapter 6 says that the suffering is what separates believers from those who practice church, so that the Corinthians may fulfill their ministry of reconciling others to God. Chapter 7 goes over the mental anguish that can take place when you walk in the Spirit and shows that God will comfort you, if you remain in the sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles. Chapters 8-9 show that liberal, monetary giving leads to liberal, spiritual growth, because it takes the focus off the flesh, when it comes to money, so that money can be used to grow spiritually, rather than as the root of all evil (I Timothy 6:10). Because sound doctrine is so contrary to the flesh, what Paul has shared is the opposite of what their “ten thousand instructors in Christ” (I Corinthians 4:15) have shared with them. Therefore, Paul spends the rest of the book (chapters 10-13) defending himself as their apostle. He gives details of his suffering so that they see that suffering is, in fact, a proof of godly living. This will keep them from following false instructors and apostles, and it will comfort them in times of their own suffering for godly living.

Summary: The Corinthians need to recognize that suffering for the believer is part of God’s plan (4:7-5:8), and Satan tries to trick them into believing otherwise (4:1-4) by having Satan’s ministers appear to represent Christ (11:13-15).

Key passage: 12:9-10 (9) And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

II Corinthians 1 – Going Through Tribulations Helps Us Spiritually

1 The Corinthians are saints, in spite of their carnality (v. 1). As saints, God comforts them as they suffer for godly living (vs. 3-5). This suffering can also help

others grow in sound doctrine (vs. 6-7). Suffering gets you to stop focusing on your flesh and to focus on who you are in Christ instead. This is how God delivered Paul from death when he was in Asia (vs. 8-10). Granted, God did physically deliver Paul, but the most important deliverance is the spiritual one, so that he learned to trust in God more, instead of his own flesh. We then live in “simplicity and godly sincerity,” instead of in the flesh (v. 12), which leads to true joy (v. 14).

Paul had intended to visit the Corinthians when he went to Macedonia (v. 16), but he decided not to because they are still carnal (v. 23). He would have had to correct them, which may have resulted in them following Paul in a fleshly manner. Therefore, Paul wrote this epistle instead so that they may change their thinking and behavior for Christ’ sake. As such, Paul would be a helper of their joy, rather than having dominion over their faith (v. 24).

1:1 Paul and Sosthenes wrote I Corinthians (I Corinthians 1:1) around Acts 19. Paul gave the letter to Timotheus to deliver to them (I Corinthians 16:10-11). Now, he is writing another letter around Acts 20. Apparently, Timotheus made it to Corinth, and this is why the writers of this second letter are Paul and Timotheus.

Note that the letter is “unto the church of God which is at Corinth” (1:1). A church is not a building, nor is it an organization. The Mormons say that they are “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints”, but this is not an accurate description of them, because they believe in a works-based salvation. There is also a church called “The Church of God”, but they also believe in works for salvation. Just because you put Jesus’ name or God’s name in your church does not make it God’s church. God’s church is the group of people all over the world, who have believed in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). All of these people make up “the church of God.” Therefore, Paul writes “unto the church of God which is at Corinth” (1:1).

Note also that the Corinthians are saints. They did not become saints because an official church committee saw their works and declared them to be so. Rather, they became saints the moment that they believed the gospel. This shows that sainthood is not based upon your performance, but upon Christ’s performance.

1:2 Because they are in Christ, they have peace with God (Romans 5:1) and stand in grace (Romans 5:2). Only by standing in grace can they serve the Lord.

Ultimately, grace and peace are from God the Father, but they are also from the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is the One Who is offering them to us in this dispensation, rather than receiving the wrath that we deserve for our sin.

1:3 1:3-5 are wonderful verses to keep in mind when we go through trials.

God is “the Father of mercies” (1:3). Israel is told that “it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentation 3:22-23). Also, Psalm 136 has 26 verses in it, and every single verse ends with: “For His mercy endureth for ever.”

Mercy is God not giving us the punishment we deserve, while grace is God giving us blessings that we do not deserve. Since we stand in grace, you may think that God does not need to give us mercy. However, we still have a sin nature, we still sin, and our flesh is still vile. Therefore, the Lord still gives us new mercies every day, because we sin every day.

However, sometimes God allows us to suffer. We suffer for three reasons: 1) Suffering is the natural consequence of living in a fallen world, 2) We did something, according to our sin nature, that caused us to suffer, and 3) We suffered for godly living because a fallen world punished us for doing so or our flesh did not like us going against our sin nature (II Timothy 3:12). Regardless of the reason, our lives are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), and we belong to God (I Corinthians 6:20).

Therefore, God is going to comfort us. Note that He is called “the God of ALL comfort” (1:3). The world provides what they call comfort. They may say, “Everything will be ok.” However, if I am not in Christ, then I will end up going to hell, which means that everything is not ok—far from it. Therefore, any “comfort” that the world provides is not really comfort at all. However, because God promises “that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28), God can comfort us in all three categories of suffering. God is the master of turning bad situations into good. Joseph said to his brethren, who sold him into slavery, “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20). When God looks at saved people, He does not see our sin, but He sees us as “holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12), because we are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6), Who is Christ. Therefore, God is here to give us comfort in our tribulations, not to say, “See, I told you so, or this will teach you to obey Me.” “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). God responds to that cry with the comfort that only He can provide us. Praise the Lord!

1:4-5 One of the purposes of God comforting us in our tribulations is that God enables us to comfort others, who also go through tribulations. I had my gallbladder removed four years ago. About one month ago, I was talking with someone, who was experiencing a gallbladder problem and did not know if he should have it removed or not. When I shared my experience, it comforted him to have knowledge of how it could work out good for him. But, then I shared my wife’s experience which was not that good, and that was not a comfort to him.

Since all things work together for good for believers (Romans 8:28), we can share the comfort of God with others who go through tribulations, and it will always comfort them, not just sometimes depending on circumstances. 12:9-10 teaches us that the Lord’s grace is sufficient for us, because His strength is made perfect in our weakness. This means that suffering helps us spiritually. 4:17 says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” As Paul will soon say, “All the promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” Therefore, when we believe God’s Word to us, we are ALWAYS comforted by God in our tribulation. We

can then share this comfort with other believers, who are also suffering. This is how “the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (1:5). Thus, in Christ, affliction and consolation go hand in hand.

1:6 When Paul and Timothy are afflicted, they are comforted by God, which brings the Corinthians consolation that, when they are afflicted, they will also be comforted by God. This verse mentions that the Corinthians also receive “salvation” at the same time. This is not salvation from hell because they received that the moment they believed the gospel. Rather, this is salvation from the vain philosophies of this world that try to twist the truth of what God is doing into a lie. Some of these vain philosophies regarding suffering include: 1) Thinking that God is punishing you for some sin that you have committed, 2) Thinking that God is trying to teach you something in the suffering, and 3) Thinking that you need to will yourself out of depression, to name a few. When you recognize that suffering comes from this world and the enemy, not from God, then you are saved from following man’s philosophies. This is the salvation that comes when you have a godly perspective on your suffering. When you do this, you have true comfort from “the God of all comfort” (1:3), rather than fake comfort from the world that is full of sin. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Why would you expect anything different, just because you are a Christian?

1:7 The good news of this verse is that the Corinthians have been suffering in Christ. This means that they must be applying sound doctrine, in order to eliminate the issues they had that Paul addressed in his first epistle to them, since “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12).

Paul’s hope of them is steadfast, because he trusts in God that God’s comfort will bring them through their trials, just like He had done in Paul’s trials. We should note that God is not promising to take away their trials, because then they would not partake in the consolations that come in going through trials.

In heaven, we will never sin, and we will not be tempted by sin, because Christ in us will overcome all temptations, as Christ did in His first coming (Matthew 4:1-11). Therefore, we should use tribulations today as opportunities for Christ to live in us so that people may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. This is why Paul says, that “with the temptation,” God will “make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (I Corinthians 10:13). The way of escape comes in the Christ in us being able to bear it, not in us avoiding having to go through the temptation altogether.

1:8-10 Their trouble in Asia is told in Acts 19:21-41. Paul disputed in a school in Ephesus for two years, and many miracles were done through Paul (Acts 19:9-12). Ephesus worshipped the queen of heaven, Diana. However, after what Paul had done, “many that believed” burned their religious books worth 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:17-19). This got the idol makers mad, because they were afraid they would lose their livelihood (Acts 19:24-28). During all of this, they captured Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s travelling companions, as well as capturing Alexander (Acts 19:29-33). Then, they got the people to cry out for two hours:

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:34). Finally, the townclerk said that they would get in trouble for this great outburst, and so he got them to stop (Acts 19:35-41).

Obviously, all of this was troubling to Paul and those with him, because you never know what a crazy mob like that will do. Therefore, Paul said, “we despaired even of life” (1:8). Paul says that, the reason God allowed this to happen, was so they would learn not to trust in themselves, but in God (1:8). Note that they “were pressed out of measure, ABOVE strength” (1:8). They did not have strength in themselves. (This is much like Christ did not have strength in Himself to overcome His will to survive. He had to be strengthened from above by the Father (Luke 22:42-46).) It is usually only when we are pressed above our ability to handle something that we finally allow Christ’s strength to come through us. Paul then died to his flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) and allowed Christ’s life to come through him.

Paul then goes on to say that God delivers them from death in the past, present, and future (1:10). Of course, Paul does not know if he will be delivered from physical death in the future, and so Paul must be referring to being delivered, not from physical death, but from the fear of death. In other words, Paul’s mind is delivered from worrying over potential death, even though he may actually die. This makes sense in the context of God being the “God of all comfort” (1:3). This shows us that the focus of II Corinthians is on what is going on in our minds.

1:11 “The gift,” then, probably refers to God comforting them in all their tribulation (1:3-4). The “many persons,” who bestowed this gift, would be those in Ephesus who wanted to kill Paul. (What a difference Christ made in Paul’s life. He went from despairing of life to seeing this fear as resulting in him receiving a gift from God!) Paul says that the Corinthians helped by praying for them. Romans 8:26 says, “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” This may mean that the Spirit “helpeth” or increaseth our infirmities so that we learn that when we are weak, Christ is strong through us. “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (12:10).

In summary, I believe 1:11 is saying that the Corinthians’ prayers for Paul helped put Paul in the situation that his life was threatened by people in Ephesus so that Paul would learn not to fear death, receiving the gift of comfort from God. Now many people may thank God for this gift of comfort given to Paul because Paul can then comfort them when they are in trouble, “by the comfort wherewith [Paul is] comforted of God” (1:4).

1:12 In I Thessalonians 5:16, Paul says to “rejoice evermore.” Paul’s rejoicing, in the trouble at Ephesus, is that his conscience can testify that he used “simplicity and godly sincerity” (1:12) in that situation. “The simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3) is to believe God’s Word over the “fleshly wisdom” (1:12) that comes about when we allow Satan to use his subtilty to twist the truth around (11:3) to the point

where we allow our flesh to deceive us into following its desperately wicked way (Jeremiah 17:9).

Applied to this situation, Paul could have very easily allowed his flesh to trick him into concluding that he should stop preaching the mystery gospel and doctrine because God must have been teaching him to stop by allowing him to get into a situation in Ephesus where he was almost killed. Instead, Paul uses the simplicity that is in Christ to conclude that it is the heavenly things that are important, not the earthly things (Colossians 3:2). Also, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Therefore, Paul can use the simplicity of believing God’s Word to him and the godly sincerity of living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20) to operate in God’s grace (Romans 6:14) to allow the excellency of the power of God (4:7) to be demonstrated in that situation to “the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (1:12). It is “more abundantly to” the Corinthians, because they are in Christ and have the potential spiritual insight (I Corinthians 2:14-16) to see things from God’s perspective of God being glorified through the trouble Paul had in Ephesus, rather than the flesh’s perspective that he should quit preaching the gospel and find a less dangerous profession. It is also the grace of God to the world because they can see Christ’s love in him and desire to be saved themselves.

1:13 Paul uses “simplicity and godly sincerity,” rather than “fleshly wisdom” (1:12). This is probably quite a contrast with what their “ten thousand instructors in Christ” tell them (I Corinthians 4:15). The main difference between Churchianity and Bible believers, who rightly divide the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), is our way of thinking. Because Churchianity does not believe God’s Word, they put a fleshly spin on the Bible so that they have “a form of godliness, but deny... the power thereof” (II Timothy 3:5). Bible believing right dividers use the simplicity that is in Christ and “GODLY sincerity,” not “FLESHLY wisdom.” Because of this, the Word of God can effectually work in them (I Thessalonians 2:13). Paul trusts that they will acknowledge this sound doctrine “even to the end” (1:13), not going back to the fleshly wisdom of their 10,000 instructors in Christ.

1:14 This verse is great news that the Corinthians acknowledge that Christ is living in Paul and Timothy, in spite of the sufferings they go through. Based on how the Corinthians were living when Paul wrote I Corinthians, it looks like they believed the health and wealth gospel, and so we see an improvement in them in this second epistle.

Note that Paul says that him and Timothy are the Corinthians’ rejoicing in the present tense, while the Corinthians will be Paul’s rejoicing “in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1:14), which would be at the rapture. This shows that Paul is confident of their salvation, but not of their sanctification. But, he is confident in Jesus’ work in them so that they will be his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

1:15 When Paul first came to the Corinthians, he “determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:2).

Because they were carnal (I Corinthians 3:3), he did not even know if they were saved or not. Now, however, he does know that they are saved, and so then he “was minded to come unto you” so “that ye might have a second benefit” (1:15). In other words, he wanted to come unto them so that he could be assured of their sanctification. (Salvation is the first benefit, and sanctification is the second benefit.)

However, he did not come unto them (1:23). The reason is because he wanted to come to them in love, rather than with a rod (I Corinthians 4:21), because he wants to help their joy, not have dominion over their faith (1:24). Therefore, the “second benefit” (1:15) of their sanctification is to come in this second epistle to them, rather than through an in-person visit by Paul. This is why his rejoicing over the Corinthians, regarding their sanctification, will come “in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1:14).

1:16 This verse shows that Paul planned to visit the Corinthians, both coming into and leaving from Macedonia. Paul mentioned this to them in his last letter to them (I Corinthians 16:5-7). It does seem like, from Acts 20:2-3, that he did stay with them, but 1:23 tells us that he did not. Instead, he probably wrote this epistle while he was wintering in Greece, because the Corinthians still had some issues to be ironed out in their sanctification process.

1:17-19 Paul says that he did not take his planning lightly but had purposed to stay with the Corinthians for the winter months (I Corinthians 16:6), but he did not do so. Note that he says, in I Corinthians 16:7, “I trust to tarry a while with you, **if the Lord permit.**” In other words, Paul only wanted to stay with the Corinthians if it would be beneficial for them, spiritually speaking.

Probably what happened then is that, when he got to Greece, he met with Timotheus first, and found out that the Corinthians, while improving, still had some growing to do. Because he wanted to help their joy (1:24) and especially since Timotheus had delivered the first letter and was still there, Paul decided to write this epistle, rather than trying to correct them in person. Paul sums this up at the end of this epistle (13:10): “I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.” Therefore, the Lord did not permit him to visit the Corinthians at this time, due to them still needing reproof in their practical application of the faith doctrine found in Romans. (It is not that the Lord told Paul not to go. Rather, Paul used the mind of Christ to determine that the Lord did not want him to go to the Corinthians at this time.)

Because Paul has liberty in Christ to do what he wants to do, he could have gone to the Corinthians anyway, so “that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay” (1:17). In other words, he could have gone so that he would have done what he purposed to do, but then he would have been doing so “according to the flesh” (1:17), because he would be going, not for the Corinthians’ spiritual benefit, but to save face with them.

So, according to the flesh, his “yea” was “nay” (1:17). However, according to the spirit, his word toward them was yea and yea (1:18). The first yea was his purposing to come to them, and the second yea was that he wrote this epistle, which is better for them spiritually than if he came in person. He was afraid their walk with Christ would be destroyed if he came in person, and so he penned this letter instead for their edification (13:10). Therefore, while it appears that he was not concerned with the Corinthians since he did not come in person, writing this letter was actually better for them, and shows his desire to help them spiritually. Therefore, Paul’s word toward them “was not yea and nay” (1:18).

It was not really Paul, the man, who was the concern here, but it was Jesus Christ in Paul. The Christ in Paul was “yea” to the Corinthians when he preached the gospel to them before he wrote I Corinthians, and the Christ in Paul is “yea” when Paul wrote this letter to them (1:19). In other words, Jesus Christ always delivered on His promises to the Corinthians. In fact, God ALWAYS causes Paul to triumph in Christ (2:14).

1:20 God never fails in delivering His promises to us. These promises come to us because we are in Christ, and Christ is God’s beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased (Matthew 3:17). Since we are “accepted in the Beloved” Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:6), we receive the promises of God that Christ receives in heavenly places. This is why “God...hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), we are “quicken...together WITH Christ,” and we are seated “together in heavenly places IN Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5-6). We are also “joint-heirs WITH Christ” (Romans 8:17). Therefore, “all the promises of God” are in Christ, “and in Him Amen” (1:20), meaning that these promises are settled in Christ. They cannot be taken away from us. The result is that God gets glory “by us” (1:20), which is the Father’s glory plan (Ephesians 1:17) “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...: to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Ephesians 1:4,6). Praise the Lord!

1:21-22 “Establish” takes place initially. “Stablish” means a continuance in what you have already been established in. Since Paul uses “stablisheth,” it means God is giving them more knowledge of the promises of God so that they rely upon God’s Word to them, rather than upon the things of the flesh.

You can see the Godhead in these verses. God the Father stablishes, anoints, and seals us. We are stablished in Christ, Who is God the Son. God seals us by giving us the “earnest” or down payment of the Holy Ghost in our hearts (Ephesians 1:13-14).

We are stablished in Christ, meaning that we use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to apply the things of God so that we live by the faith of the Son of God. “Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20) results in people being saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). This is why God has anointed us (1:21) as ambassadors for Christ (5:20). The world follows Satan’s course (Ephesians 2:2), and I Corinthians 5:9-10 teaches us that we must stay in this world for God’s will to be done through us. The potential danger is that the world

can rub off on us. This is why God sealed us with the Holy Ghost and has “given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (1:22). This way, we can rest assured that we will not lose our salvation when we are in a world that is following Satan.

In summary, resting in God’s promise of salvation (1:20) and blessings in heavenly places keeps us from worrying about our own salvation because we have the down payment of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. This down payment teaches us the things of God so that we can be stablished with the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:9-16) and anointed as ambassadors for Christ so that God’s will is done through us, rather than being selfish, constantly worrying if we are saved or have lost our salvation.

1:23-24 By calling “God for a record upon my soul” (1:23), Paul is assuring the Corinthians that he is not mad at them or does not like them any more. After all, he said he planned to come to them. Now, he is wintering in their home country, and he does not even go to see them for the whole three months he is there! Our flesh would automatically assume that the reason for this is that Paul did not like something about the Corinthians. However, he actually wanted to spare them the rod of correction in person. He would rather correct them with another letter, and then come see them later, after they have worked out more of their flesh and allowed Christ to live in them to a greater extent.

Why? Because his job is to be a helper of their joy, not to have dominion over their faith (1:24). First, note that Paul does not have dominion over their FAITH. This shows that we are no longer under the law, once we are saved. Therefore, a pastor should not be creating a bunch of laws for his congregation to follow. Rather, his job is to help the joy of saved people. Your joy is full in the fellowship of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (I John 1:3-4). When you were saved, you “were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (I Corinthians 1:9). The way you enjoy this fellowship is by getting sound doctrine in the inner man and allowing Christ to live in you. Therefore, Paul is a helper of the Corinthians’ joy by giving them sound doctrine, not by imposing a bunch of rules on them. If Paul were to come in person, he would be imposing rules on him, as seen in I Corinthians, so that they would learn to operate in the fellowship of Christ, rather than in the lusts of their flesh. Since he does not have dominion over their faith, he does not come to them at this time.

Also note that they stand by faith. If I put myself under the law, I make myself a transgressor (Galatians 2:18). Then, I am trying to stand in the law, which means I have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4) and Christ died in vain, meaning that I am frustrating the grace of God by operating under the law instead of under grace by faith (Galatians 2:21). Therefore, Christ is not living in me (Galatians 2:20), and I have no joy.

Paul needs to correct bad doctrine and replace it with good doctrine. If he comes in person to do this, the danger may be that his presence would cause the Corinthians to put themselves under Paul, rather than under Christ, which means they would try to apply the good doctrine in a legalistic way, as most of

Churchianity does. (In other words, if Paul is standing there, they may try to obey Paul to impress him, rather than obeying because those are the words of Christ and they desire to serve Christ.) Then, they would not be standing by faith in the grace of God. This means that the true reason Paul did not visit the Corinthians was so he would help their joy by them having the proper attitude of changing what they believe so that Christ will live in them, as opposed to changing in order to please Paul.

Romans 14:4 is a good verse to keep in mind here. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” Yet, Churchianity puts people under their control, rather than God’s control, because they want the power over them so they can manipulate them into giving them more money. This is why “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (I Timothy 6:9). By following money, they “[err] from the faith” (I Timothy 6:10), putting people under man, rather than living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).

When you put people under the law, you guilt them into giving you money. When you put people under the faith of Christ by teaching them sound doctrine, Christ produces love in them. Whether money or love is more important to an organization will determine if they teach the truth or not.

II Corinthians 2 – Christ’s Love in His Body

2 Paul did not come to the Corinthians this time because he did not want to have heaviness due to the Corinthians’ lack of having Christ live in them (vs. 1-3). Paul wrote I Corinthians in grief (v. 4) over the man having sex with his father’s wife (I Corinthians 5). Now, he writes to tell them to accept the man back into the church, lest the guilt of what he did swallow him up (vs. 5-10). It is important that we read God’s Word and follow it, because it is very easy to think we are doing the right thing, when we are not. On the one hand, you can get caught up in the pleasures of the flesh and do evil things. On the other hand, you can become a legalist in doing “good” things, but this also pleases the flesh. We need to be aware that Satan can use both good and evil in the flesh to get us away from letting Christ live in us (v. 11). Paul gives the example of him leaving Troas so that Satan would not get an advantage of him, even though staying in Troas meant preaching the gospel (vs. 12-13). This shows how tricky Satan can be, which is why God says that he is “more subtle than any beast of the field” (Genesis 3:1).

As long as we use the mind of Christ, God will always cause us to triumph (v. 14), because we are a savour of Christ to the world (v. 15). We even triumph when others reject the Christ in us, because it shows who they really are (vs. 15-16). Because of this, it is very important for us not to corrupt the Word of God (v. 17). By believing God’s Word and letting Christ live in us, we hasten the rapture, because the Christ in us is separating out the wheat (believers) from the tares (unbelievers) (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43) so that God correctly judges both groups.

2:1 Because of the Corinthians' carnality, Paul did not even know they were saved when he first came to them (I Corinthians 2:2). Therefore, he came to them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Corinthians 2:3). It was a terrible experience for him. But, he did see that they were saved, and so he wrote I Corinthians to get them to get out of their carnality. This time, he had hoped to spend the winter with them and rejoice over them allowing Christ to live in them (I Corinthians 16:5-7). Granted, they are getting carnality out of their church, but they are still not living by the sound doctrine for today found in Paul's epistles. Therefore, Paul will not visit them, even though he is in Greece (Acts 20:2-3), because he does not want to come to them in heaviness again. Instead, he writes this epistle to correct them.

"With myself" (2:1) shows that, while Jesus did commission Paul to reach all unbelievers with the mystery gospel (Acts 9:15), it is up to Paul to determine how he will do this. Paul does not wait for Jesus to direct him magically to go to one city or another. Paul makes his own decisions, because he is an adult son of God.

2:2 Later on, Paul will say that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (7:10). He does not want to make them sorry, unless they are "sorry after a godly manner" (7:9). If Paul comes to them in the flesh, the danger is that they will have fleshly sorrow. In other words, they will not be sorry for not letting Christ live in them, but they will be sorry that Paul caught them living in their flesh. If this happens, Paul will regret coming to the Corinthians, and so he will not be glad (2:2). Therefore, Paul writes this second epistle to see if they will have godly sorrow. Then, he can rejoice with them when that happens.

2:3 We are the body of Christ. Because the members of the body are connected together, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (I Corinthians 12:26-27). Because we are "blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), we should "rejoice evermore" (I Thessalonians 5:16). However, if one member of the body of Christ is suffering, we suffer with him. Since the Corinthians were carnal, Paul's coming would make them sorrowful, because he would have to come to them "with a rod" of reproof (I Corinthians 4:21). This would cause Paul to receive sorrow from them, when he should be receiving joy from them.

Therefore, Paul decides to write this epistle, rather than coming to them in person, in hopes that the joy that he has in Christ may cause them to have joy, also (2:3), as they turn from their carnality to walk in the Spirit as a result of this epistle.

2:4-5 Paul says that he "wrote unto you." Since this is in the past tense, he is referring to the letter of I Corinthians. When you see all of the carnal issues that Paul addressed in that letter, you can see why writing that letter caused him "much affliction and anguish of heart...with many tears" (2:4).

However, Paul did not have much grief (deep sorrow) (2:5), because he was confident that the Christ in them could overcome the issues addressed in the first epistle. He earlier stated that the Corinthians would be his rejoicing “in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1:14), and he had confidence that his joy in Christ would become their joy in Christ once they applied the suggestions in the first epistle (2:3). Why? Because Paul gave them “the commandments of the Lord” (I Corinthians 14:37), “which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (I Thessalonians 2:13). Paul knew that, as long as the Corinthians followed God’s Word to them in the first epistle, the love of Christ from Paul to the Corinthians would abound over their carnality so that they would turn from walking in the flesh and walk in the Spirit instead (2:4).

2:6-8 Apparently, this worked because they took Paul’s suggestion of kicking out of the church the man committing sexual sin with his father’s wife (I Corinthians 5:1-5). This man has now stopped this sin and wants to come back to the church, and they have not let him back in yet. Paul tells them, “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many” (2:6).

The Corinthians did what the carnal mindset does. The carnal or fleshly mind has the knowledge of good and evil, thanks to Adam (Genesis 3). When the Corinthians were bragging about the sin of this man, they were using their knowledge of evil to get involved in carnal sins and using their eternal security as an excuse for their lascivious behavior, as seen in Romans 1. Apparently, the first epistle got them out of this evil mindset, but then they adopted a legalistic mindset, using their knowledge of good to brag about their flesh, as seen in Romans 2. Both ways are bad, whether good or evil, because no good thing dwells in their flesh (Romans 7:18). Paul tells them to do the godly thing, which is to forgive, comfort (2:7), and love the man (2:8) back into their assembly.

In other words, what the Corinthians did was they overcorrected. Instead of abandoning their fleshly mind for the mind of Christ, they used their fleshly mind in a way that deceived them into thinking that they were serving Christ (Jeremiah 17:9), when all they did was allow their fleshly mind to trick them into using a different tactic. They had “a form of godliness” by kicking the man out, but they denied the power of godliness by not welcoming him back in, because they were more concerned with the outward appearance rather than with showing Christ’s love to him (II Timothy 3:5).

The danger, in not welcoming him back to the assembly, is that he may “be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2:7). Churches like to pour the guilt upon you and make you feel bad for every little thing you do so that they can have control over you and get more money out of you. But, “the blood of Christ” has purged “your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). God has blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), and “all the promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (1:20). God wants you to “rejoice evermore” (I Thessalonians 5:16), not to wallow in sorrow.

At the same time, God does want you to turn from your sin and allow Christ to live in you, so that you serve God. Therefore, the man, having sex with his father's wife, needed to stop doing that. This made it important for Paul to instruct the Corinthians to kick him out of the church. Having now turned from that sin, he needs to be welcomed back into the church. If he is not, then he will not see the love of Christ in them and may be overcome by his sorrow to the point that he goes back out into the world and lives in his flesh.

Perhaps an illustration will help in understanding this. If you are overweight, you may want to exercise and watch what you eat. It is tough to do these things, but you may do them if you see that you are losing weight and feeling better about yourself. However, if you do these things and you still gain weight, you will probably give up and go back to your old lifestyle. Similarly, the man enjoyed having sex with his father's wife but was willing to give it up so that Christ could live in him, and he could be a part of the assembly again. If the Corinthians do not let him back in, he may not see any benefit in giving up something that was pleasurable to his flesh, and so he may go back to it or move on to something even worse (if that is possible). He would do this if he were "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2:7).

Since he "sorrowed to repentance...after a godly manner" (7:9), the Corinthians need to welcome him back in so that he continues to walk in the Spirit. However, if he is not welcomed back in, his godly sorrow may turn into "the sorrow of the world" (7:10), meaning that he feels sorry for himself, rather than having sorrow that results in Christ living in him. Therefore, it is important that the Corinthians welcome him back into the assembly.

2:9 Since the Corinthians were carnal, Paul wrote the first epistle to see if they would obey or not. Now that they have obeyed, he writes this second epistle to get them to move on to letting Christ live in them.

Romans covers the basic doctrine of faith. Romans 1-3 shows your sin and that only Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection can atone for your sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Romans 4-5 tells of your eternal security so that you no longer have to worry about your sin leading you to hell. Romans 6-8 shows how Christ can live in you once you allow Him to overcome your sin for you.

Similarly, when Paul first came to the Corinthians, he came to make sure they were saved—Romans 1-3 doctrine (I Corinthians 2:2). Then, he wrote I Corinthians so that they would come out of their carnality—Romans 4-5 doctrine. Now that they have proven that they are willing to set aside their flesh and walk in the Spirit (2:9), Paul writes II Corinthians so that Christ can live in them—Romans 6-8 doctrine.

2:10-11 As believers, we have forgiveness of sins from God (Ephesians 1:7). We should forgive "one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Otherwise, we can have "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking...with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31) build up inside us.

The result will be that Christ will not live in us. Therefore, forgiving the man, who had sex with his father's wife, is not done just for his sake, but it is also done for the sake of the one doing the forgiving, as is the case with all those who forgive others.

Paul says that "we are not ignorant of [Satan's] devices" (2:11). Satan can work any angle imaginable to get you to operate by your sin nature. Your sin nature is "desperately wicked" and is "deceitful above ALL things" (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, your sin nature does not mind looking good in order to do its evil. Meanwhile Satan is "full of wisdom" (Ezekiel 28:12). He knows the Bible better than any of us; he just does not believe it. So, he can twist scripture around to make it sound like you are doing the right thing, when you are not.

This is the primary device that Satan tries to use against dedicated Christians, especially those attending legalistic churches. In the case of the Corinthians, they may brag about how they are "standing for what is right" by kicking the man out of the church and not letting him back in, just like they bragged about how the man could get away with his heinous sin and still be part of the church (I Corinthians 5:2). (The sin of pride can be used both in an evil way (I Corinthians) and in a "good" way (II Corinthians). Either way, it is still the sin of pride.) After all, Paul said that they should kick him out (I Corinthians 5:5), and that was the word of God to them (I Corinthians 14:37). However, the purpose, of kicking the man out, was "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Corinthians 5:5). When the man turned from his sin, the flesh was destroyed in that case, and so now it was time to let the man back into the church.

This is why Paul says that, if they forgave the man, then he forgives the man, because he must have turned from this sin. By forgiving, the sin could not be held against the man any more, and the Corinthians would not get puffed up in their flesh for taking a righteous stand against sin. This keeps the Corinthians from using their flesh in a religious way. If they do not let the man back in, Satan gets an advantage. Sure, the sexual sin was kicked out of the church, but it has now been replaced with the sin of pride. Either way, Satan has a stronghold in the church. Therefore, the Corinthians need to use the mind of Christ by showing Christ's love to the man in letting him back in the church, so that the church can continue to be used by the Lord for His glory.

(Later on, Paul will tell the Corinthians that using spiritual weapons in their battle against Satan will pull down strong holds, "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (10:4-5).)

2:12-13 Paul now gives an example of how he did not let Satan get an advantage of him when he was in Troas. First, we see that, in Troas, "a door was opened unto me of the Lord... to preach Christ's gospel." Yet, he left Troas because he "had no rest in [his] spirit, because [he] found not Titus" (2:12-13). Churchianity would say that Paul blew it. After all, if the Lord opens a door for you, you had better walk through it, or you are not smack dab in the center of God's will for your life!

However, Paul says that, if he did preach Christ's gospel in Troas, even though the Lord opened a door unto him, Satan would have gotten an advantage of him. While people would have been saved, Paul would not have had the right attitude in preaching, and that is more important than preaching the gospel. Why? Two reasons: 1) God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, if Paul does not take advantage of the opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas, God would use someone else to do so. So, it does not mean that fewer people would be saved; it just means that fewer people would be saved by the preaching of Paul, and 2) Paul is in a spiritual war. He wrestles "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Every Christian's battle occurs in the spirit realm, which is fought in the mind. If Paul's mind is unrestful because he does not find Titus, then he would be in his flesh if he preached the gospel in Troas, rather than walking in the Spirit. Therefore, he would not be rewarded for it. (Paul says in I Corinthians 9:17 that he is rewarded for preaching the gospel only if he does so willingly.)

After all, we are to "be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). This is easy to say but can be hard to follow. Given the persecution of Christians at that time, he feared for Titus' life. This is not something he could easily set aside in order to preach the gospel in Troas. Paul needed to get his mind right first before preaching the gospel. Therefore, he needed to go to Macedonia to find Titus, even though he had a great opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas.

Also, it is not like Paul could not preach the gospel in Macedonia. I believe Paul is referring to what happened in Acts 16:8-11. There, we are told that Paul received a vision in Troas of a man of Macedonia who said, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Therefore, while there was a door opened to Paul to preach the gospel in Troas, he also had a similar door opened for him in Macedonia.

It would be a blow to Paul's ego if he left Troas and went to Macedonia, forsaking his opportunity to preach in Troas. Paul knows that pride is a device of Satan's. Therefore, to win the spiritual battle against Satan, Paul does not preach the gospel in Troas, but he goes to Macedonia to find Titus and also to preach the gospel in Macedonia, as there is a need for him there.

Paul mentions this example to the Corinthians because Paul had to swallow his pride for the spiritually better situation of going to Macedonia, just like the Corinthians need to swallow their pride for the spiritually better situation of letting the man back into their assembly. This is spiritually better, both for the Corinthians and for the man, just like Paul's going to Macedonia is spiritually better, both for himself and for the Macedonians. It is also probably better for Titus and for whoever the Lord will send to preach the gospel to those in Troas. After all, since the Lord gave a vision to Paul to go to Macedonia, He probably also

gave a vision to another member of the body of Christ to go to Troas to preach the gospel to them. The Lord probably did this, knowing the spiritual unrest that Paul had over not finding Titus in Troas. (By the way, Paul was comforted in Macedonia because Titus came to him there (7:5-6).)

2:14-17 The reason that we can “rejoice evermore” (I Thessalonians 5:16) is because “God...ALWAYS causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2:14). Paul had an opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas, but he left in order to find Titus in Macedonia. That is okay, because Paul still got the victory in Macedonia.

The key to 2:14 is “in Christ.” If I am a Christian but I rob a liquor store, God does not cause me to triumph. But, as long as I use the mind of Christ, I will always triumph in whatever situation I am in. The reason for this is because, when I allow Christ to live in me (Galatians 2:20), I am going contrary to the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2). The result is that the world receives “the savour of His knowledge” (2:14). The world’s course is sin, and its savour is the fleshly pleasure of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). Christ’s knowledge has the savour of the spiritual pleasure of knowing your purpose in life, which is to bring glory to God. This is so different from the world’s savour that the savour of life in Christ is made known “by us in every place” (2:14).

For God, this savour is sweet, because it is the savour of Christ. At Jesus’ baptism, God looked at His Son and said, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). God said the same thing about Jesus when He was on the mount where He was transfigured (Matthew 17:5). God is well pleased with His Son, because His Son always does and says what God wants Him to do and say (John 5:19; 7:28,38). When God looks at the body of Christ, He sees us as being “accepted in the Beloved,” Who is Christ (Ephesians 1:6). When we allow Christ to live in us, the savour that God smells is the savour of Christ.

The first time the word “savour” appears in the Bible is Genesis 8:21, when Noah built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God to worship Him for saving him through the flood. Genesis 8:21 says, “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour.” This was not the smell of the burnt meat. In Amos 5:21-22, Israel also offered burnt offerings, and God said, “I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.” God would not accept their offerings because Israel offered them to the gods of Moloch and Chiun (Amos 5:26). Therefore, the sweet savour, that God smelled coming from the burnt offerings from Noah, was the savour of Christ, not the savour of steak. Noah was in Christ, because he was a believer. It was the Christ in Noah that offered these offerings, and God was well pleased with the offerings, because He is well pleased with His Son. (Lest you think that Old-Testament saints were not in Christ, Hebrews 11:26 tells us that Moses suffered “the reproach of Christ” from apostate Israel. He must have been “in Christ” to suffer the reproach “of Christ.”)

Therefore, when we let Christ live in us by applying the sound doctrine of Paul’s epistles by using the mind of Christ, “we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ” (2:15). This savour goes out to everyone, both the saved and the ones who are perishing (2:15).

With regard to unbelievers, “we are the savour of death unto death” (2:16). Jesus came to give man abundant life (John 10:10), not death, so how is the savour of death sweet to God? It is because what is dying is sin, corruption, and wickedness. Note that the savour of death is “UNTO death.” “Death” will be cast into the lake of fire at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:14). All unbelievers are also cast into the lake of fire at that time (Revelation 20:15), and they are called “the dead” (Revelation 20:13). The reason this is sweet to God is because it gets rid of evil for ever. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil (Habakkuk 1:13). Therefore, until death dies at this judgment, God is suffering long with death because He does not want any to perish. God wants all to be saved (II Peter 3:9).

Once death dies, God’s suffering is over. When the sweet savour of Christ goes to unbelievers, it shows that they are, in fact, dead spiritually speaking. Death can then be done away with. The quicker Christ’s savour goes out to all people, the quicker people are confronted with the decision to believe the gospel and be saved or not to believe and be lost. Either way, the result is that the decision is made and death can be done away with more quickly, which makes the savour of death sweet to God.

The parable of the wheat and the tares explains this for us in Matthew 13:24-30,36-43. The question is posed of if the tares should be gathered up and burned. The householder says, “Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:29-30). In other words, there are unbelievers now, who will become believers later. Therefore, God suffers long with the wickedness of man so that some of these people will believe and be saved.

When the sweet savour of Christ comes from us to others, it helps separate the wheat from the tares. Obviously, God likes the savour of life because it is unto life in Christ for all eternity, but He also likes “the savour of death unto death” (2:16) because it hastens the coming of the time when death dies at the Great White Throne Judgment. The savour of death unto death is sweet to God, much like the death sentence of serial killers is to victims’ families. It is a sweet savour because justice is finally served, and that person can no longer murder again. Similarly, when death is thrown into the lake of fire, it can never harm people again. Praise the Lord! And so the savour of death gets God out of His suffering quicker, which is why it is sweet to God.

The question of “who is sufficient for these things” (2:16) is answered by the next verse. If you sincerely speak the Word of God in Christ, not corrupting it, then YOU are sufficient for these things. However, 2:17 tells us that many corrupt the Word of God. This means that they approach God’s Word from a fleshly point of view, even though they are saved. I Corinthians 2:9-16 tells us that only the Holy Ghost can teach us the things of God by teaching the spiritual things of God’s

Word to our spirits. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (I Corinthians 2:14).

Yet, most Christians approach God’s Word from a fleshly point of view, choosing not to believe it, but to wrest or twist it (II Peter 3:16) so that they corrupt it. The reason is because even Christians try to nourish and cherish their flesh (Ephesians 5:29), even though God says that it is crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and that “Christ...is our life” (Colossians 3:4). They need to make the decision every day to die to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31), reckoning it “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). The problem is that the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). It shows that in our flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). The world needs to be crucified to us (Galatians 6:14), but our flesh loves the world (I John 2:15-16). Therefore, most Christians deny the power of God’s Word by adopting a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5), rather than allowing Christ to live in them. They do this by corrupting the Word of God.

In other words, they use the Word of God, but they do so in a fleshly way. They bring the spiritual down to the fleshly level, which corrupts the Bible. When they do this, God does not triumph in them, because they are not in Christ. There is no savour of death unto death, because they are not recognizing the flesh is dead. There is no savour of life unto life, because they are not recognizing the life of the Spirit in the words of the Lord Jesus (John 6:63), as given to Paul for us today (Romans 16:25).

In summary, when the sincere, uncorrupted Word of God comes through us to others, as we let Christ live in us, it forces people to make a decision about Christ. If they choose to reject Christ, their savour is “of death unto death” (2:16). If they choose to accept Christ in us, their savour is “of life unto life” (2:16). This means that death comes through the unbelievers, and Christ’s abundant life comes through believers. Therefore, “God ALWAYS causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2:14). This is why it is so important for us not to be “ignorant of [Satan’s] devices” (2:11), recognizing that Satan will use every conceivable angle to get us to operate in our flesh, even to the point of appearing to be godly to others. After all, Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light (11:14). Therefore, he also transforms his ministers into ministers of righteousness (11:15), and so we should EXPECT Churchianity to follow Satan, because doing “good” is the perfect cover story for wickedness.

II Corinthians 3 – Cemetery Schools Are Worthless; Let God Change Your Face

3 Cemetery (seminary) degrees mean nothing to God (v. 1). God is only concerned with changed lives. The Corinthians’ lives have been changed through Paul begetting them through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15), and that should be all the evidence they need to listen to Paul (vs. 2-3). Paul will not get the big head over this, because he knows that any good thing done in the Corinthians’ life is done by

God through him not by him (vs. 4-5). Paul is just a minister of the new testament for the dispensation of grace (v. 6).

The old testament for Israel was glorious, even though it ministered death to them (vs. 7). Paul is ministering life to them through the new testament they have with Christ of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3) and having their lives hid in Christ (Colossians 3:3). Therefore, God's new testament with us in the dispensation of grace is much more glorious than God's old testament with Israel in their program (vs. 7-11). In fact, it is the difference between life and death!

Therefore, Paul uses "great plainness of speech" in explaining the things of God to believers in today's dispensation (v. 12), and we should as well, as ambassadors for Christ (5:20). The wonderful thing is that, because we are believers, we can understand the ministration of the Spirit, which can result in us being changed to look like Christ, spiritually speaking (vs. 13-18). Therefore, we need to come to the Bible with a heart of belief (open face) rather than trying to corrupt the Word of God (2:17). We should seek to have our face changed into the image of Christ, rather than saving the face of our flesh (v. 18).

3:1 As far as I am concerned, this is the best verse to demonstrate that mentioning that you have a cemetery (seminary) degree is seeking to make a "fair shew in the flesh" (Galatians 6:12). Paul says that "some others" need "epistles...or letters of commendation from" the Corinthians (3:1) in order for the Corinthians to listen to them. This is exactly what Churchianity does today. If I want to be a pastor of the First Church of the Refrigerator, I had better have a degree from their cemetery school, or they will not even consider me for the position.

What a cemetery degree shows is that a person knows what lies to tell to protect the lies of their denomination, so as to deceive people into thinking that their denomination is the one, out of the hundreds out there, that is telling the truth! That is all it says. Now, I can understand only hiring a college graduate for a secular position, because colleges are secular in nature. However, God is a Spirit (John 4:24). His words are "spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Therefore, God's Word is "spiritually discerned", and we need "the Spirit of God" to teach us the things of God. The natural man cannot know the things of God (I Corinthians 2:13-14). Therefore, if a church is truly concerned with learning the truth of God's Word and living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), it will not care one bit about whether a person has a cemetery degree or not. If anything, having a cemetery degree should disqualify someone from being a pastor, since he is likely to interpret the Bible using a man-made system, rather than letting the word of Christ dwell in Him richly (Colossians 3:16) by having the indwelling Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19) teach him the things of God as he reads and believes God's Word.

A cemetery degree hinders this process; it does NOT help it. Case in point: Gamaliel was a doctor of the Pharisee's law (Acts 5:34). Paul "was brought up...at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the

fathers” (Acts 22:3). Therefore, Paul possessed a cemetery degree. If the Corinthians wanted one in order to listen to Paul, he could have showed them his. However, Paul does not even mentions this to the Corinthians, because he wants their focus to be on God and His Word, not on man and his worldly credentials.

The first question that should be asked of a potential pastor is if he is saved, and what is the gospel that saves him. If he does not say that he was saved by recognizing his sin and trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for his sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), then he will not lead a single soul to heaven as a pastor. Apparently, the Corinthians were just like today’s Churchianity. All they cared about was a fair shew in the flesh. Therefore, they had “ten thousand instructors in Christ” (I Corinthians 4:15) lined up to instruct them “in the things of God,” while they did not want to listen to Paul unless he produced man’s credentials.

3:2-3 Paul says that he has something much better than a cemetery degree. His credentials are the living “epistle” of the Corinthians. Paul begat the Corinthians in Christ Jesus through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15). Paul has a spiritual credential from God in that he ministered Christ to the Corinthians. Now, “the epistle of Christ” is “written” on their hearts “with the Spirit of the living God,” and this “epistle of Christ” (3:3) is “known and read of all men” as they see Christ living in them.

If I want to prove that I am an accountant, it is better to show a resume full of meaningful work in the accounting field, rather than showing a piece of paper that says I have an accounting degree. A degree says that I have some knowledge, but work experience shows that I have successfully applied that knowledge. Similarly, if the Corinthians “seek a proof of Christ speaking in” him (13:3), the best proof of all is the change in the lives of the Corinthians as a result of Paul administering the gospel to them. A cemetery degree just says that some organization says that you have some knowledge. However, the epistle of Christ written on the hearts of the Corinthians with the Spirit of the living God shows that Christ Himself has worked through Paul to save the Corinthians and to start them on the sanctification process. This is a FAR better proof of Paul’s credentials than some piece of paper is! Moreover, this is a credential that is “known and read of all men” (3:2), meaning that others can be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth through the Corinthians being ambassadors for Christ (5:20). This shows that God’s inward epistle of Christ can grow exponentially through those on whose hearts this epistle is written. Praise the Lord!

So, why doesn’t Churchianity require such proof? Because they do not want it. Much like building a company, most churches are seeking to grow in money and power. They are not interested in the truth. Instead, they want something that closely resembles the truth. That way, people will give them a lot of money, because most people are more interested in feeling good than in going to heaven. They would rather continue in their lusts and pride so that they do not have to admit that they are sinners in need of a Saviour, and they just want a church to be their fallback story to “prove” to others that they are good and going to heaven.

Regarding the political leaders of Jesus' day, God said, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). In other words, politicians want their names on the church roll so that people will think they are good and vote them into office. They would not attend a church that teaches the truth, because they would be confronted with their wickedness, and they are too prideful for that. Therefore, they go to a place that has "a form of godliness" but denies the power of godliness (II Timothy 3:5), which is God's Word, because God's Word would discern the thoughts and intents of their heart as being wicked (Hebrews 4:12).

This is why people will spend a lot of time and money with churches that do not teach the truth, while criticizing Bible believers, because Bible believers show that they are following lies. This is also why churches seek to teach lies that are as close to the truth as possible, because they are harder to disprove, which allows people to continue using their false schemes to try to convince others that they are okay with God. The problem, though, is that they are hurting themselves more than anyone else. Paul says that they really "oppose themselves" (II Timothy 2:25-26).

Granted, there are some people who want the truth, and the Corinthians seem to fall into this category. However, they want to look good to others at the same time. Not doing the popular "Christian" thing hurts people's ability to do this. This is why there are a lot of closet right dividers out there. They secretly rightly divide the Word of truth, but they play along with the church game to look good to others. This hurts their growth and usually results in them rejecting right division in the end because "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (I Corinthians 5:6). In other words, it is hard to continue to believe the truth when you regularly attend a church that teaches lies.

I think this is why Paul tells the Corinthians that they are his epistle of Christ written on their hearts, rather than whipping out his cemetery degree. If Paul can get the Corinthians to see the error of following their flesh, maybe they will allow the words of this epistle to sanctify them to a greater extent than before.

3:4-5 While Paul seeks to get the Corinthians to follow after the spiritual rather than the physical, the danger is that Paul may sound prideful. Therefore, he uses these two verses to show that His trust is "through Christ to God-ward" (3:4). In other words, Paul is not the one who made the Corinthians this living epistle. It was God Who did it through Christ.

Paul is "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), and so he had the ability to present the gospel and sound doctrine to them so that they may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). However, Paul's sufficiency to do so came from God as well (3:5). Thus, God provided the message and the power to save and sanctify the Corinthians (Romans 1:16), and God is the one who

made them a living epistle with the Spirit of the living God written on their hearts. Paul merely was a willing participant in the process, as he presented his body a living sacrifice unto the Lord (Romans 12:1) to be used by God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We would do well to remember this when others are saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth through us sharing the gospel and giving them sound doctrine. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12).

3:6 Right dividers get tripped up by Paul’s use of the phrase “new testament.” After all, we know that God made an old covenant with Israel with the Mosaic law and will make a new covenant with them when He forgives their sin, gives them the land of Israel to dwell in eternally, and gives them positions of authority in that land. (“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31).) The main focus of the book of Hebrews is the difference between the old and the new testaments for the Hebrews.

So, why does Paul say that members of the body of Christ are “able ministers of the new testament” (3:6)? Paul is referring to a new testament for the dispensation of grace. Romans 2:6 says that God “will render to every man according to his deeds.” If we do well, we receive eternal life. If we do not obey the truth, we receive God’s wrath (Romans 2:7-9). This is the old covenant for Gentiles. Romans 2:14-15 goes on to say that the Gentiles have the law of the conscience written in their hearts. Thus, the old testament for Gentiles is to obey the law perfectly, and we receive eternal life. If we do not obey the law perfectly, we receive God’s wrath in an eternal lake of fire.

Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and earned death (Romans 6:23), God is willing to make a new testament with us. This new testament is that, if we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), God gives us the gift of eternal life. We are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ. We are given the Holy Ghost, the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:9-16), and God’s perfect Word. Therefore, all three members of the Godhead make us “able ministers of the new testament” (3:6), meaning that we can share the gospel with others so that they are also saved.

For Israel, God gave them the Mosaic law. That is their old testament. They disobeyed it, just like we disobeyed our conscience. Therefore, in Israel’s program, they also have an opportunity to be saved by God’s new testament with them. If they repent (stop trusting in their own righteousness and trust in God to save them) and are water baptized, they receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). In other words, they are also taken out of Adam and placed into Christ.

Therefore, because there is an old testament with the Jews and a different old testament with the Gentiles, there is also a new testament with the Jews and a different new testament with the Gentiles. Today, we are able ministers of the new testament given to Gentiles. After the rapture, believing Israel will be able

ministers of the new testament given to Jews. God offered old testaments to both groups, because the first step in being saved is to recognize your sin. “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24-25).

Therefore, both groups are given a law so that we may be saved. God gives different laws to Jews and Gentiles because our minds operate differently. “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom” (I Corinthians 1:22). So, God gives Jews the “carnal ordinances” (Hebrews 9:10) of the Mosaic law, since they need a physical sign of their sin. God gives Greeks the law of the conscience, since Gentiles need a wise sign of their sin. If you had two children and they responded differently to instruction, wise parents would give them different instructions so that each would respond in the best way. Similarly, “God only wise” (Romans 16:27) gave two, different sets of instructions to Jews and Gentiles, according to how their minds work.

The last part of 3:6 proves what we said about the first part of 3:6. The old testament, whether it is the Jewish one or the Gentile one, is the letter of the law. “The letter killeth” because no good thing dwells in our flesh (Romans 7:18). Therefore, none of us have the capacity to obey the old testament. The law is there to work the wrath of God against us (Romans 4:15), so that we recognize our sin. Once we do that, God offers the new testament to us, which is of the spirit, which gives life (3:6). Unfortunately, our pride often stands in our way of receiving life. Thus, the purpose of the old testament is to get rid of our pride, so that God can give us life with the new testament.

3:7-8 God gave you commandments so that you would sin even more, not so you would sin less! Since “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), all of us deserve to spend eternity in the lake of fire. The only way you will have eternal life is if you recognize your sin and trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Very few people will ever recognize that they are sinners because their pride gets in the way. Therefore, the issue is not the number of sins you commit, but the recognition of your sin. If you use the law to try to please God, you will build up your pride so that you will never recognize your sin and end up going to hell in the process. God gave you the law so that you would sin MORE so that you would be more likely to recognize your sin so that you would believe the gospel and be saved. Romans 7:8 says that your sin nature takes “occasion by the commandment” in order to work in you “all manner of concupiscence.” The key is that the sin nature “**that it might appear sin**” works death in you by the law so “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (Romans 7:13), i.e., your sin exceeds your pride so that you recognize your sin.

Unfortunately, most of Churchianity uses the law, not to recognize their sin, but to build up their pride. They think that they need to try to keep the ten

commandments and to obey the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7. They think that they have life by trying to obey Jesus' red letters. The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day also thought that their religion would save them. Jesus told them, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye THINK ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:39-40). Churchianity thinks that they have life by their own obedience of the scriptures, when, in fact, the law is there to point them to Christ so that they will believe the gospel and be saved from their own dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14). Galatians 3:24-25 says that the law is your schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ that you might be justified by faith. Once you believe the gospel, you are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

I say all of this so that you understand why Paul calls the Mosaic law "the ministration of death" (3:7). The law administers death to unbelieving man, because no good thing dwells in man's flesh (Romans 7:18). "The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). Since the law works with my sin nature to cause me to sin more and the wages of sin is death, then the law is administering death unto me.

In fact, when Israel entered into the Mosaic law, Nehemiah 10:29 says that they "entered into a curse," because "cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deuteronomy 27:26). This is why "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Therefore, the moment you believe the gospel, God removes you from the law and puts you under grace, so that you can now operate by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," rather than by "the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). Praise the Lord!

The ten commandments were also "written and engraven in stones" (3:7), which is another proof that it is associated with death, because stone engravings are usually associated with graves.

Although Paul does not mention it here, we should also note that God had Moses put the ten commandments in a coffin. In fact, when it came to building the tabernacle, the first thing that God told Moses to build was an ark (Exodus 25:10). He was to build a mercy seat, put the mercy seat above the ark, put the ten commandments in the ark, and then God would meet and commune with Israel from above the mercy seat (Exodus 25:21-22). Basically, God knew that Israel would break the commandments (They even broke them before Moses could get down from the mountain with them!), and so he called the commandments "the testimony" (Exodus 25:16), because they testify that Israel is worthy of death. The commandments were then put in a coffin, i.e., the ark of the covenant, and a mercy seat was placed upon the ark to show Israel that, although they were worthy of death, God would meet with them above the mercy seat and give them mercy via the sacrifices that were brought to Him. Therefore, from the very beginning, God treated the ten commandments as a testimony of their sin and death as a result of sin.

In spite of the law being a testimony of sin and death in Israel, it was still glorious to the extent that Israel could not even look directly at Moses' face, when he came down from Mount Sinai. His face shone so brightly that Israel was afraid of coming close to him (Exodus 34:30), and so he had to put a veil on his face in order to speak God's commandments to them (Exodus 34:33). This is because the law is holy (Romans 7:12) and spiritual, while Israel was carnal, sold under sin (Romans 7:14). This shows how great God's glory is that He would give Israel something that would administer death to them, and yet it still shown brightly!

Because the law was temporary to show Israel their sin, the glory of the law "was to be done away" (3:7), and yet it was still so glorious that Israel was scared of coming close to Moses. Once we believe the gospel today, the law is replaced by grace, which is administered to us by the Holy Ghost. We will operate in grace for all eternity, and that operation will be by using the mind of Christ as we apply God's Word to various situations. Thus, the process is a spiritual one, controlled by God Himself, which means that "the ministration of the spirit" (3:8) is so much more glorious than "the ministration of death" is (3:7).

Hebrews 12, in talking to apostate Israel, says that Israel, with regard to the Mosaic law, came "unto the mount that might be touched" (Hebrews 12:18). Yet, it was so terrible of a "sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake" (Hebrews 12:21). This was the old covenant. With the new covenant, apostate Israel comes to "the heavenly Jerusalem," angels, the church, God, believers, Jesus, and Jesus' blood (Hebrews 12:22-24). If they thought the old covenant was a fearful thing, just wait until they fall into the hands of God Himself, Who will consume them with fire if they have not believed the gospel (Hebrews 12:25,29).

This is what it looks like for unbelievers, when comparing the old versus the new covenants. The flip side is what Paul is talking about. "The ministration of the spirit" (3:8) is so much more glorious than the law that "the ministration of death" (3:7) is pale in comparison. Therefore, it is utter folly for a Christian to put himself back under the law (ministration of death) after he has been saved (ministration of the spirit).

Not only is the ministration of the spirit so much more glorious than the law, but it also is the only ministration that can work with the Christ life within you. If you put yourself back under the law after you are saved, you make yourself a transgressor (Galatians 2:18), because you have no power in your flesh to obey the law, since no good thing dwells in your flesh (Romans 7:18). The only power to serve God comes through the Spirit, and so you must work through the ministration of the spirit in order to bring glory to God. Galatians 2:19 says, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." You must be made dead to the law in order to operate in grace, and Christ only lives in you when you operate in grace. Therefore, not only is the ministration of the spirit in grace so much better than the ministration of death in the law, but it is also the only ministration that can work in your flesh, as you present your body as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1) and live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).

3:9-11 The law condemns people because we fail to obey the law. Grace gives us righteousness. God's righteousness, given unto believers, is much better than the law, which condemns all people. Since the law has glory, the ministration of righteousness must EXCEED the law's glory.

Romans 3:21-22 tells us that the righteousness of God is manifest to us "WITHOUT the law." "The righteousness of God...is by faith of Jesus Christ," which is "upon all them that believe." God gave us the law to show us our sin. Once we recognize our sin, we diligently seek God, and He rewards us by giving us the gospel that saves us. Once we believe that gospel (I Corinthians 15:3-4), we are baptized into Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4), meaning that our new identity is Christ. Since our lives are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), God gives us Christ's faith. We then receive God's righteousness, because God rewards Christ's faith with righteousness, since Christ did no sin (I Peter 2:22). This is "the ministration of righteousness" (3:9).

By contrast, before we were saved, the law worked with our sin nature to create more sin (Romans 7:8-13). Sin results in death (Romans 6:23), and so the law administers condemnation to us. Yet, this was glorious because it taught us to recognize our sin so that we might seek out the gospel and be saved. Therefore, the ministration of condemnation receives glory secondhand from the result of us seeking God and believing the gospel. However, the ministration of the spirit receives direct glory from God due to Christ's faith and God's righteousness being imputed unto us.

Therefore, the glory of the ministration of condemnation is pale in comparison to the ministration of the spirit such that, it appears that the ministration of condemnation's glory is no glory at all because of the exceeding glory of the ministration of the spirit (3:10).

In referring to the law, 3:11 says, "That which is done away." This is another proof that we are no longer under the law, once we are saved. You can think of the law vs. God's righteousness as the difference between high school and a doctorate degree from college. If you apply for a job and they ask you about your education, you would say that you are a high-school graduate if you never went to college. However, if you got a doctorate degree from college, you would not even mention the high-school diploma, even though you have one, because the doctorate degree is so much better than that. This is how it should be when comparing the law with God's righteousness. We should only glory in the cross of Christ, not the law, because the law is done away with in Christ, being replaced by something that is so much better that the law is not even worth mentioning any more.

3:12 First, we need to understand that "hope" is not a wish, but it is a confident expectation of what God will give us. Colossians 1:5 calls it, "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." If it were a wish, Paul would say, "the hope that you may receive when you get to heaven." This "hope" would be our position in heavenly places and the life that we have in Christ.

When it comes to the practical application of this hope, it is summed up by Romans 8:2, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” If we were still under the ministration of condemnation, i.e. the law, it would work with our sin nature to create death in us. Since we are under the ministration of the spirit, the life of Christ Jesus can be made manifest in our mortal flesh (4:10-11). This is an indescribably phenomenal change. Therefore, Paul says “we use great plainness of speech” (3:12).

In other words, Paul wants to use simple words so that people may understand what life in Christ is all about so that they may desire to have Christ’s life come through their bodies. Yet, Churchianity does the opposite. They create fancy sounding, theological words to make themselves sound smart and important. This shows that they do not operate by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). If they did, they would make things plain, rather than going to the original Greek or Hebrew, confusing people with multiple translations, and making the things of God complicated with invented theological words.

God says that His thoughts and ways are higher than man’s thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), and this is a perfect example of this scripture. Man makes things complicated so that he can seem important to others. Since he has no spiritual value in himself, he tries to create it with his “form of godliness” (II Timothy 3:5). On the other hand, God seeks to bring us up to His level by filling us with His Spirit, His Word, and giving us the mind of Christ to apply the spiritual things we have learned to our everyday lives.

An example of this difference may be a boxing match between a weak man and a strong man. The weak man tries to intimidate the strong man by bragging or by trying to show off. The strong man is confident in his strength, and he just shows up and punches the lights out of the weak man. Similarly, Paul says that he does not run, as uncertainly, nor does he fight “as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (I Corinthians 9:26-27). In other words, Paul knows that his strength is in Christ (12:9-10), and so he uses “great plainness of speech” (3:12) to convey sound doctrine to believers so that Christ’s power may come through him. Because Churchianity is in the flesh, they have no spiritual strength within themselves, and so they desire “to make a fair shew in the flesh” (Galatians 6:12) to try to deceive you into thinking that they have godly lives, so that you will continue to come to them and give them your money.

3:13-14 Again, we are told that the law is abolished for us (3:13). Why is the law abolished for us and not for Israel? Because Israel did not believe. When Israel returns to the Lord after the rapture takes place, “the vail shall be taken away” (3:16). Thus, God did not use “great plainness of speech” with Israel (3:12) because they did not believe the gospel.

This is the real reason why God “hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Ephesians 1:8), while Israel could not even see why they were given the law, much less understand it! Churchianity thinks it was because Christ had not

come yet, but that is not the case. Exodus 33:11 says that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Yet, Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables that they could not understand because it is only given to BELIEVERS to know the mysteries of God’s kingdom, not unbelievers (Matthew 13:10-11).

Because Israel, under Moses, was in unbelief, they could not even “look to the end of that which is abolished” (3:13). In other words, they could not even see why God gave them the law. The vail over Moses’ face was a physical illustration of this. Note that, when Moses met with God, he did not put a vail over his face. The result was that Moses’ face shone, and Israel could not stand the glory on Moses’ face. Yet, Moses COULD stand the glory he received from God by meeting with Him. (“And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded” (Exodus 34:33-34).) Why? Because Moses was a believer, and Israel was not. Therefore, God had to give Israel something less glorious—the law—than He gave Moses—life in Christ. Because Paul is speaking to believers, he does not need to conceal God’s truths to them. This is why 3:14 says, “which vail is done away in Christ.”

3:15-16 Since Israel is not in Christ, there remains a vail upon their heart. After the rapture of the body of Christ, Israel will turn to the Lord, and the vail upon their hearts will be taken away.

Having understood the spiritual concept here, we can apply these verses to people today. Some people never believe the gospel, and so they remain dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). A dead man cannot understand anything. Therefore, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14).

On the other hand, “he that is spiritual judgeth all things” (I Corinthians 2:15), meaning that believers do not have a vail on their heart. However, Christians still have their vile flesh (the natural man) along with the mind of Christ (the spiritual man). If a Christian, who has believed the gospel and is going to heaven, chooses to operate in his flesh, he is not being spiritual. This means that the vail is on his heart with regard to that particular issue. For example, Jesus sent seventy believers out, and they cast out devils (Luke 10:17-20). Later on, however, Jesus’ 12 disciples were not able to cast out a specific, lunatic devil (Matthew 17:15-21). Why? Because the 12 were in unbelief at the time.

Similarly, a Christian may be going to heaven, having believed the gospel. However, he may call you a heretick and say that you belong to a cult, when you share right division with him, even though you are standing for the truth. Why? Because a vail of unbelief is upon his heart regarding that particular doctrine, even though he is going to heaven and has God’s Spirit within him. God will not

force an unbeliever to believe the gospel, and He will not force a Christian to believe sound doctrine over the lies of Churchianity.

3:17 In 3:8, Paul used the term “the ministration of the spirit” to show what administers grace to us. This was a reference to God’s Spirit, but “spirit” was not capitalized there, because he had not revealed yet that it was God’s Spirit. In 3:17, Paul tells us that “the Lord is that Spirit,” and so “Spirit” is now capitalized. (“The Lord” is the Lord Jesus Christ, and so it is a reference to the Spirit of Christ within us.)

Note that Paul says that there is liberty “where the Spirit of the Lord is” (3:17). This goes along with what I said in 3:15-16. Christians have the “liberty” to read, believe, and apply God’s Word in their lives using the mind of Christ. Churchianity looks at this as the liberty to sin, because they look at things from the fleshly point of view and all that the flesh wants to do is sin. However, if we look at this using the mind of Christ, we see it as the liberty for us to be “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind” (Romans 12:2).

In Galatians 5:1, Paul tells us to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” This means that our liberty is the opportunity for Christ to live in us by standing in God’s grace, rather than putting ourselves back under the law. If we put ourselves back under the law, then “ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

Therefore, the legalist, who sees eternal security as “a license to sin,” is the one who is not letting Christ live in him. By contrast, the grace believer, who sees eternal security, as the liberty to allow Christ to live in him, is the one who is truly serving Christ. Everything is backwards for the legalist, because he is approaching his relationship with God from man’s point of view, and man’s way is lower than God’s way (Isaiah 55:8-9). Therefore, he is in bondage to the law, and the vail of unbelief is upon his heart so that he does not have the spiritual insight to see his bondage, thinking instead that it is the grace believer who is bondage to his flesh.

3:18 I think most people, who read this passage, think, that the reason we can see with open face and Israel could not, is because the new covenant is better than the old covenant. While the new is better than the old, the reason we can see with open face is because we are believers. If it were because the new is better than the old, then Moses would not have beheld the Lord with open face.

I Corinthians 2:14 says that the natural man cannot receive the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. We understand them because we have the Spirit of God. Since unbelievers do not have the Spirit of God, they have a spiritual vail over their hearts. Remember that 3:17 says that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The “liberty” is explained in 3:18, which is the liberty to be changed to be like Christ! We behold the glory of the Lord with open face. It is important to understand that we do not just behold the Lord’s glory, but we also behold it “AS IN A GLASS,” which would be like looking into a mirror. So, as we

read God's Word **with a believing heart**, God's Word reads us (Hebrews 4:12), just like a mirror tells us what we are really like.

We understand the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-10), and we can use the mind of Christ to have Christ live in us (I Corinthians 2:16). When we do that, God changes us to conform us "to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29). When you look at yourself in the mirror, you seek to change yourself to make yourself look better. When you hold the mirror of God's Word rightly divided up to your spiritual face, you want to change yourself. However, you cannot do that, because in your flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). Instead, you have to let Christ change you by using the mind of Christ. This is how we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (3:18). We are changed from the glory of a fallen man (Adam) to the glory of the risen man (Christ). However, if we never read God's Word **and** believe it, we are never changed. But, when we "let the Word of Christ dwell in [us] richly" (Colossians 3:16), we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). In other words, we are changed into the image of the Lord by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how the Lord is "the Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). This means that we cannot be changed to be like Christ unless we read and believe God's Word. Otherwise, there is no mirror put up to our spiritual face. This means that feeling the presence of the spirit, giving money, feeling sorry for your sin, volunteering at the church, and anything else done in the flesh will never bring about spiritual growth.

As a side note, you may wonder, how it is that Moses took the veil off when he spoke with the Lord (Exodus 34:34) and that "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face" (Exodus 33:11), when, in the same chapter, the Lord tells Moses, "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). My guess is that, when the Lord met with Moses in the tent, the Lord came in a body, not unlike the body that Jesus had in Matthew – John, and that body could be seen because it did not show the Lord's full glory. However, when Moses asked the Lord, "shew me Thy glory," the Lord said that He would make ALL His goodness pass before Moses (Exodus 33:18-19). This means that the Lord would pass before Moses with His full clothing of light on (Psalm 104:2), rather than coming to him in an ordinary body. If this is the case, then Moses' skin shone when he talked with the Lord due to the law being glorious (Exodus 34:29), not because he met with the Lord.

This shows that the Word of God is the light, which makes sense from what we read in John 1. There, Jesus Christ is called "the Word" (John 1:1), and "the true Light" (John 1:9). Jesus Christ, the Word, and the Light cannot be separated from one another, otherwise "Word" and "Light" would not be capitalized. Therefore, what made Moses' face shine was the Word of God upon him, i.e., the 10 commandments, not beholding the Lord in a body like ours.

II Corinthians 4 – Suffering to Focus on Eternity

4 Paul has "the ministration of the Spirit" (3:8), which is "the ministration of righteousness" (3:9). Basically, his job (and ours, too) is to administer the eternal

life of Christ to others. With unbelievers, we do this by giving them the gospel. With believers, we do this by giving them sound doctrine. In both cases, people need to see past our flesh and see the life of Christ in us. This is why “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (v. 7), and why we must bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus (v. 10). Of course, this means that we will suffer in our flesh, but we should not faint (v. 1), because of the eternal rewards that are produced in us. Thus, Paul could say that he had “light affliction” (v. 17), even though he suffered greatly (11:24-28). His affliction was “light” because it was temporary, while his reward far exceeds the suffering, because the reward is eternal (vs. 17-18).

Contrast this with most people, who err from the faith in order to be rich in this world (I Timothy 6:9-10). There is also “the god of this world,” Satan, who blinds people from believing (vs. 3-4). Paul stays true to mystery doctrine because of the eternal impact that it has, and he renounces dishonesty and deceit (v. 2). This results in gaining knowledge of the spiritual life of Christ in us, bringing glory to God (v. 6), and having the resolve of Christ that God will reward us in eternity, even though we suffer in this life (vs. 13-14).

4:1 Moses had “the ministration of death” (3:7) due to the unbelief of Israel. Paul has “the ministration of the spirit” (3:8) due to the belief of the body of Christ. Because Churchianity does not recognize this difference, they think that they must work to earn or keep their salvation. For example, Jesus told the rich, young ruler, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). Jesus was not giving the man a prescription for earning eternal life, but He was doing the opposite, ministering death to him! “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24-25). Jesus was giving him the law, which works wrath (Romans 4:15), so that he would recognize his sin so that he would ask for the gospel so that he could be saved from his sin.

Once a person has believed the gospel, he has “passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Then, the ministry to that person becomes one of sanctification, not salvation. It is “the ministration of the spirit,” rather than “the ministration of death.” This ministration of the spirit is much more glorious than the ministration of death (3:9-11). Therefore, Paul says that “we faint not,” since we have received mercy from God to have this ministry (4:1). Paul is referring to not fainting spiritually. In other words, he will continue to preach the mystery gospel and doctrine so that people will be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4), because this ministry is so glorious. If Moses continued his ministration of death even though Israel refused to believe, how much more should we continue the ministration of the spirit today!

4:2 The word “dishonest” only appears in the Bible twice—Ezekiel 22:13 and Ezekiel 22:27. God says that the Jewish religious leaders of apostate Israel have “taken gifts to shed blood...and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.” In Romans 3:15, Paul says that religious people “are swift to shed blood.” This is talking about

spiritual murder, as Jesus said in John 8:44 that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.”

Do you want to know why Churchianity does not accept and teach Paul’s gospel and mystery doctrine? It is because they use dishonesty to teach false doctrine so they gain money at the expense of destroying souls. Paul says in I Timothy 6:9-10 that, “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Note that Paul says that he has renounced the “hidden” things of dishonesty. In teaching lies intentionally, Churchianity’s true motives are hidden, or else no one would believe them and give them money. Therefore, they teach lies that are cloaked in a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5). By contrast, Paul has renounced dishonesty because he has been given “the ministration of the spirit” (3:8). He uses “great plainness of speech,” clearly teaching the mystery gospel and doctrine because of the glorious ministration of the spirit that he has been given.

Next, Paul says that he does not walk in craftiness. Craftiness means to be skilled in using deception. Churchianity takes the lies of the devil and adds them to scripture to make it sound like they are telling you the truth. Ephesians 4:13-14 says that if we have the unity of the faith, which is God’s preserved Word, then we can come unto “the knowledge of the Son of God” to the extent that we will no longer be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

When Satan came to Jesus, he used a promise of God to Jesus from Psalm 91:11-12 that applies to His second coming and added the phrase “at any time” to try to get Jesus to apply it to His first coming (Matthew 4:6). It was a slight modification, but Jesus caught it by saying, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7). Only because Jesus thoroughly knew God’s Word did He catch Satan’s craftiness to try to deceive Him. Satan’s craftiness was that he was scriptural, but not dispensational.

Similarly today, Churchianity will quote the truth of God’s Word from Israel’s program and try to apply it to us today. The reason that churches want their pastors to have graduated from seminary is because seminary teaches them how to become better liars. They learn how to change God’s Word ever so slightly and use scriptures, that do not apply to the current dispensation, in order to do the work of the devil in getting you to follow his lies. This is why II Corinthians 11:13-15 says that Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light and “HIS ministers” are transformed into “THE ministers of righteousness” (meaning that they are the only ones teaching the truth. After all, they will not even listen to me, because I do not have Churchianity’s qualifications to teach.) by working deceit.

Therefore, Paul says that he does not use the things of dishonesty, does not walk in craftiness, and does not handle the Word of God deceitfully. Since God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), there is no need to lie. If you do lie, people no longer trust you,

even if you are telling them the truth. By telling the truth, Paul is commending himself “to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (4:2). In other words, people can tell that he is telling them the truth, because he is not being honest, crafty, or deceitful. Therefore, he can give them the clear gospel message or clear doctrine for today, and they will believe what he says. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). By telling the truth, the Corinthians see Jesus’ love coming through Paul, such that they are willing to be edified by the sound doctrine he is giving them, because he is telling them the truth.

It is also a whole lot easier to tell the truth than to tell lies. When you tell the truth, it stands on its own. “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (13:8). When you tell lies, you have to remember the lie you told, and you have to be able to cover up your lies with other lies until your lies are believed as the truth. It takes a lot of time for Churchianity’s pastors to research and change words, definitions, and take things out of context in order to make their lies convincing enough to come up with a sermon. It may take them all week to prepare for a one-hour sermon, because there is so much research time involved in covering up lies to make them believable. This is why most pastors are paid by their churches to lie to them, because it is a full-time job to come up with smooth lies.

By contrast, Paul reached the whole world with the gospel, wrote all of the Bible that is specifically to us today, and managed to work making tents to support himself (Acts 18:2-3). My Sunday Bible studies typically last 4 hours each week, because I have a question-and-answer session afterward. Churchianity’s pastors never have question-and-answer sessions because they need time to make their lies believable. They also cannot answer questions on the fly because they do not know the truth. However, I have no problem having question-and-answer sessions because all I have to do is present the truth of God’s Word to answer questions. If I do not know the answer, this challenges me to study even more to find out the answer. This is “the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3). Churchianity preaches “another Jesus,” “another spirit,” and “another gospel” (11:4) and so they have to hide their dishonesty, walk in craftiness, and handle the Word of God deceitfully (4:2) in order to continue their scam religion.

Finally, using deceit is not something we should ever do. Jeremiah 17:9 says that our flesh is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” When we share the truth of God’s Word, it is hard for people to accept, because they have allowed their flesh to deceive them into thinking that they are already following the truth when they have not done so. I Peter 2:22 tells us that there was no guile found in Jesus’ mouth, and yet they still killed Him. (Guile is very similar to deceit.) The first thing Jesus said to Nathanael was that no guile was in him (John 1:47). Therefore, we have Biblical examples of why we should never handle the Word of God deceitfully, as Churchianity does.

4:3-4 “The god of this world” (4:4) is Satan. God gave dominion of this world to Adam (Genesis 1:26-28). Adam lost that dominion when he sinned. Satan told

Jesus that he had power over all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5-6), and Jesus did not dispute his claim. Satan even had power over Israel. Israel was Satan's "lawful captive," due to their sin (Isaiah 49:24).

At the same time, God is still the possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:19). It is just that God gave dominion of the earth to man, and man give that dominion to Satan. The Lord Jesus Christ did get the dominion of the earth back from Satan through His death, burial, and resurrection. However, Jesus will not realize this dominion until His second coming, because Israel is not saved yet. Therefore, Israel cannot take leadership positions in Jesus' eternal, earthly kingdom. Hebrews 2:8-9 explains this, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under [man's] feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Until death is swallowed up in victory on the earth for Israel (Isaiah 25:8), Satan is still the god of this world.

However, since God is the possessor of heaven and earth, Satan has to report to God and get permission to do things on the earth, as seen in Job 1:6 and 2:1. If Satan breaks God's rules, Satan will be put in chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This is what happened to the devils, who had sex with women to create superhuman creatures in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:4). Since this has not happened to Satan, he can walk to and fro on the earth (Job 1:7), seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Therefore, Satan is still "the god of this world," even though God is the possessor of heaven and earth.

Think of it this way. God is a just God. Since He gave dominion of the earth to man and Satan took it away from man when man sinned, God cannot simply take control of heaven and earth back again. He must do it righteously. So, God sent His only begotten Son as a man, and Jesus destroyed the power of death and hell over us. However, death must be fully conquered for us, by our vile flesh being done away with and us receiving our glorified bodies, before we can rule with Jesus. Right now, Jesus is sanctifying and cleansing us with the washing of water by the Word. Once this washing is accomplished, we will be a church that is holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:29). We can then rule with Jesus. Until then, death has not been destroyed and so Satan remains the god of this world.

As "the god of this world," Satan hides the gospel by "blinding the minds of them which believe not" (4:4). The reason God allows Satan to do this is because God "is a rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). If you seek God, you will find Him. If you do not seek God, God will let you continue in your sin. If you reject the truth, God will allow Satan to blind your mind so that you do not believe the gospel. For example, during the tribulation period, those, who take the mark of the beast and worship the image of the beast, do so because God sends them "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned." Why? Because "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." They "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II

Thessalonians 2:10-12). God wants “all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). However, if you “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life” (Acts 13:46) by refusing to believe the gospel, God will give you what you want by allowing Satan to hide the gospel from you. Note that II Corinthians 4:3-4 says that the gospel “is hid to them that are lost,” and that Satan blinds “the minds of them which believe not.” This is not Calvinism. Man has to make the conscience decision not to believe what he knows about God (Romans 1:19-21) and follow Satan’s lie program instead (Romans 1:25) before God will allow Satan to blind “the minds of them which believe not.” Note that it is those who “believe not” who are blinded by Satan, not those who have not made up their minds yet. Basically, if you want eternal life, God will give it to you. If you do not, God will give you hell, even though He wants you to go to heaven.

One time, I heard a preacher give a gospel message, and he included walking down an aisle, praying with a church leader, and making Jesus the Lord of your life. Afterward, I told him that I wished he had given the clear gospel of recognizing your sin and trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection alone as atonement for your sin. He said, “But, I did share that.” There are many people in churches, who honestly think they have believed the clear gospel in order to be saved, when they never have. Why? Because they did not diligently seek God. Instead, they sought to please God with their own “good” works in a church. The result is that they actually blaspheme God, because they take on God’s name in their church, but they do not really serve Him. Therefore, God has allowed Satan to blind their minds to “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (4:4). Jesus warns of this very thing in Matthew 7:21-23. He says, “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” Note that this passage does not say that a few people will say, but that “many” will say this. They end up going to hell in the handbasket of religion.

Note also that Christ “is the image of God” (4:4). An image is a picture of the real thing. It looks just like the real thing. If the image of God shines unto us, then we become that image. Adam was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), but he lost that clothing of light (Psalm 104:2) when he sinned (Genesis 3:7). Adam’s son, then, was made in Adam’s fallen image, not in the image of God (Genesis 5:3). However, Jesus Christ is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). Therefore, Jesus’ light came upon “the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3) to become a glorified body in the image of God again when Jesus rose from the dead.

It makes sense that Satan attempts to blind people’s minds from receiving the light of Christ, because Satan is over darkness. Acts 26:18 says that, in forming the body of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ turned us “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Colossians 1:13 says that God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” Now that we are saved, Ephesians says that “we wrestle...against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12), and that we should “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). When God made man,

John 1:5 says that “the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” Thus, Satan seeks to blind people from comprehending “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (4:4) so that they never believe the gospel and are never saved.

4:5 This verse speaks of our proper place. Just because we have eternal life and the treasure of Christ (4:7) in our inner man does not make us any better than anyone else. Even after we are saved, nothing good dwells in our flesh (Romans 7:18), and our flesh is still vile (Philippians 3:21). Christians are not the final authority. God’s Word is the final authority, and Jesus Christ is the Word (John 1:1). When we preach the gospel and sound doctrine for today, we are preaching “Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery” (Romans 16:25). No one should worship us or give us glory. We are only “your servants for Jesus’ sake” (4:5).

In I Corinthians, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 which says, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” Paul then says that the reason that verse is in the law of Moses is “for our sakes...that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (I Corinthians 9:9-10). In other words, our spiritual work today, as ambassadors for Christ (5:20), can be rightly compared with oxen in the material realm. No one gives glory to oxen, except by giving them plenty of food so that they have enough energy to do a good job. Similarly then, we should give honour to those “who labour in the word and doctrine” (I Timothy 5:17-18), but we should never elevate believers as being superhuman, as many churches do today with their pastors. The reason is because we are just “your servants for Jesus’ sake” (4:5). Basically, our job is to brag about our brother (Jesus). Therefore, the glory belongs to Jesus, not to us.

4:6 We receive God’s light when we believe the gospel. John 1:4 says that Jesus’ life “was the light of men.” Therefore, when we believe the gospel, we receive eternal life, which is the light of God to guide us in life. Unbelievers do not comprehend the light of God (John 1:5), because the things of God are only spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14) and Christ lives His eternal life in us (Galatians 2:20) when we operate based upon the words that Jesus has spoken unto us today (John 6:63), which are the words of Paul’s epistles (Romans – Philemon). Note carefully that Jesus says that “the words that I speak you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The words that Jesus spoke unto us today are the words of Paul’s epistles, not the red letters of Matthew – John. Paul says that he gave the Romans “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest” (Romans 16:25-26). He says that Jesus Christ made the mystery known unto Paul by revelation, “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed” (Ephesians 3:3-5). Therefore, the books of the Bible outside of Paul’s epistles are not the words that Jesus Christ speaks unto us today, which is why Paul says, “Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (II Timothy 2:7). If we do not recognize this by “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15), we will be rejecting “the light

of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6), even though we may read our Bibles every day!

Therefore, most Christians, who have believed the gospel and are going to heaven, are not operating in Christ’s light/life, because they do not believe the words on the pages of God’s Word. Paul says that the Word of God “effectually worketh also in **you that believe**” (I Thessalonians 2:13). If you do not believe the words that Jesus spoke to you today in Paul’s epistles, then you are not living “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

The reason is because Jesus Christ through Paul teaches the grace of God, according to the revelation of the mystery, while Jesus Christ, in the red letters, taught His disciples to put themselves under the Mosaic law (Matthew 23:2-3). Paul makes this clear by saying “that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Romans 15:8), while Paul is “the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:16). If I follow the red letters, I follow the words of Jesus Christ to Israel. If I follow Paul’s epistles I follow the words of Jesus Christ to me today. Since it is the words that Jesus speaks unto me that have spirit and life (John 6:63), I need to follow Paul’s epistles in order to operate by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2). This is why Paul says, “Be ye followers of me” (I Corinthians 4:16).

Today, we “are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). When we try to follow the red letters, we elevate the law over the grace that we stand in as believers (Romans 5:2), and we make ourselves transgressors of the law (Galatians 2:18). This is what Paul means when he says, “ye are fallen from grace,” not that we have done some heinous sin, but that we have subjected ourselves to legalism. “Christ is become of no effect unto you” (Galatians 5:4), and we “frustrate the grace of God” that wants to work in our lives (Galatians 2:21). All we have to do is elevate one law (circumcision in Galatians 5:3, water baptism in most churches today) over God’s grace, and the Christ life will not work in us, because faith and law do not mix (Romans 4:4-5,14).

This is important because we come face to face with Jesus Christ when we read and believe the Bible (3:18). Israel did not believe God’s Word to them, and so “their minds were blinded” to the truth, and there was a vail upon their hearts, such that they could not understand God’s Word (3:14-15). We, also, will not understand the Bible if we do not believe the words Jesus has spoken to us today in Paul’s epistles, because we are not beholding the face of Jesus Christ. Instead, we have a vail over our faces due to unbelief.

When we believe God’s Word to us today, we behold “the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6) with “open face” (3:18). Thus, we see face to face. This is what I Corinthians 13:8-12 is talking about. It says that spiritual gifts will cease when we are “face to face” (I Corinthians 13:12). Churchianity says that spiritual gifts remain in operation today, and that “face to face” means when we get to heaven. This is because they

have a veil of unbelief over their hearts so that they refuse to make the connection between these verses. I Corinthians 13:12 says that seeing “face to face” is accomplished when we have full knowledge. This must be when God’s Word was completed, because that is when God “hath abounded toward us in ALL wisdom and prudence” (Ephesians 1:8). God’s Word was completed when Paul wrote his last book found in scripture, because Colossians 1:25 says that the mystery dispensation was given to Paul “to fulfill the Word of God.”

Furthermore, Ephesians 4:13 says that the spiritual gifts were given to the body of Christ “TILL we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It does not say that the spiritual gifts were given until we come face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. The cessation of spiritual gifts is linked to full knowledge, not to going to heaven. Yet, because Churchianity walks by sight, not by faith (5:7), they do not see this, as they look at scripture with an unbelieving veil on their faces.

Note that God has “shined in our hearts” this light. Before we are saved, our heart is in our flesh, since Jeremiah 17:9 says that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Once we are saved, Colossians 2:11 says that “the body of the sins of the flesh” are cut off from our souls by the circumcision of Christ. Our heart then moves from our flesh to our spirit, because our spirit is now alive in Christ (Romans 6:11; Ephesians 2:1). This is why Romans 10:10 says that “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Therefore, the light of the knowledge of God’s Word comes into our heart, which is our spirit. This is why “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14). Before you are saved, your heart is in your flesh. If you try to understand the things of the Bible, you cannot, because your heart is wicked. However, once you are saved, the same light of God’s Word can be shined into your heart, and you can now understand God’s Word, because the things of God are spiritually discerned and your heart now resides in your spirit.

Finally, note how “the glory of God” is linked with knowledge in this verse. This is why Colossians 2:3 speaks of the “TREASURES of wisdom and knowledge” that are hid in Christ. This is also why God has magnified His Word above all His name (Psalm 138:2). The Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12) and transforms you by renewing your mind (Romans 12:2), using the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), rather than your fleshly mind (Colossians 2:18). This brings God glory, because God’s Word has completely transformed you. Thus, God gives us “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

4:7 “This treasure,” mentioned in this verse, is Christ. Specifically, it is the knowledge of God’s spiritual program of sharing His love through Christ, and us in Christ, in heavenly places for all eternity, bringing glory to all of us involved.

Colossians 1:27 speaks of “the riches of the glory of this mystery...; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” **There is no glory for any human being apart from Christ.** Man is to live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Only the spiritual man can understand the things of God (I Corinthians 2:14). The Holy Ghost teaches us these things (I Corinthians 2:9-13), and we use the mind of Christ to apply them to our lives (I Corinthians 2:16). This is how we “live by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20). (It is Christ’s faith, not our faith. “The just shall live by His faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).)

It is the words that Jesus speaks unto us in Paul’s epistles (Romans – Philemon) that are spirit and life (John 6:63). When we live by these words, we live by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2). “Christ...is our life” (Colossians 3:4). Therefore, the treasure within us is Christ. When we live by God’s Words through the mind of Christ, it brings glory to God, which is why Christ is called “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). This is also why Colossians 2:2-3 says that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hid in Christ. Without having the mind of Christ, I cannot understand and apply these things. This is why they are hid in Christ. Only believers have this treasure, because God only reveals His Word to us through Christ.

In spite of this great treasure that we have of Christ in us, we still have “earthen vessels” (4:7), meaning that we do not have our glorified bodies yet. Why? Because we should walk by faith, not by sight (5:7). Therefore, Christ’s spiritual strength is made perfect in fleshly weakness. When I am weak, Christ is strong in me (12:9-10).

Having this treasure in earthen vessels gets rid of our pride. Proverbs 16:18 says that “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Paul says, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12). Look at all of the pride there is today in Churchianity. Can you imagine how bad it would be if we received our glorified bodies the moment that we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins?! Look at Lucifer. He was the anointed cherub that covered God’s throne (Ezekiel 28:14). He was “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12). Lucifer got prideful, as he covered God’s throne and looked at his own reflection in the sea of glass that surrounds God’s throne (Revelation 4:6). Ezekiel 28:17 says, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezekiel 28:17). If saved man received a glorified body the moment he believed the gospel, his wisdom would also be corrupted by reason of his brightness.

Moreover, because all unbelievers walk by sight, they would bow down to and serve believers if they had their glorified bodies. Look at John, a saved man, part of believing Israel, and he had to be chided by an angel because he tried to worship the angel (Revelation 19:10). How much more, then, would unbelievers worship believers because of their beauty? They would also be paying great sums of money to try to obtain our beauty, just like Simon tried to buy the power of the Holy Ghost with money (Acts 8:18-23). (Unbelieving man already does this for

temporary, fading beauty through makeup, plastic surgery, Botox, and other things.) Therefore, receiving glorified flesh while Satan is still the god of this world and man still has his sin nature would put the focus on believers, when the focus should be on Christ (Galatians 6:14).

Also, the glory of our heavenly bodies is in direct proportion to how much sound doctrine we have in us and is applied through us. Of course, God knows the future, and so He could give us the correct amount of glory based upon how we would serve the Lord for the rest of our lives, but that would not work out too well, because then we would know the future. God does not want us to know our personal futures, because then we would not walk by faith. Also, the glorified bodies would make us prideful, and then we would not serve the Lord. It is as if God would be destroying His work in us by giving us our reward now, much like an employer does not pay you until AFTER you have done work for him. Therefore, however you look at this, it is best that we do not receive our glorified bodies until our sin nature is gone from us forever.

4:8-9 In these two verses, Paul contrasts the external with the internal. I Thessalonians 5:16 tells us to “rejoice evermore,” meaning that we can always rejoice because of who we are and what we have in Christ, even when circumstances are against us. In fact, II Timothy 3:12 tells us that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” because God knows that we need to bear the dying of the Lord Jesus in our bodies in order for the life of Jesus to come through our bodies (4:10-11). Thus, we can give thanks “IN every thing,” even though we may not give thanks FOR everything (I Thessalonians 5:18).

The first trial Paul mentions is that we are “troubled” (4:8), meaning that we have a problem externally. Yet, we are “not distressed” (4:8) internally, meaning that we do not have anxiety over our trouble. Jesus sums this up well in John 16:33 by saying, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The “things,” that Jesus spoke about, were that Jesus would be arrested, and the disciples would leave Him alone. Jesus would have to go through the most trying time possible with no earthly friends, but He was not alone because the Father was with Him (John 16:32). Therefore, whatever trial we face, even if it means that everyone abandons us, should not cause us distress because Christ is in us, and Christ has overcome the world. We can rejoice in who we are in Christ and look forward to the joys awaiting us in heaven.

This makes us “careful for nothing.” Instead, “in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,” we let our requests be made known unto God. Then, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). The whole world may be against us, but God is for us. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32). Therefore, we cast our cares upon the Lord, and He gives us peace, such that we are not distressed. In sum, we have peace when we set our “affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

The next statement is that “we are perplexed, but not in despair” (4:8). “Perplexed” is the external condition, meaning that we are completely baffled by what happens to us. When you stand on the truth of God’s Word, people will attack you. This is perplexing. After all, why would someone get mad at me for giving him the words of eternal life with no strings attached?! Jesus said, “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Don’t people want to be free from the shackles of the flesh, sin, and hell? Yet, I get attacked for trying to bring them the liberty that is in Christ. This is very perplexing. However, I am “not in despair” (4:8). Someone in despair has no hope. “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, we are “not in despair” (4:8). Because we know that we have eternal life with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5-6), we are not like “others which have no hope” (I Thessalonians 4:13). “Nay, IN all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). “The Lord Jesus Christ...is our hope” (I Timothy 1:1). When our hope is in Christ, then we “have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6), because God has destroyed “the wisdom of the wise.” God has “made foolish the wisdom of this world” by “Christ crucified” (I Corinthians 1:19-20,23).

Look at Job. Satan took away his possessions, his family, and his health. Yet, in the end, Job received double the possessions that he had lost (Job 42:12). Jesus told the 12 apostles that they would receive an hundredfold back of what they had given up for Christ (Matthew 19:29). Moreover, they gave up temporal possessions for an eternal rate of return of 10,000%. You cannot beat that investment plan! Therefore, you can rejoice if man tortures you, because that suffering works an eternal weight of glory for you (4:17). You can rejoice if man kills you, because death is “FAR BETTER” than life (Philippians 1:21-23), because you will not have the sin nature and the world going against your life in Christ in heaven. In Christ, all things are good. Therefore, we are “not in despair.”

Next, Paul says that we are “persecuted, but not forsaken” (4:9). Being persecuted (the external condition) means that we are mistreated. Not being forsaken (the internal condition) means that we are not abandoned. You may say, “but my family and friends have abandoned me because I believe the Bible over their religion.” While that may be true, Paul is talking about not being forsaken inwardly, not outwardly. Romans 8:31-39 tells us that no one and no thing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. God is for us, and so no one can be against us. God freely gives us all things, as evidenced by the fact that He spared not His Own Son. The world may forsake you, but Jesus overcame the world for you (John 16:33) and we are crucified to the world through the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, we are not forsaken by Jesus internally, and that is where it really counts.

Note that Hebrews 13:5 tells believing Israel that God will never leave them nor forsake them, which is a quote of God’s promise to them in Deuteronomy 31:6. Just before Jesus ascended to the Father, He told His disciples, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). So, Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them all the way until the world ends, and then,

shortly after saying this, He left them! Or, did He? Yes, He physically left them and went to the Father. However, He indwelt them, which meant that He never left them spiritually. So, too, when we believe in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), we are given the Spirit of Christ, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). This means that, while the world persecutes us, we should never get discouraged because the Lord Jesus Christ has not forsaken us.

As a side note, we should mention that God told King Asa that He would forsake him if he forsook God (II Chronicles 15:2). We know this cannot be a dispensational difference, as we already saw that Jesus' promise not to leave is applicable to both Israel's and the Body of Christ's program. What was going on with Asa was that God made a fleshly covenant with Israel. They would have the land of Israel as long as they served the Lord. If they turned away from the Lord, God would turn away from them. With Asa, his "heart...was perfect all his days" (II Chronicles 15:17). But then, in the 36th year of his reign (II Chronicles 16:1), Asa trusted in the king of Syria, rather than in the Lord (II Chronicles 16:7). Asa then put God's prophet in a prison (II Chronicles 16:10). Therefore, God brought a disease upon Asa from which he never recovered (II Chronicles 16:12-13).

However, for us, in the dispensation of grace, God never made a physical covenant with us. We receive spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), not material blessings. Therefore, we should not expect God to give us health and wealth, nor should we believe that God is punishing us for unconfessed sin in our lives when we are persecuted. We need to stand on the truth of God's Word that God is for us (Romans 8:28,31). God has forgiven us all of our sins according to the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7), not according to our performance. We are seated together with Christ in heavenly places right now (Ephesians 2:5-6). The body of sins of our flesh has been spiritually circumcised from our souls by Christ (Colossians 2:11), Christ has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us (Colossians 2:14), and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit until (Ephesians 1:13-14) and "unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Therefore, even when Churchianity says that you must have sinned or that God is chastising you, you can rest in Christ's promise to you today that you may be persecuted, but you are not forsaken by God (4:9).

Finally, we are "cast down, but not destroyed." To be cast down means to be demeaned and trampled on. A good example of this is Job. He had three "friends," who gave him a worldly point of view as to why he was suffering. Job said, "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?" (Job 19:2). Similarly, the world will cast Bible believers down. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:18). "The world by wisdom knew not God" (I Corinthians 1:21). The world thinks we are crazy when we believe that Jesus' death gives us life. Therefore, they will cast us down. Our response should be to "bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Romans 12:14), and "recompense to no man evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). (I believe the reason that God gives us life through death is to show us that even the weakest part of God's Spirit is stronger than the strongest part of man's flesh. I get this from I Corinthians

1:25 which says, “The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”)

Destroyed means to be defeated or ruined. Try as they might, the world cannot destroy us because our hope is in Christ (I Timothy 1:1). I Corinthians 15:57-58 says, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Therefore, rather than being destroyed, we are actually victorious through Christ. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). Jesus said that Satan came “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,” but Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). When we believe God’s Word and live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), “God...ALWAYS causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2:14). The world may cast us down, but Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). Therefore, when we believe God’s Word, God gives us the victory over the world through Christ.

4:10-11 4:10 teaches us that the life of Jesus comes through us by us dying to ourselves. This further explains why God does not change our outward appearance once we are saved (4:7). In fact, 4:16 says that our outward man keeps getting worse while, in Christ, our inward man keeps getting better. (What a comforting thought as you see your body slowly deteriorate over the years.)

4:10 shows that there is an inverse relationship between your flesh and your spirit. Before you are saved, your spirit is dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1). Once you are saved, God reckons that your flesh is dead, and Christ is now your life (Colossians 3:3-4). However, your vile flesh is still with you, and so you can choose to walk in the Spirit or to fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). We should reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). But, “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Ephesians 5:29). Therefore, we need to “die daily” (I Corinthians 15:31) to the flesh by choosing each day to walk by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” rather than by “the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). When we read and believe God’s Word, the Holy Ghost teaches it to us. We then use the mind of Christ to apply the doctrine. Since we are then going against the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2), we are “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” in order for Christ’s life to be made manifest in our body.

Jesus gives us an illustration in John 12:24-25 to help us understand this. He says that a corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die in order to bring forth fruit. So, too, we must give up our lives and let Christ live in us (Galatians 2:20) because He is our life (Colossians 3:4). Then, we will be living out our eternal lives right now. Most Christians believe that we only receive our eternal lives when we get to heaven, because Churchianity has tricked them into thinking that they can lose their salvation. However, **eternal life is not in a place (heaven); it is in a person (Christ)**. It is having complete trust in God the Father, which only happens through living by the faith of the Son of God, as the Holy Ghost teaches us God’s Word.

When Jesus “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8), God highly exalted Him (Philippians 2:9), because God’s love came through Him to others. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The same applies to us when we present our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1) so that Christ can live a godly life through us.

Paul desired to be found in Christ and HIS righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. Of course, God’s righteousness and Christ’s faith had already been imputed unto him the moment he trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for his sins (Romans 3:22). But, if he does not operate in Christ’s righteousness and faith then, from a practical standpoint, Christ is dead in vain (Galatians 2:21). When we are weak in the flesh, Christ is strong through us (12:10).

Jesus Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8-9). He was made “perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:9-10). Therefore, Paul desires to know Christ’s sufferings and be made conformable unto His death (Philippians 3:10). This is what walking in newness of life is all about (Romans 6:4)—suffering so that Jesus’ life is manifest in our mortal flesh. When this happens, Paul apprehends his eternal life in Christ (Philippians 3:12). This is the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

This is why Paul says that we should let the mind of Christ be in us (Philippians 2:5). This mind says that we are to not think it robbery to be equal with God, because of who we are in Christ (Philippians 2:6). Therefore, we know that God can transform our lives by giving our lives to Him to use. Therefore, we can make ourselves of no reputation (Philippians 2:7), even though we are adopted sons of God and are seated together with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5-6). We will then humble ourselves and die to ourselves so that Christ’s life comes through us (Philippians 2:8). Remember that Paul said, in 1:8-10, that he had the sentence of death within himself, so that he would learn to trust in God, rather than in himself. If we never recognize that we are dead to sin, we will never let Christ’s life live through us.

We should also note the use of “always” and “alway” in these verses. We are “always” bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus (4:10) and “are alway delivered unto death” (4:11). In other words, we need to die daily to ourselves so that Christ can live in us. This is the “always” part. When we do this, we are “alway” or delivered “all the way” to death for Jesus’ sake. Therefore, we can see the gradual sanctification process of always working our vile flesh out of us so that we make it all the way to Christ living in us, rather than living for ourselves. I have observed this personally in my life and in the lives of others. The more sound doctrine you get in your inner man and the more you apply it in your life, the more disgusted you become with your flesh such that, the lusts of the flesh that used to be very appealing to you, are now not attractive or may even be disgusting to you. Letting Christ live in you causes you to learn that the pleasures of sin are but for a season (Hebrews 11:25), while the joys of heaven last forever. Therefore, as you set your

affection on things above, not on things of the earth (Colossians 3:2), you forego the things of the flesh for the things of the Spirit more and more over time.

4:12 Taken out of context, death working in Paul and life in the Corinthians, makes it sound like the Corinthians are doing better than Paul is. However, since death of the flesh is a good thing because it means that Christ's life is manifest in us, then death working in Paul is the better scenario.

Death working in us means that Paul is dying to his flesh, and he is living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). In 13:9, Paul says, "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection." When Paul is weak, then Christ can be strong through him (12:9-10) so that the power of God is seen in him by the Corinthians. They can then see the benefit of dying to the flesh and letting Christ live through them, which will result in their perfection. In 13:4, Paul says that Christ was "crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God" (13:4). Paul was also crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20), and so he can also live by the power of God. This happens by applying sound doctrine to every situation. II Timothy 3:16-17 says that the man of God is "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" when he applies scripture to his life. By seeing sound doctrine work in Paul's life, the Corinthians can give up their temporal, carnal pursuits and focus on the eternal, spiritual things that they have in Christ. Then, death can work in them, just like it is working in Paul when he writes this second epistle. We do not have a third epistle to the Corinthians, so perhaps they followed Paul in letting the cross of Christ work in them so that Christ's resurrection life lives through them.

4:13-14 Since they both have "the same spirit of faith" (4:13), why is death working in Paul but life is working in the Corinthians? Paul quotes Psalm 116:10, which is what Jesus said. Jesus was greatly afflicted and went to hell (Psalm 116:3), but He knew that God would deliver Him because He believed. Therefore, Jesus was willing to go to the cross and fight death and hell, because He completely trusted that His Father would give Him resurrection life. In other words, death had to be worked out in Christ before resurrection life could also be worked out in Christ (Ephesians 1:19-21). The only way we can have Christ's resurrection life live through us today is if we believe, as Jesus did in Psalm 116, that God will deliver us from the death and sin of our flesh. (Note that Paul does not quote the part of Psalm 116:10 where Jesus says, "I was greatly afflicted." This is because Jesus was afflicted for us (5:21), taking our punishment for us.) Romans 8:10-13 says that we have the life of the Spirit in us. God can then quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit so that we mortify the deeds of the body and have Christ live in us.

If Christ could have complete trust in the Father, even though He "was greatly afflicted" for our sin, how much more should the Corinthians trust that sound doctrine will work in them so that Christ's life comes through them to others, even though they suffer in the material world for it? Note, from Ephesians 1:19-21, that the mighty power of God was "wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." God's power was

wrought or worked in Christ. This same power of God is also given “to us-ward who believe,” which means God’s power will work through our earthen vessels, accomplishing God’s will in us, when we follow the doctrine.

The Corinthians’ problem was that they were not believing God’s Word so that the resurrection life of Christ could work in them. So, Christ’s death worked in Paul, but the Corinthians’ fleshly life worked in them (4:12). At the rapture, both Paul and the Corinthians will be glorified (4:14). Even if the Corinthians do not read and believe God’s Word and use the mind of Christ to apply God’s Word in their lives, their souls will still be saved because they are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6), who is Christ (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). If they live by the faith of the Son of God, they will receive a higher position in heavenly places. If they do not live by Christ’s faith, they will suffer loss of their reward, but their souls will still be saved (I Corinthians 3:15). Therefore, both Paul and the Corinthians will be raised up to have eternal life in heavenly places, the question that remains is, “How much glory will they bring God?” This is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

4:15 If the Corinthians see Christ’s life working in Paul, it should cause them to want the same thing to happen to them. This is how “all things are for your sakes” (4:15). When they see “the abundant grace” of Christ working in Paul, they should thank Christ for this. They should then be followers of Paul (I Corinthians 4:16) in the things of 4:8-11, because they see the life of Jesus manifest in Paul’s mortal flesh. This means that Jesus’ life can be manifest in their flesh, as well. Then, when Christ lives in them, the result is that Christ’s grace redounds (contributes greatly) to the glory of God.

As an example, I learned right division in my late teens. I believed it to be true, but I did not really grow in the doctrine until I met John Versteegen in my early 30s. To him, right division was not a religious system, but it was the life of Christ in him. Seeing this life of Christ caused me to desire to get the doctrine in my inner man so that Christ could live in me to a greater extent. Now, people see the life of Christ in me, and they desire to have Christ live in them. This is how Christ’s grace redounds to the glory of God. It is the snowball effect of the Christ life, because it is so attractive to those who desire heavenly things that Christ will live in someone as a result of someone else seeing Christ live in them.

4:16 Because of the great work that Christ’s grace does in the Corinthians, Paul will not faint. He started the chapter by saying that they faint not (4:1), seeing that they have the ministry of the spirit, which allows them to behold the glory of the Lord with open face (3:18) as they read and believe God’s Word rightly divided (4:6).

Personally, what I admire most in Bible-believing preachers is seeing them consistently preach God’s Word rightly divided week after week, month after month, year after year, for the majority of their lives. Lay people may think of preaching as something glamorous, but the truth is that it is a lot of hard work. You must spend hours to know your topic well enough to preach one message.

Filling in for someone, every once in a while, is an easy thing to do. However, consistently preaching one or more messages each week over a period of years can make you weary. Maybe you do not feel good one day, maybe you are real busy with things happening at home or at work on another day, or maybe there are personal issues you are dealing with. It does not matter. You keep studying and preaching. People, who set these examples, can give you the strength to do the same.

On top of all of the circumstances of life that are going on, there is the spiritual warfare that you face whenever you teach the truth:

1) Your flesh is against you. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17).

2) Unbelievers are against you, as they are following “the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2).

3) Churchianity is against you, because you are teaching things according to God’s Word, rather than according to tradition. In fact, when you teach God’s Word rightly divided, many well-meaning Christians will try to get you away from the truth. You are shunned, you are accused of being a heretic and part of a cult, and you have virtually no emotional support to continue to fight against the tide of Satan’s lie program that has permeated Churchianity.

With all of this against you, it is very easy to make up some excuse and stop preaching the truth week in and week out. Or, maybe you keep preaching but compromise on the doctrine a little bit. Or, maybe you keep preaching, but you start teaching the lies of Churchianity. Many people start out well, but then they stop fighting the good fight of faith (I Timothy 6:12).

When my wife went to be with the Lord in 2021, it would have been very easy to give up preaching. However, we are ambassadors of Christ to reconcile people to God through the gospel of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection and sound doctrine associated with Paul’s epistles (5:20). This is a unique opportunity that we will not have in heaven. Therefore, we press on.

Paul continues to preach the mystery gospel and doctrine because it gets people saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). It “effectually worketh also in you that believe” (I Thessalonians 2:13). However, it can become harder and harder to continue to have Christ live in us, because, the more sound doctrine we get in our inner man, the more we suffer for the doctrine (II Timothy 3:12), and so our outward man perishes, as we saw in 4:8-11. Yet, we can wear this perishing outward man as a badge of corruption because we have the same confidence that Jesus had that “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 116:9).

Because Paul knew of the redounding effect to the glory of God of having Christ live in him, resulting in someone else having Christ live in him, which results in another person having Christ live in him, etc., Paul would not faint. Paul says that it is “far better” to depart and be with Christ, than it is to continue to suffer in his mortal flesh. However, it is more needful for others that he continue to abide in the flesh (Philippians 1:23-24). Therefore, he faints not (4:16). Paul recognizes that the ministration of the Spirit is the most glorious thing he could have. It brings eternal life and higher positions in heavenly places to those who listen to it. Therefore, he is willing to go through physical and mental suffering for the rest of his life, because it will reap eternal glory.

Paul also has the added encouragement that his “inward man is renewed day by day” (4:16). Unfortunately, most people only care about the outward man. God said, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). Billions of dollars are spent each year on cosmetics, plastic surgery, diet and exercise programs, hair dye, jewelry, manicures, pedicures, hair stylists, expensive clothing, shoes, and many other things with the intent of looking good on the outside. Yet, most people will not spend \$10 on a basic, King James Bible and allow the Holy Ghost to teach them God’s Word for free! The Corinthians also seemed to fall into the category of looking “on things after the outward appearance” (10:7).

However, such is NOT the case with Paul. He knows that, the more sound doctrine he gets in his inner man, the more he is “strengthened with might by [Christ’s] Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). He presents his body a living sacrifice unto the Lord (Romans 12:1), resulting in the perishing of his outward man (“troubled”, “perplexed”, “persecuted”, and “cast down” (4:8-9)), but he is transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:2), such that his inward man is renewed (“not distressed”, “not in despair”, “not forsaken”, and “not destroyed” (4:8-9)) day by day as he dies to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) and walks in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

The only way, that Paul was able to present his body a living sacrifice unto God in order to be transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:1-2), was that he had the confidence of Psalm 116:9 (“I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.). This makes our daily dying to the flesh our “reasonable service” (service based on reason) (Romans 12:1). What is this reason that causes us to die to the flesh and walk in the Spirit on a day-by-day basis? It is what Paul will now cover in 4:17-18.

4:17-18 These are two of the most amazing verses in the Bible. Paul says he has “light affliction,” which includes receiving 39 lashes on 5 occasions (11:24, based upon Deuteronomy 25:3), beaten with rods thrice (11:25), stoned and left for dead once (11:25; Acts 14:19), being shipwrecked at least 3 times (11:25), and spending a night and a day in the sea (11:25). This is considered light affliction compared with burning in hell for all eternity and having no rest day nor night (Revelation 14:9-11). (Even worse than the burning in hell is being eternally separated from

the love of God, as seen in Jesus' cry from the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46.)

The affliction, that we go through, can seem like it is never ending. Have you ever noticed how the work week goes by slowly, but that same week on vacation goes by quickly? This is because time flies when you are having fun, but it goes by slowly when you are not doing something you want to do. One thousand years with the Lord is like one day (II Peter 3:8). That same thousand-year period probably feels like one million years to those suffering in hell. Therefore, when we suffer in the flesh, it feels like it will never end. However, whatever length of time that we do suffer, it pales in comparison with eternity, which is why Paul says that our suffering "is but for a moment" (4:17). By contrast, the reward we receive is eternal glory, which is "far more exceeding" than our suffering (4:17). Why? Because: 1) It never ends, and 2) There is a snowball effect. In eternity, God's love comes through us, as Christ lives in us, bringing glory to God. The more we suffer now, the more Christ is strong through us (12:9-10), which means we will be better prepared to live by the Spirit in heaven. The better our preparation, the higher our position in heavenly places (Colossians 1:18-24). The higher our position, the more glory we bring to God.

The currency of heaven is love. Some of the characteristics of love are that it suffers long, bears all things, and endures all things (I Corinthians 13:4,7). If we are used to suffering for godly living, then we are used to God's love coming through us, which means there will be more of God's love coming through us in eternity, which brings more glory to God.

Therefore, if I have God's love come through me as I suffer for godly living, more of God's love will come through me for all eternity, which would be the snowball effect. Also, John 13:35 says that all men shall know that we are Jesus' disciples, if we have love one to another. Therefore, when God's love comes through us to others, people have the opportunity to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). These people end up getting other people saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth, and the new people do the same thing. As time goes on, more people become alive in Christ and allow God's love to come through them as the result of my initial decision to allow Christ to live in me. Thus, the snowball effect also works here. Therefore, the eternal weight of glory from suffering is seen in that: 1) Christ lives in me to a greater extent, and 2) Christ lives in others as a result of Christ living in me.

Romans 8:18 says something similar to 4:17 by saying, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). The suffering is that our spirits, alive in Christ, try to serve Christ, but we are impeded by our flesh. The more that we attempt to live by the spirit, the more we suffer, because "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). This is why

II Timothy 3:12 says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Therefore, we need to understand that the suffering, that works the eternal weight of glory, is suffering for godly living. It is suffering for trying to live by the Spirit but ending up doing the lusts of the flesh instead, or suffering from Churchianity or others, who are following the god of this world (4:4), while we are walking in the Spirit. There can also be suffering for making stupid decisions, such as getting drunk, and suffering from living in a sin-cursed world, such as getting cancer. However, it is only the suffering for walking in the Spirit that works an eternal weight of glory. This is seen in the context that we are “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (4:10).

However, most people, including Christians, look at things from a fleshly perspective, rather than a spiritual perspective. The only way we will take the spiritual perspective is if “we look...at the things which are not seen,” because they “are eternal,” while the things of this life are seen, but are temporal (4:18). We do this through the eyes of faith (5:7). “Faith is the SUBSTANCE of THINGS hoped for, the EVIDENCE of THINGS not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Churchianity describes faith as something that does not make sense; we just have faith that it is true. However, faith is substance and evidence, which means that it does make sense.

Romans 12:1 says that presenting our bodies as living sacrifices unto God is “your REASONABLE service.” In other words, it is service based on reason. If I am looking at the things of this world, it does not make sense to present my body a living sacrifice, because I will suffer for doing so. Churchianity walks by sight, which is why faith does not make sense to them, such that they have redefined what faith means. However, faith is substance and evidence of the eternal things of God in heaven. This is why it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). If we set our “affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2), then we will see that the eternal things of God are what is valuable, because these are the only things that will survive this life. When my wife went to be with the Lord, she could not take her clothes, her car, and other worldly possessions with her, but she did take the Spirit of God and the things of God with her and is rewarded eternally for those things. Just like you should not buy a cheap item at the dollar store, thinking that it will last forever, you should also not follow the riches of this world over the riches of heaven, thinking that the things of this world are what is important. If our affection is upon heaven, we will consider whatever trials and sufferings we face on this earth as “light affliction, which is but for a moment” (4:17).

Only with this eternal perspective do we serve Christ and bring glory to God. Satan’s main device is to get believers to focus on the things of this world, then we do not have God’s love coming through us, and God is not glorified. This is why the health-and-wealth gospel and the idea that suffering is God’s chastisement of us for our sin are prevalent in Churchianity today. When we focus on asking God to give us health and wealth and for God to get rid of our suffering, then we are

focused on the things of this world. Since all Christians sin after they are saved, a perspective of our suffering being God's chastisement for sin gets us to focus on us doing better in the flesh, rather than recognizing that we are dead and Christ is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). We then frustrate the grace of God's work in our lives (Galatians 2:21), and no glory is the result. Therefore, while Churchianity believes that they are serving God by getting on a spiritual treadmill, the reality is that Christ has already done the work for them. They just need to glory in the cross of Christ, rather than in their own flesh (Galatians 6:14).

When they do not rely upon the finished work of Christ, Christ is become of no effect unto them, and they have fallen from God's grace working in their lives (Galatians 5:4). This is why it is so important to stop focusing on this world and to focus on the eternal things of the Spirit that we have in Christ instead. Hebrews 12:2 says, "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." We are to let this mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). This mind is to set our affection on the eternal things of heaven (4:17-18).

II Corinthians 5 – Death's Door to Heaven's Joys

5 As much as we may like our physical bodies, they do not even compare with how glorious our eternal bodies will be in heaven (v. 1). We end up groaning in our bodies due to the sin that we do (v. 2,4). We should not fear death, because we know we will have life in heaven, as evidenced by the life of the Spirit that we have now as a down payment on our new bodies (v. 5). Knowing this, we labour in God's Word to learn sound doctrine in order to get a greater reward, thereby bringing greater glory to God, and leading others to heaven (vs. 9-11). When we do this, the love of Christ comes through us to a greater extent, and we look at people based upon who they are spiritually, rather than what they look like in the flesh (vs. 14-16). What is important is believing the gospel so that people can be part of the new creature, which is the body of Christ (v. 17). When we became part of His body, Christ gave us the job to reconcile people to God as ambassadors of Christ (vs. 18-20). Christ took our sin upon Himself that we might receive God's righteousness (v. 21), and so we want to share that good news with others so that they also might receive God's righteousness imputed to them as they trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin.

5:1 This verse starts with "for," which tells us that we should not be concerned with our outward man perishing (4:16) or with bearing the dying of the Lord Jesus in our body (4:10-11). Why not? After all, things that happen to our physical bodies are a very big deal to almost everyone, because "no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephesians 5:29). The reason is because, when we leave this earth, we have an eternal building of God in which our soul and spirit will reside.

5:1 starts with "For we know." Most everyone is afraid of dying, because they do not know what will happen when they die. This includes most Christians. They

THINK they will go to heaven, but they are scared because they do not know. Yet, Paul says, “for we know.” How can he say this? Because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and God has told him what will happen with his body when he dies. Also, Paul died in Acts 14:19 and was caught up into the third heaven, where he saw, with his own eyes, what happens when believers go to sleep in Jesus (12:2-4). He is not like the modern shyster, who lied about this in order to make a bunch of money on a best-selling book. We know that Paul actually went to heaven, because Paul’s account is in the Word of God. When we read and believe what Paul wrote down, we have faith in what God has said (Romans 10:17). This faith is “substance” and “evidence” of the things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Therefore, we are not like most people who think they will go to heaven or wish that there even is a heaven, but “we KNOW” that, when we do go to heaven, we have an eternal building of God eternal in the heavens (5:1).

This is how Jesus made it through His trials. Jesus is “the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). He knew, with 100% certainty, that He would bring many sons unto glory through the cross (Hebrews 2:10), and that He would have the joy of sharing God’s love throughout God’s kingdom as the one sitting on the right hand of God’s throne. Therefore, “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). We can have this same mind in us as was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5), but only if we, by faith, KNOW the eternal joys waiting us in our heavenly house. (This is not a mansion, as we think of one on the earth (John 14:2), but it is a “house” for our soul and our spirit to reside in.)

Note the language of 5:1-4. Verses 1 and 4 call our body “this tabernacle,” while verses 1 and 2 call our eternal body a “house.” Your body is the house for your soul. “Tabernacle” means it is temporary, because it only lasts on this earth. The dictionary definition of a tabernacle is: “A fixed or movable habitation, typically of light construction.” The dictionary definition of a house is: “A building for human habitation.” In other words, by using “tabernacle” for the earth and “house” for the heaven, Paul is showing us that our earthly bodies are temporal, while our heavenly bodies are eternal (4:18).

Understanding the difference between God’s tabernacle and God’s house may help us understand the difference between our earthly tabernacle and our heavenly house.

God had Israel build a tabernacle for Him to dwell in, while Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Exodus 33:7 says, “And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.” Numbers 1:51 says, “And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.” This tells us that God’s tabernacle was moved from place to place, whenever Israel moved. It was pitched

outside the camp and anyone coming near it, except for the Levites, were to be killed. Why? Because Israel was in unbelief, which made them unholy. If a holy God comes in contact with unholy man, the man has to be killed to protect God's holiness. Today, believers are the temple of God (6:16). Therefore, God is protected from unholy man by our holy bodies (Christ makes us holy (Colossians 2:10-14, 3:12). We will go into more detail on this later.) But, we see that God dwelt in a tabernacle or tent that could be moved from one place to another.

Hundreds of years later, God was still dwelling in a tabernacle. David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). David said, "I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (II Samuel 7:2). Therefore, David decided to build a house for God to dwell in. God objected to this. He told David that He did not want him to build Him a house (II Samuel 7:5-7). Instead, "Thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels..., He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom for ever" (II Samuel 7:12-13).

Churchianity assumes this promise is fulfilled with Solomon. While Solomon did build God a house, God did not "stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." Even Solomon himself, when he gave the dedicatory prayer for the temple, acknowledged that God would not dwell in his temple. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (I Kings 8:27). Furthermore, the Lord said "The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?" (Isaiah 66:1). The Lord said this in Isaiah, a few hundred years AFTER Solomon built the temple.

The Lord further says that the man, who will build His temple, is the one "that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). Zechariah 6:12-13 says, "Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." The BRANCH ends up being the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, God's promise, that the seed of David will build God's house and God will establish His throne for ever, is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible refers to Jesus as "the son of David" (Matthew 1:1). Jesus is the son who builds God's house.

The Lord Jesus Christ also builds the building that we are part of as members of the body of Christ. The moment that we recognize our sin and trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins, our individual bodies become the temple of the living God (6:16). A holy God cannot dwell inside unholy man. However, because Christ became "sin for us," Christ has now made us "the righteousness of God in Him" (5:21). Therefore, our bodies become the temple of the living God. So, the earth and the heaven cannot contain God, yet our bodies, which are very small compared with the earth and the heaven, can contain God. This shows that God's dwelling place has to do with quality, rather than size.

In addition to God living inside us individually, God also lives inside us corporately. Ephesians 2:19-22 says that we are of the household of God, and that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. As we learn and apply more sound doctrine, we “groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,” and we “are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” And so God dwells in the body of Christ in heaven (Ephesians 1:3). God also dwells in the bride of Christ, which is believing Israel, on earth for all eternity (Revelation 5:10, 21:2-3).

In summary, the Lord Jesus Christ builds the temple of God, which is the body of Christ in heaven and the bride of Christ on the earth. God dwells within believers in heaven and on earth, because God is a Spirit (John 4:24), which is why He did not want David to build Him an house of cedar, as God needs a house that is a body, not one that is of wood. Then, Colossians 3:3 says that our lives are “hid with Christ in God.” So, the moment we believe the gospel, we are placed into Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). God then dwells within us because we are holy, having our lives hid with Christ in God. The more sound doctrine we get in the inner man, the better the building is for God to dwell in. Thus, God’s house is one that is fit for a spirit to live in, not a body to live in. When God made heaven and earth, He saw that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). However, when He is done building His temple in heaven with the body of Christ and in earth with the bride of Christ, His creation will finally be “beautiful” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Getting back to our bodies, God has built us a spiritual building that is fit for a holy God to dwell in. This is our glorified bodies that will last forever. Right now, we have vile flesh, and we will receive our glorified bodies at the rapture (Philippians 3:21). There are at least two reasons why we have to wait until then: 1) “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (4:7), and 2) The more light affliction” we go through for Christ, the more glorious our bodies will be. Therefore, we must wait until all fruit of Christ in us has reached its full maturity before we receive our glorified bodies.

Note that 5:1 says that our earthly house will be “dissolved.” You dissolve a solid by incorporating it into a liquid in order to become a solution. For example, I can dissolve coffee grounds into water to create coffee. The better the quality of the coffee grounds, the better the coffee will taste.

Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” “(But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:38-39). Paul tells us that the end result of going through trials is that “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). Therefore, in spiritual terms, the formula is faith in God’s Word and trials + the Holy Ghost = the love of God, much like the physical formula of coffee grounds + water = coffee.

The quality of a cup of coffee depends, for the most part, on the coffee grounds that are put into it, because the water is the constant. Similarly, the depth of God's love coming through you to bring glory to God in eternity depends on how much sound doctrine you have built up in the inner man. Romans 5:2 says that we have access by the faith of Christ into the grace that we stand in. Romans 10:17 says that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore, the more we read and believe God's Word, the more faith we have. The more faith we have, the more we operate in grace. The more we operate in grace, the more the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. The more the love of God coming through us, the better the quality of our glorified bodies because they will bring more glory to God in heavenly places because we are more qualified to do so. Just like the chief financial officer brings more glory to a company than a file clerk, due to his greater education and experience that is more beneficial to the company, so too, the more sound doctrine we have built up in our inner man, the more glory we will bring to God for all eternity due to our greater education and experience in the things of God.

5:2 The reason we are "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (5:2) is because of the struggles in our vile flesh (Philippians 3:21). "The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). As a result, I do the things that I hate, and I do not do the things that I want to do (Romans 7:15), because no good thing dwells in my flesh (Romans 7:18). The result is that I groan within myself, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). In other words, I have a body that is spiritually paralyzed. It cannot do the things of God. Now, I can present my body as a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1) and Christ can live sound doctrine through my body, in spite of my body's failings. However, none of us do this perfectly. To the extent that I sin and do not do God's will in my body, it groans waiting to receive the glorified body. This is why Paul says that "to depart, and to be with Christ...is far better" than remaining in this sinful flesh (Philippians 1:23), even though we do not receive our glorified bodies until the rapture (Philippians 3:21). We can only imagine, then, how wonderful it will be to be clothed with our house from heaven (5:2)!

When we do receive our glorified bodies, they will probably look like rainbows. Genesis 5:1 says that Adam was created "in the likeness of God." Psalm 104:1-2 says that the Lord is "clothed with honour and majesty" and that He covers Himself "with light as with a garment." In Revelation 4:3, we see a rainbow around God's throne. In Revelation 10:1, we see a rainbow around the head of a mighty angel.

A rainbow occurs when light reflects off of water. John 1:9 says that Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." When we believe the gospel, Ephesians 5:8 says, "Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." As stated before, Jesus says that believers will have rivers of living water coming from their bellies, and this living water is the Holy Ghost (John 7:38-39). Since we are children of light and will have rivers of living water coming from our bellies, it makes sense that the clothing of light that we have will be a rainbow.

We also see that “the Lamb’s wife” (believing Israel) has “the glory of God.” “Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (Revelation 21:9-11). Her wall is “of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass” (Revelation 21:18). The foundations of the wall have 12 precious stones: Jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst (Revelation 21:19-20). Her gates are of pearl, and her streets are of “pure gold, as it were transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21). All of these things indicate beautiful reflections of light in all the colors of the rainbow.

In Ezekiel 28:13, we see that Satan had a rainbow coat. He was clothed with 10 precious stones: Sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, carbuncle, and gold. Thus, Satan the cherub, has transformed himself into an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). It is no coincidence that sodomites have done the same thing by taking on the rainbow as their symbol. Romans 1:26-28 shows that sodomy is the last step in the downward spiral of sin before man is so depraved that God gives him over to a reprobate mind because he will never believe the gospel. And, why should they? After all, Satan came up with his own rainbow coat, and these sodomites proudly display their rainbow garb in clear defiance of God, Who will give a true rainbow covering to all believers in the ages to come. By clothing sodomites in a rainbow, Satan is thumbing his nose at God and saying, “You don’t need God’s rainbow covering in eternity. Here is one for you that everyone can see right now!”

Another thing to note is that God’s rainbow has seven colors, while the sodomite’s rainbow has six colors. Seven is God’s number, while six is the number of man. The reason for only six colors by the sodomites is because the seventh color is invisible, representing the invisible God, Who does not dwell in them, since they have not believed the gospel. (The seventh color is indigo which is 75% blue and 25% purple. It is invisible because it sits between blue and purple and is a combination of both. Indigo also represents mystery, showing that God’s judgments are unsearchable, “and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33).)

I Corinthians 3:12-15 says that, at the judgment seat of Christ, our work is tried by the fire. If it is gold, silver, precious stones, it will survive the fire. If it is wood, hay, stubble, it will be burned up. Therefore, when our earthly bodies are dissolved to create our heavenly bodies, what is left will show how much glory we receive. Satan had a coat of many colors that was comprised of precious stones, and so we will probably have one, as well, especially since God clothes Himself in light (Psalm 104:2) and Adam was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Thus, our glorified bodies will probably be clothed in a rainbow. This will be the heavenly glory of our new, spiritual bodies (I Corinthians 15:40-44). The more we suffer for letting Christ live in us, the more the “eternal weight of glory” of our clothing of light in heaven (4:17-18). (In Revelation 21:11, Israel is described as “having the glory of God” with “her light...like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”)

Now, we have seen a mighty angel with a rainbow upon his head and that God and all believers have a clothing of rainbow light in eternity. So, why is it that God placed the rainbow in heaven? John 1:51 says, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Hebrews 1:14 says that angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." I Corinthians 6:3 says that "we shall judge angels." The body of Christ (Gentiles) is in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), and the bride of Christ (Jews) is on the earth (Revelation 5:10). Therefore, both the body and the bride will be sending angels to do the Lord's work in heaven and on the earth. Jesus is the head of the body, and He will be on the earth, on the throne in Mount Zion (Psalm 48:1-2). Therefore, the space between the heaven and the earth can be seen as the Lord Jesus Christ's neck. Since we have glorified bodies with a rainbow covering, there will be a perpetual rainbow in the sky, going from the Lord's throne on the earth to the body of Christ in heaven to connect us with the Lord. This is why God put a rainbow in the sky.

Note that Jacob saw this rainbow. In Genesis 28:12, Jacob saw "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." By progressive revelation, we learn, in John 1:51, that this "ladder" is actually the neck of the Son of man (Jesus). In Genesis 37:3, Israel (Jacob) makes his son, Joseph, "a coat of many colours." This was a point of jealousy with his brothers in that they later capture him and "stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him" (Genesis 37:23). Why did Israel make a coat of many colours for his son, and why were his brothers jealous of his coat? Probably because the "ladder" or neck of Jesus, that Jacob saw, looked like a rainbow, and so Israel made Joseph a coat like it. Joseph is the most complete type of the Lord Jesus Christ found in the Bible, and this coat adds to that list, if I am correct in saying that the glorified body looks like a rainbow.

5:3 Before Adam sinned, he was naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25) because he had a clothing of light. (Adam was made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and God has a clothing of light (Psalm 104:2).) After he sinned, he was naked and ashamed, and so he tried to cover up his nakedness by sewing fig leaves together to make aprons (Genesis 3:7-11). Man's clothing is not sufficient to cover man's sin, because blood must be shed before there is remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). Therefore, the Lord God made "coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

Since there is no remission of sins in hell and man's clothing would burn up, those in hell probably do not have any clothing, neither do they have a way to try to make their bodies look good. Therefore, the shame of their nakedness appears (Revelation 3:17-18). Their bodies also degenerate down to a worm (Psalm 22:6; Mark 9:44,46,48), which makes them "an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

For believers, our bodies go to sleep when we die (John 11:11-14). Our souls and our spirits go to be with the Lord, and so we are "absent from the body" (5:8). Our bodies are changed from vile flesh to glorified flesh at the rapture (Philippians 3:20-21). So, what happens in the meantime when we are in heaven before the rapture? Surely, we would not be naked.

The probable answer is that God gives us white robes to wear until the time when we receive our glorified bodies. Revelation 6:9-11 says that believers, who are slain in the tribulation period, are given white robes, and they rest until Jesus' second coming. In Revelation 7:9, believing Israel is seen at Jesus' second coming "clothed with white robes." Granted, the body of Christ is different from believing Israel, but it makes sense that after we die and before we receive our glorified bodies at the rapture, we would also have white robes over our souls and spirits. If you think of your clothing, a robe is used as a temporary covering, and so it makes sense that God would also use white robes as a temporary covering until we receive our glorified bodies.

5:4 We groan because we are burdened by our vile flesh. Romans 7:15 sums this up nicely for us: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." My flesh is vile (Philippians 3:21). No good thing dwells in my flesh (Romans 7:18). So, when I try to use my flesh to serve God, I end up sinning. My spirit is "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11), but "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). This results in us, "which have the firstfruits of the Spirit..., [groaning] within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). The Spirit of Christ within us cries "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15), or "Dear, Father," but our flesh cries, "Give me some lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). To the extent that we allow the flesh to win over the Spirit, we groan in this tabernacle, being burdened (5:4).

Our groaning is not to be unclothed, because our soul and our spirit were made to have the container of the flesh to reside in. Rather, we groan for a better container, i.e., "that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (5:4). When we die, my guess is that our fleshly bodies go to a storage area until the rapture of the body of Christ. This is when Christ changes our flesh so "that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). (This concept of our fleshly bodies going to a storage area is hard to understand, because we do not see this. We either have our bodies cremated, or we embalm bodies to preserve them until after the funeral when we bury them in the ground in a casket. So, the bodies do not disappear, yet the bodies must go somewhere, even though we do not see this happen, or else how can Christ change our vile bodies into glorified bodies? Think of Paul. He has been dead for almost 2,000 years. His body has returned to the dust (Genesis 3:19), yet Christ will resurrect his body somehow. Therefore, his real body must still exist somewhere. This explains why Michael the archangel had a dispute with the devil over Moses' body (Jude 9).) "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." When this happens, "death is swallowed up in victory" (15:54). In other words, I will always do what God wants me to do, once I have my glorified body, because the law of sin and death of my vile flesh will have been soundly defeated by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that will always work in my glorified body (Romans 8:2).

Because we do not receive our glorified bodies until the rapture, the dead in Christ rise first at the rapture (I Thessalonians 4:15-17). Those alive at the rapture simply have their vile flesh changed into glorified flesh and their flesh, soul, and spirit rise up together as a whole unit at the rapture. The dead in Christ already have their souls and spirits in heaven, and they are absent from the body. So, they come back with Christ at the rapture with white robes on their souls and spirits. Then, Christ changes their vile flesh into glorified flesh, and their flesh rises to meet their souls and spirits in the air. This is done first for the dead in Christ so that their glorified flesh joins their soul and spirit before those alive in Christ arrive.

Right now, Christ is the only one with a glorified body. This is why I Corinthians 15:23 says that Christ is “the firstfruits” of the resurrection. Acts 2:33-36 says that God the Father has made Jesus “both Lord and Christ,” and He is sitting “by the right hand of God exalted.” From this position, Christ is “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21). However, these positions in heavenly places cannot be filled with the body of Christ until we also receive our glorified bodies. Therefore, the Father must reign until the rapture (I Corinthians 15:24-28). This is why “now we see not yet all things put under” Christ (Hebrews 2:8), and Satan is still “the god of this world” (4:4).

5:5 “Wrought” means that God worked us. Basically, what God “wrought” was His life in us. “What hath God wrought!” was the first message transmitted in Morse Code. It comes from Numbers 23:23 and refers to the work that God made with Israel that no enchantment and no divination would work against Israel. In other words, because they belong to God and God is all powerful, no one can destroy them.

Similarly, God has wrought a work in us through Christ. Ephesians 1:19-20 says that we have “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He **wrought** in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” What this means is that Christ became sin for us (5:21) and defeated death and hell for us. God’s power to rule over heaven and earth was then transferred to Christ because He has eternal life because He defeated death. Therefore, “death is swallowed up in victory” with Christ (I Corinthians 15:54). This work of life’s victory over death is then given to us because we are accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6). Being made for life, then, is “the selfsame thing” that God wrought in us (5:5). Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). We receive Christ’s life when we are identified or “baptized into Jesus Christ’s” death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

The proof of this is seen in that God “hath given unto us the earnest [down payment] of the Spirit” (5:5). After all, God is holy (Isaiah 6:3). The only way we can be holy (Leviticus 20:7) is by Christ conquering sin for us. Therefore, God says that, once we have recognized our sin and trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), we are now “holy and

beloved” (Colossians 3:12) because we are now in Christ (I Corinthians 15:22). Having the Holy Spirit within us gives us the liberty to have Christ live in us (3:17).

In Genesis 2:7, we see that God made Adam and gave him life. Our bodies are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) by God, meaning that He made them with the specific purpose of having Christ live in us so that God’s life comes through us to others. Therefore, when God made heaven and earth in Genesis 1, He saw that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). But, that was just the beginning of God’s creation, because He has spent the last 6,000 years making us into His beautiful creation through which He rules both heaven and earth by all believers being in Christ (Believing Israel is Jesus’ bride and rules the earth; believing Gentiles today are Jesus’ body and rule the earth.). Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He hath made every thing beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.” When our purpose changes to ruling with Christ for all eternity in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5-6), God will give us new bodies to fit that realm (I Corinthians 15:38), just like He gave Adam a body to fit the earthly realm. Thus, Christ changes our vile bodies to be fashioned like unto His glorious body at the rapture of the body of Christ (Philippians 3:21), and that is when God’s creation will finally be beautiful.

We get an illustration of this in the book of Jeremiah. God had Jeremiah go down to the potter’s house, where a clay vessel was made. Then, the vessel became marred, and the potter made another vessel from that clay (Jeremiah 18:3-4). Similarly, God made our bodies, but they became marred from our sin. Then, the Lord Jesus Christ made a new vessel called “the new creature” (5:17), which is the body of Christ. The problem with unbelievers is that they make their own vessels, not allowing the Lord Jesus Christ to make them new in Him. They hew “out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). When we make our own creation, it is worthless because no good thing dwells in our flesh (Romans 7:18); therefore, no good thing can come from using our flesh. However, when we present our bodies as living sacrifices to God by allowing Him to transform us by the renewing of our minds in God’s Word rightly divided (Romans 12:1-2), the excellency of the power is of God, not of us (II Corinthians 4:7), as He builds our glorified, heavenly tabernacle.

Remember that we have “the earnest of the Spirit” (5:5). When you put earnest money or a down payment on a house, the house is now yours and you will constantly add to it as you make more payments. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ bought us by His blood (Acts 20:28), giving us the earnest of the Spirit. He is now constantly adding to that payment by sanctifying us and cleansing us “with the washing of water by the Word,” resulting in us becoming “a glorious church” (Ephesians 5:26-27). When we read and believe God’s Word rightly divided, we allow the potter to mold us more and more into the image of Christ, which is our “building of God” (5:1). When we do not, we build upon our flesh, which will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ, because it cannot survive the fire. However, the foundation of Jesus Christ will survive the fire. Therefore, our souls are saved,

even if we lose our reward by not letting Christ continue the work He began in us (I Corinthians 3:9-15).

5:6 5:1 says, “We know,” 5:6 says, “We are always confident,” and 5:8 says, “We are confident.” This shows that there is no doubt that we will forever be with the Lord once we die. How do we know for sure? First, this verse tells us that “we are always confident” because God has given us the earnest of the Spirit. We can see God’s Spirit working in our lives, crying “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15-16), and the Holy Ghost teaching us God’s Word as we read and believe it (I Corinthians 2:10-14). This change tells us that we are part of the new creature (5:17) wrought in Christ (5:5), which will be forever in heaven as His body.

Second, God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Therefore, when God says that we are present with the Lord when we die (5:8) and that we will forever be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:17), “we know” and “are always confident” that this is the case. Third, Paul actually saw paradise in the third heaven (12:2-4), and so we have eyewitness testimony from our apostle (Romans 11:13) that these things are true.

As long as we have our vile flesh, “we are absent from the Lord” (5:6), because sin cannot enter God’s presence. We prefer to be present with the Lord, because that means we will not sin again. However, God desires us to walk by faith, not by sight (5:7), and so God keeps us in these vile bodies so that we learn to trust in “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

5:7 Walking by faith, not by sight, is fundamental to the Christ life. This is included as a parenthetical reference because the Corinthians should already know about this. By the time Paul writes II Corinthians, he has probably already written Galatians and Romans. Both of those epistles tell them that “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11). (This is also mentioned twice in the scriptures to Israel, which they also should have (Habbakuk 2:4; Hebrews 10:38).)

2:11 says that we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. One of Satan’s main devices is to redefine Bible terms to change the truth of God into a lie, and Satan has done a good job at this when it comes to the term “faith.” Churchianity thinks faith is something that we do not understand. They may say something like, “We’ll understand it better by and by. I don’t know what that verse means, I just take it by faith that it is true.” This cannot be the definition of faith, because we cannot walk by something we do not understand. If I applied for a job as an accountant and they asked me, “What is a balance sheet?”, I had better not say, “I do not understand it. I just take it by faith that it exists.” If so, I will never get the job! The only way I can be a good accountant is if I understand accounting principles. Similarly, the only way I can walk by faith is if I understand God’s Word.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the EVIDENCE of things not seen.” If I do not understand something, then I do not have the substance and the evidence of heavenly things. Instead, I am living by fatalism and my feelings, which James 3:15 says is of the devil.

Romans 10:17 says, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” When I believe the gospel, I am given the faith of Christ as a free gift (Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). I stand in grace by faith (Romans 5:2). This grace is that the Holy Ghost teaches me the deep things of God as I read and believe God’s Word (I Corinthians 2:10-14). My “measure of faith” then grows, as I use my spiritual ears to hear the Word of God (Romans 12:3,6). I can then “walk by faith, not by sight” (5:7). However, if I listen to Satan through Churchianity, I will go to church and check my brain at the door, because all I want to do is feel God’s presence (much like concertgoers or those attending sporting events do. They are going for the good feeling.). This is why most churchgoers do not bring a Bible to church anymore. They then walk by “sight,” doing whatever their pastor tells them, rather than following God’s Word as taught to us by the Holy Ghost. Teaching is the true ministry of the Holy Ghost, not making me feel good. When we walk “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), we walk by who we are in Christ, and not by our vile flesh, i.e., we “walk by faith, not by sight.”

5:8 Because Churchianity does not walk by faith in God’s Word, they have no confidence in going to heaven. They put themselves on Churchianity’s treadmill figuring that, as long as they abide by the church’s instructions, they will make it to heaven. Since none of us can do this perfectly, they are afraid to die. Granted, they say they are going to heaven, because that is the right thing to say to maintain a fair shew in the flesh (Galatians 6:12), but they do not have the assurance of life in heaven. This shows that they stay on Churchianity’s treadmill, even in death.

However, Paul says, “we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (5:8). He is confident because the faith of Christ through God’s Word tells Paul that he has eternal life in heaven. In fact, he would rather be in heaven than to be on this earth. Not only are professing Christians afraid of dying, but they also prefer life on this earth. This is true in spite of the fact that Satan is “the god of this world” (4:4) and the Spirit of Christ within them groans, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of this flesh (Romans 8:23). This shows how much Christians love their vile bodies, even after they are saved. This is because they have not been edified by sound doctrine from Paul’s epistles. If they had been, they would know that Paul says that to be “absent from the [vile] body” “and...present with the Lord” (5:8) is “FAR better” (Philippians 1:23) than staying on this earth.

One of my most popular candid conversations on Youtube is on death being far better than life (<https://youtu.be/FFTvPpIplLU>). Unfortunately, most commentators are those who hate their lives and think that suicide will get them out of their pain, even though most are probably unsaved. What a tragedy that most people who want to die are those going to hell. They try to escape the pains of this life, not recognizing that their pains in hell will be far worse. Then, those, who profess to looking forward to heaven, actually prefer the pains of this life for as long as possible, not recognizing that the joys in heaven are far greater than any

temporary pleasure they have on this earth. This shows that Satan has most people fooled. The only ones not fooled are Bible believers.

Finally, this verse gives the deathblow (pun intended) to the false doctrine of soul sleep. Soul sleep is the idea that our souls stay with our bodies in the grave. They say that our souls fall asleep until the rapture takes place, which is when we finally go to heaven. However, 5:8 clearly teaches that, when we die, we are absent from the body and present with the Lord. Our souls are who we are. So, our souls go to heaven. Your body is just a container for your soul to be in. It is a pretty lousy container right now due to the sin nature. Therefore, when you die, it is your body that goes to sleep, not your soul. Your body is what I Thessalonians 4:14 is referring to when it says that we “sleep in Jesus.” Then, when the rapture takes place, the Lord Jesus Christ shall change (I Corinthians 15:51-52) “our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). This means that, when we die, body sleep is true, not soul sleep.

5:9 We labour to be accepted of Christ. Why? Because “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (5:10). I Corinthians 3:9-15 gives the details of this judgment seat. It says that “we are labourers together with God” (I Corinthians 3:9), as Paul also says here in 5:9. If you build sound doctrine (gold, silver, precious stones) on the foundation of Jesus Christ, you will receive a reward of a position in heavenly places. If you build false doctrine (wood, hay, stubble) upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, you will suffer a loss of your position in heavenly places, but you “shall be saved,” because your foundation is Jesus Christ and “the foundation of God standeth sure” (II Timothy 2:19). Therefore, our “labour to be accepted of Him” (5:9) is for our work to be accepted in order to receive a reward in heavenly places. It is NOT to be accepted of Him in terms of labouring for our eternal life in heaven. That work has already been completed for us by Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.

Since this is the foundation, the way our labour is accepted of Him is by glorying only in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). The way we do this is by labouring in God’s Word rightly divided, which renews our minds (Romans 12:2) to use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Then, Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4), and so our labour is accepted of Christ. Our labour is not in vain, only if it is “in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

In Philippians 3:9-14, Paul says that he wants to “be found in Him” [Christ] by living by the faith of Christ. Then, it is Christ’s righteousness that comes through him, not his own righteousness. For this to take place, he must be “made conformable unto His death” by suffering for godly living (II Timothy 3:12). So, he must get sound doctrine in his inner man and make decisions based upon that doctrine. He will then suffer because his flesh lusteth against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), and Satan is the god of this world (4:4) and has most everyone operating by his course (Ephesians 2:2). This suffering will produce patience, experience, hope, and the love of God being shed to others by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:3-5). Since sharing God’s love is what heaven is all about, his labour will be accepted of Christ. He will then have “apprehended” his work in heaven (Philippians 3:12).

This is what pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” is all about (Philippians 3:14).

5:10 Note that this verse says that we are rewarded based upon the things we do IN our bodies. Since nothing good dwells in my flesh (Romans 7:18), I need to present my body as a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1). The way we are “living sacrifices” is that we are “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). So, “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

When I read and believe God’s Word, the Holy Ghost teaches it to me (I Corinthians 2:13). Since Paul’s epistles “are the commandments of the Lord” (I Corinthians 14:37), I am letting the word of Christ dwell in me richly when I learn sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles (Colossians 3:16). I can then apply the doctrine I have learned by using the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). When I do this, “Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). When I do not do this, I walk in the flesh and sin, because “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Therefore, when I live by doctrine found in Paul’s epistles, I live by faith in God’s Word and God’s love comes through me to others. When I live by anything else, I am living in sin, because I am not living by the faith of the Son of God. If I live by faith, then God’s will is done in my body, and I receive a reward of a position in heavenly places at the judgment seat of Christ. If I live by sin, I lose my reward.

This helps us understand Romans 14:10-12, which says that “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ,” where we will give an account of ourselves to God. We will not have to explain everything we did. Rather, Christ will look at our inward motivations and burn up the things of the flesh and reward the things of the Spirit.

Since what is done IN my body is what is important, this shows us that doing or not doing God’s will is based upon heart motivation, and not upon what things appear to be like on the outside. For example, if I lie to protect my household, I am doing God’s will (God says this is good), but if I read my Bible to impress others, I have sinned (God says this is bad). This is contrary to what most people think, because “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). Since most people love “the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43), they will try to serve God in the energies of their flesh, which is an impossibility. To the world, Bible believers look like they are not serving God, because they reject many of the things that Churchianity does. But, that is okay, because the Lord Jesus Christ will give us a reward in heavenly places based upon what is done IN our bodies, not based upon the outward appearance of what we have done.

While we are on the subject of rewards in heavenly places, we should also note that there are degrees of punishment in hell. Matthew 10:15 says that cities, that rejected the gospel of the kingdom when Jesus was on earth, will have a worse

punishment in hell than Sodom and Gomorrah will have. Jesus also says something similar to this in Matthew 11:20-24. In Matthew 23:14-15, Jesus says that the Pharisees' and Sadducees' religious proteges are "twofold more the child of hell" than they are. Therefore, the more unbelievers reject the gospel and lead people astray with religion, the more their bodies are an abhorring and receive more pain (Isaiah 66:24). Note that, just like with rewards in heaven, degrees of punishment in hell are dependent upon doctrine, not actions. This is why Sodom and Gomorrah, who had incredibly wicked actions, will receive less of a punishment in hell than the cities to which the believing remnant of Israel preach the gospel during the tribulation period (Matthew 10:15).

Degrees of punishment is probably also how to distinguish between hell and the lake of fire. All unbelievers go to hell when they die. They will be resurrected at the Great White Throne Judgment, which occurs after Jesus' millennial reign. Death and hell are then cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). This leads me to believe that hell is a general place of torment. Then, at the Great White Throne Judgment, unbelievers are judged based upon their works, and they receive bodies that relate to those works. ("God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body" (I Corinthians 15:38).) They are then cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15), where they suffer varying degrees of punishment based upon their unbelief and leading others astray, i.e., their works.

Therefore, the lake of fire is the reverse of heavenly places. In heavenly places, the greater the sound doctrine we have coming through our lives, the more glorious our bodies will be. By contrast, unbelievers receive more abhorring and more painful bodies in hell based upon the degree of their apostasy.

5:11 For Israel, they are afraid of not making it into God's kingdom due to the conditional salvation of their program. This is seen in Hebrews 12:22-29, where it says that, if Israel refuses Jesus, they will have to give an account of their lives in "heavenly Jerusalem" with "an innumerable company of angels" watching with Jesus standing there with His nail-scarred hands. If they have refused the gospel, then "our God is a consuming fire," Who will consume them with eternal fire. However, because we today, the body of Christ, have justification by His blood right now (Romans 5:9), we have peace with God right now (Romans 5:1). Therefore, "we are made manifest unto God" (5:11) that we are His children, but we need to "persuade men" to believe the gospel so that they do not experience the terror of the Lord that Hebrews 12:22-29 talks about.

The dictionary definition of terror is "extreme fear." II Timothy 1:7 says that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Power is the Holy Ghost teaching us God's Word (Hebrews 4:12). God's love is seen through us as we allow Christ to do God's will in us (Romans 5:2-5). The sound mind is using the mind of Christ by applying sound doctrine to situations. Note how all three members of the Godhead are involved with us.

Love = God the Father
Sound mind = God the Son
Power = God the Holy Ghost

Furthermore, I John 4:18 says that there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. This means that fear comes from the law (Proverbs 1:7), while love comes from grace (Romans 5:1-5). Therefore, the terror of the Lord is not something that believers will experience. Only unbelievers will experience the all-consuming fire of God (Hebrews 12:29). Knowing this, “we persuade men” (5:11) to believe the gospel so that they also can have all three members of the Godhead working through them for all eternity instead.

Note also how “we are made manifest unto God,” meaning that it is clear to God that Christ is living in us. If the Corinthians are using the mind of Christ, then Paul is also “made manifest in [their] consciences.” However, because the world is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), Paul must “persuade men.” If men will take an honest look at themselves, they will recognize that they are sinners and they will be persuaded that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection is the answer to their sin. If not, they will not be persuaded.

5:12 Paul is not interested in commending himself to the Corinthians, i.e., he is not trying to gain the Corinthians’ approval. (This is at least his third, maybe his fourth letter to them.) The Corinthians have “ten thousand instructors in Christ” (I Corinthians 4:15), who teach a health-and-wealth gospel. Paul has already commended himself to them in his previous letters to them. In this letter, Paul says he does not need to commend himself to them again because they are Paul’s epistle written in Paul’s heart, “known and read of all men” (3:2). In other words, others can already see the mystery doctrine from Paul working in the lives of the Corinthians. Therefore, the Corinthians should already know that Paul is giving them the Lord Jesus Christ’s doctrine for today, as opposed to the false gospel and false doctrine of the ten thousand instructors in Christ.

Now, Paul desires to go beyond this to give the Corinthians “occasion to glory on our behalf” (5:12). What are they to glory in? The Corinthians should glory in the cross of Christ working in Paul’s life (Galatians 6:14), which is seen in the infirmities that he suffers (11:30; 4:8-11). This is important because, by glorying in suffering, the Corinthians will be focusing on the spiritual, rather than on the physical.

Note how the ten thousand instructors in Christ “glory in appearance.” They show their physical wealth, but physical wealth matters nothing in the heart. Therefore, what Paul is doing, in writing this epistle to the Corinthians, is that he is focusing on suffering, which leads to God getting the glory in these earthen vessels. Paul’s prayer is that this will cause the Corinthians to shift their focus to the spiritual, and not follow the health-and-wealth gospel of those false instructors in Christ. In other words, the way the Corinthians answer the health-and-wealth gospel people is by suffering for Christ and rejoicing in it. People then see Christ’s love coming through them. This is how people know that they are believers (John 13:35).

Look at the Antichrist in contrast to the believing remnant of Israel in the tribulation period. The Antichrist will be doing signs and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:9). The little flock will also be doing signs and wonders (Mark 16:17-18). The Antichrist offers riches (Revelation 18:3,15,17,19), while the little flock is poor and cannot even buy food since they will not take the mark of the beast (Luke 6:20; Romans 15:26; James 2:5). So, why will the lost sheep of the house of Israel believe the little flock and not the Antichrist's forces? Because they will see Christ' love come through them, which comes about through suffering (Romans 5:1-5).

Similarly, Paul wants the Corinthians to ratchet up the game, to get the Corinthians to focus on the spiritual, rather than the physical. Then, those, looking for the truth, will come to the Corinthians, rather than the health-and-wealth people, because they see God's love come through them in their suffering. Thus, the Corinthians are better ambassadors for Christ, which is where Paul is trying to get them to (5:20).

5:13 The question is: What will the Corinthians think of Paul and Timothy? If they use the mind of Christ, it will make perfect sense to them that suffering is how Christ is manifest in Paul and Timothy. In this case, the Corinthians will think that they are sober, and it will help the Corinthians have Christ live in them. Alternatively, the Corinthians may use their fleshly mind and determine that Paul and Timothy are beside themselves, i.e., they are crazy. If they do that, Paul is okay with that, because Christ in them is still made manifest to God, and they may persuade men to believe the gospel and be saved (5:11). Therefore, there is spiritual benefit for Paul and others through his suffering, even if the Corinthians focus on the flesh and do not accept the profit for themselves. This is why Paul said, in 2:14, that God "always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

Paul says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). With regard to Christ, Mark 3:21 says that, when Jesus' "friends" heard how Jesus had picked 12 disciples and that multitudes of people were following Him, "they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself." Ten verses later, Jesus' mother and half-brothers find Him, and Jesus refuses to acknowledge them as His family, because they are not doing God's will (Mark 3:31-35). It is obvious, then, that the "beloved virgin Mary" believed, at this time, that her own Son was crazy. Why? Because He taught the commandments of God, rather than the Jewish traditions (Mark 7:9). Here, in II Corinthians 5:13, Paul says that some people will also think that he is beside himself.

Since we are to follow Paul as he followed Christ, we should not be surprised when professing Christians call us crazy, like they did to Christ and to Paul. I stay at home and teach Bible studies, and I am called a heretic because I do not attend a church. I teach what God's Word says rightly divided, daring to reject what denominational pastors teach. Who am I to question these cemetery (seminary) graduates? Therefore, many consider me to be part of a cult. And, what if you watch my Bible studies and read my books? You certainly are considered crazy

also, since you are listening to a guy in his living room, not wearing a suit or even a tie, not ordained by any denomination, and having been expelled from a Bible college in fundamental Churchianity. They considered Jesus and Paul to be crazy because they believed God's Word over man's traditions. The same will happen to you, if you make the Bible your final authority, rejecting man's traditions. But, this is okay, because "we are made manifest unto God" (5:11) that we are following God's will, even if fundamental Churchianity thinks we are bonkers.

5:14 The love of Christ was commended to Paul through Jesus' death (Romans 5:8). When Paul stands in grace, then he rejoices in the things of God, rather than in the things of this world. When he does this, he bears about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (4:10), and the love of God is shed to others by the Holy Ghost coming through him (Romans 5:2-5).

Those operating in the love of Christ, then, operate by the constraint to "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (5:14). Unbelievers are told, in Matthew 7:1-2 not to judge. If they do, God will judge them by their judgment. Why? Because they are dead in their trespasses and sins, and so God will judge them by their works, rather than by Christ's works, because Christ's death for their sin has not been imputed unto them. However, believers are spiritual, meaning that their spirits are alive in Christ, and so they can judge all things and no unbelieving man can judge them, because believers have the mind of Christ, while unbelievers only have their fleshly minds (I Corinthians 2:14-16).

The reason, that believers can judge while unbelievers cannot judge, is that believers have the spiritual insight that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Unbelievers, on the other hand, think that they are okay with God apart from Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, which means they have not accepted God's love (Romans 5:8), because they do not believe they need it. Therefore, a believer has the constraint of the love of Christ which says that, if Christ died for me, then He died for everyone, because all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Therefore, we must conclude that, if Christ died for all, then were all dead.

Bible believers judge by love; unbelievers judge by self-righteousness.

5:15 Hebrews 9:27-28 says that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Colossians 3:3 says, "Ye are dead." Why? Because the moment we recognize our sin and trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin, Romans 6:3 says that we are baptized or identified with Jesus Christ's death. Since we are "buried with Him in baptism," we are dead. Since we are dead, we have been judged to have eternal life, based upon Hebrews 9:27-28. This is how we are also "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God" (Colossians 2:12). We can, then, judge because we have eternal life in Christ, while unbelievers cannot judge because they are spiritually dead in their sins.

Since Christ died to give us life, we “should not henceforth live unto” ourselves. Rather, we should live unto Christ. Since He bought us with His blood (Acts 20:28), we should yield our bodies as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1), glorifying God in our bodies and in our spirits (I Corinthians 6:20).

5:16 Now, Paul comes to his conclusion. To summarize, since we have believed the gospel, we have received God’s love. When we present our bodies as living sacrifices, Christ lives in us by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). This results in the love of Christ coming through us to others. The love of Christ resulted in Him dying for all, which means all were dead. Now that we are alive in Christ, we can judge like Christ did, that man’s flesh is no good (Romans 7:18). (A great example of Christ judging thusly is found in John 2:23-25, which says, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for **He knew what was in man.**” In other words, Christ did not commit Himself to men, because He saw they gave a fleshly response to His miracles, not a spiritual one.) This means that we also should not judge man after the flesh. Instead, we should judge according to man’s spiritual condition.

If someone has believed the gospel, he is in Christ and has life. If someone has not believed the gospel, he is in Adam and is dead in his trespasses and sins. (“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:22).) Therefore, when the Corinthians see the ten thousand instructors in Christ prospering physically, they should see that they are not serving Christ, and so they should not follow them. When the Corinthians see Paul suffering physically, they should see that he is serving Christ, and so they should follow him (I Corinthians 4:15-16). This is the opposite of how man looks at things, which is why only spiritual men have the right to judge, because only they will “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Note that the word “henceforth” is used, both in verse 15 and in verse 16. This shows the transformation of our minds that should take place once we are saved (Romans 12:2). First, we should stop living according to the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16) and let Christ’s love come through us. Second, we should no longer judge others based upon their flesh. What this means is that we should not look at homosexuals, alcoholics, or any other sinners and try to reform them. Churchianity is guilty of doing this. They look at an alcoholic and say that he needs to change his life around. Then, they get the person involved in the church, and he credits God with the victory over alcoholism. Meanwhile, his soul is still going to hell, because he is still dead in his trespasses and sins. This shows that **Churchianity has not learned the lesson of 5:14-16.** This lesson is that we should not be criticizing sinners for their specific sins, because all they can do is sin. Trying to reform them does not do any good, because they are still sinners. Instead, we should look at all unbelievers exactly the same, regardless of what sins they are or are not doing. We should see them as dead and bound for hell. Similarly, we should judge all believers as people who have eternal life and are going to heaven, regardless of if they go to church, do

good deeds, read their Bibles, and allow Christ to live in them or they live just like the world does. We judge “NO MAN after the flesh,” not the sinner or the saint.

Also, note that there is a third “henceforth” in verses 15-16. This third one pertains to Christ. Paul says that we do not even know Christ after the flesh any more. What does this mean? This means that we should look at Christ’s spirit, rather than His flesh. Churchianity looks at Jesus’ miracles and then says that God will do miracles through us, too. Instead, we should look at Jesus spiritually by looking at Christ’s suffering and saying that we desire to have these same afflictions in our bodies so that we may know “the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11). In other words, the only way Christ can live in us is by suffering for godly living (I Timothy 3:12). This is no longer knowing Christ after the flesh. Yet, because Churchianity judges by the flesh, they ignore the sufferings for sound doctrine that we should do and instead focus on the miracles and the things that please the flesh. Paul is telling us that, once we are saved, we should judge ALL people according to the spirit. We do not even judge Christ according to the flesh, even though He lived perfectly in the flesh, because Jesus was only concerned with the spiritual, as we should be. How sad that, by looking at Jesus’ miracles, Churchianity does not fully appreciate His death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins. This is probably why all denominations teach a works-based salvation, at least to some extent.

With regard to Christ, another way to look at this is to say that looking at Christ after the flesh is looking at Him in the red letters, while looking at Him in the spirit equals Christ in heaven. After all, “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision,” and that was a physical, fleshly covenant that God made with Israel with the Mosaic law (Romans 15:8). Paul is “the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles..., being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:16), which is “the circumcision made without hands” (Colossians 2:11) or the spiritual covenant that God made with the body of Christ today. Christ was on earth when He ministered to the circumcision. Christ is in heaven when He ministers to the Gentiles. Thus, we look at Christ in the spirit in Paul’s epistles (Romans – Philemon), “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery” (Romans 16:25), rather than looking at Jesus Christ in the flesh in the red letters of Matthew – John.

5:17 Note that this verse says that, if you are in Christ, you are a new creature. Modern translations say you are a new creation. What is the difference? A new creation means that God has taken your old self and made you into something new. This goes along with Churchianity’s false doctrine that, once we are saved, we can somehow serve Christ in our flesh. They like to say, “Christ died for me; I will live for Him.” However, even after you are saved, your flesh is still vile (Philippians 3:21), and no good thing dwells in your flesh (Romans 7:18). (Thus, the modern versions contradict Romans 7:18, here, by saying “new creation” to say that your flesh is good, now that you are saved.) The King James Bible says you are a new creature. I Corinthians 12:27 says, “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

When the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, he said, “That holy THING which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). We know that Jesus was a person, not a thing. However, God was referring to the holy THING of the new creature that would come from Christ. Believers today are part of the body of Christ. Believers in Israel’s program are part of the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9-10), The bride is one flesh with her husband (Genesis 2:24). This means that, regardless of what dispensation you live in, in eternity, all believers are part of the “new creature,” which is Christ. Therefore, when you see that we are a “new creature” (5:17) in Christ, rather than being a new creation, the focus is on Christ, rather than on our flesh. This is a big reason why you need a King James Bible. (ESV, HCSB, NASB, NIV, NKJV, RSV, and Voice all say “new creation”).

The “old things,” that are past away, are the things of the flesh. This is because “our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Romans 6:6). Then, “ALL things are become new” (5:17). Why? Because Christ has given us life, and so all things are now of the spirit. Just after Colossians 3:3 says that we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God, verse 5 tells us to mortify or put to death our members upon the earth. Verse 8 says to put off the things of the flesh. Verse 10 says we have put on the new man. The new man is Christ. Verse 12 tells us to put on mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. Therefore, “all things are become new” (5:17) means that, when we stop looking at things according to the flesh, God’s Spirit is able to work the life of Christ through our mortal flesh (4:11). This means that Christ lives in us, and we do not sin.

However, when Churchianity looks at things according to the flesh, they put us under the law, we do not live by faith (Romans 4:4-5,15), and we live like a bunch of heathen unbelievers, which is the exact opposite of what we intended. (“If I build again the things which I destroyed [the law], I make myself a transgressor” (Galatians 2:18).) This is why Jeremiah 17:9 says that your flesh “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Your flesh tricks you into putting yourself under the law, thinking that this is how you serve God, when it is really how you satisfy the flesh (Colossians 2:23). So, you strive and deprive yourself of things, making yourself miserable, and you are not even serving God, while the heathen are doing the things of the flesh and having a good ole’ time. You are both doing the same thing, except the unbelievers are using their knowledge of evil to have fun, while Churchianity uses their knowledge of good to make themselves miserable. Either way, they are both in the flesh.

However, if we operate as who we are in Christ, we operate according to the “new creature” (5:17). We still obey the law, but we let the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20) obey the law through us. Our motivation is love, and “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). Therefore, we operate in the new creature, i.e., who we are in Christ, not by putting ourselves under the law but by putting ourselves under Christ, by reading and believing Paul’s epistles (Romans – Philemon), which are the commandments of the Lord to us today (I Corinthians 14:37), and by operating by the sound doctrine we learn in those epistles. For

example, you do not overcome alcohol by saying, “I won’t drink; I won’t drink; I won’t drink,” because you are focusing on the alcohol, making the temptation stronger. Instead, you focus on being sober minded by applying the doctrine you have learned (Romans 12:1-3), and then you will naturally desire to please God by not drinking. This is how “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (5:17).

5:18 “All things are of God” (5:18) does not mean that murder, drugs, pornography, and other things of the flesh are of God. Rather, Paul is referring to the “all things” of the new creature from the previous verse (5:17). This would be all spiritual things, since all things of this world are “temporal” or temporary, while all things of God are eternal (4:18).

Note that “God...HATH RECONCILED us to Himself by Jesus Christ” (5:18). Our reconciliation is in the past. It is a done deal. We have NOW been “justified by His blood” (Romans 5:9), and “we have NOW received the atonement” (Romans 5:11). Therefore, we are reconciled to God. Contrast this with Israel. They are under the Mosaic law and do not receive forgiveness of sins until Jesus’ second coming. Acts 3:19-20 says that their sins are blotted out “WHEN” God sends Jesus Christ to them. I Peter 1:7,9 says that Israel receives “the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” “at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, when Jesus sent the apostles out, He told them to teach the nations “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). Those “things” were the Mosaic law (Matthew 23:2-3).

Churchianity likes to call this “The Great Commission,” but the truth is that, today, we have the Greatest Commission. The apostles merely taught people the law, which was to be their schoolmaster so that they would learn they are sinners and trust in the gospel God gave them to be saved (Galatians 3:24). In other words, The Great Commission brings people to school, while, today, we have “the ministry of reconciliation” (5:18). We do not bring people to school, but we bring them to the graduation ceremony when we teach them to trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). We can actually reconcile people to God through the gospel. Why, then, would anyone want to go back to “The Great Commission,” when we have “The Greatest Commission” today?

5:19 The reason, that God was not imputing trespasses unto the world, was because of His foreknowledge that Christ would bear their sins. Now, this only applies to believers. Otherwise, no one before Christ would have ended up in hell, yet we see the rich man in hell in torments in Luke 16:22-24. Romans 1:18 says that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” Romans 3:21 says that “but NOW the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.” This is “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” It is offered “unto all,” but it is only “upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:22). For believers, God has set forth Jesus Christ “to be a propitiation” or fully satisfying sacrifice for our sins. God then declares “His

righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3:25).

When someone, in the Old Testament, trusted in God to save him, “God was in Christ reconciling [him] unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (5:19), knowing that Christ would bear his sins. This is why God would not impute the great sins of adultery and murder to David (Psalm 32:1-2), but He did impute to Saul the lesser sin of not utterly destroying all the animals, even though Saul did so to offer sacrifices unto the Lord (I Samuel 15:9-11). David was in Christ, and Saul was not in Christ. Since David was in Christ and “God was in Christ...not imputing [his] trespasses unto [him]” (5:19), God did not punish David for his trespasses, because Christ would bear that punishment for him. Since Saul was an unbeliever, he was not in Christ, and he had to bear the punishment for his own sins.

Another clear example of God imputing trespasses to unbelievers in the Old Testament is Korah and his gang (not to be confused with Kool & The Gang). They took the position of priests of God, when they were not qualified nor sanctified for that position. As a result, “the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation” (Numbers 16:32-33).

Therefore, Old Testament believers were in Christ. (Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us that Moses was in Christ.) Since God was in Christ, He did not input their trespasses to them. By contrast, unbelievers were not in Christ, and so their trespasses were imputed to them. This is possible because “the Lord knoweth them that are His” (II Timothy 2:19). God says, in Revelation 13:8 that “the Lamb [was] slain from the foundation of the world,” even though this did not happen in history at least 4,000 years after God made the heaven and the earth. Therefore, it should not surprise us to learn that God could withhold imputing trespasses to believers while He was “in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (5:19).

Since all those, who get into Christ by believing the gospel, do not have their sins imputed unto them, God has committed “unto us the word of reconciliation” (5:19), meaning that God has committed unto us the gospel. Since God’s righteousness is offered unto all, our job is to give the gospel of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sin to all who will listen. Note that 5:19 says that God has committed unto us “the word” of reconciliation. This shows that we are not reconciled by doing good deeds, trying not to sin, and/or following religious rules. We are reconciled to God by “the word” of the gospel. Galatians 2:16 says that we are “justified by the faith of Christ” when we believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:17 says that “faith [Christ’s faith as a free gift to us] cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” So, we give someone “the word” of reconciliation, which is the gospel. He believes the gospel. God then gives him the faith of Christ, which justifies him. No works are involved because Christ did all the work for us, as we will see in 5:21.

5:20 Having “the word of reconciliation” (5:19) makes us “ambassadors for Christ” (5:20). God’s will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, our job, as ambassadors for Christ, is to have God’s will accomplished in others’ lives. Remember 5:14-16, which says that we must judge that all were dead, since Christ died for all. Since we are all dead in our flesh, we are not to judge anyone after the flesh. This means that, when we meet someone, we need to ask ourselves, “Is he in Adam, or is he in Christ?” If he has never believed the gospel, he is in Adam, and our job is to get the gospel to him of recognizing his sin and trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for his sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). If he has already believed this gospel, then he is in Christ, and our job is to get sound doctrine built up in his inner man so that he comes unto the knowledge of the truth. (There must have been some in Corinth, who were not saved, in order for Paul to tell them, “Be ye reconciled to God” (5:20).) Note that we are “ambassadors for Christ,” not “ambassadors for XYZ Tombstone Church.” Churchianity is all about inviting people to church and wearing t-shirts that say “I Love My Church.” Shouldn’t we love Christ, the brethren, and unbelievers, rather than loving a man-made church?

Since Churchianity focuses on the flesh, they like to point the finger at sins that others are doing so that you do not notice the sins that they are doing. This is not being ambassadors for Christ. This is having a flesh contest. This is comparing and measuring themselves amongst themselves, which is not wise (10:12). Instead, we should read God’s Word, coming face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we are changed into Christ’s image over time (3:17; 4:6). Thus, we compare ourselves with Christ so that God’s Word can transform us by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), rather than looking at others to make sure we appear to be slightly better than them so that we make a fair shew in the flesh (Galatians 6:12).

Note also the words “in Christ’s stead” in 5:20. It is vitally important for us to recognize that, once we are saved, we are dead and our lives are hid with Christ in God. Then, Christ is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). We should strive to labour in the Lord, rather than being in a flesh contest. When we concentrate on our flesh, then we “frustrate the grace of God” (Galatians 2:21), putting ourselves back under the law, making ourselves transgressors (Galatians 2:18). But, when we recognize that we are dead to the law, that “Christ liveth in me,” and that we should seek to live in the flesh “by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:19-20), then Christ’s life comes through us. The result is that God’s love is seen by others so that perhaps they will be open to the gospel, if they are not saved, and sound doctrine, if they are saved.

5:21 “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin” (5:21). This is saying that God the Father made Jesus to be sin for us, because Christ knew no sin. Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death.” This is referring to “the second death” of being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). If I went to hell to pay for my own sin, I would stay in hell for ever, because I have no strength (Romans 5:6) to overcome hell, because I would be dead in my trespasses and sins

(Ephesians 2:1). However, with Jesus, John 1:4 says, “In Him was life.” The reason is because Christ “did no sin” (I Peter 2:22), and so He had no death in Him.

Therefore, God could place our sin upon Christ, and His soul could travail in fighting against sin. But, because Christ had life in Him and life conquers death, Christ was able to win the victory over death. He made the full payment of death for our sin and still had life in Him. Therefore, the justice of God was satisfied by Christ’s death, and God raised Him from the dead (Isaiah 53:10-11). Jesus now has “the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18), and He gives us His abundant, eternal life in the Father (John 10:10), when we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin.

This is how we pass from death to life and from sin to “the righteousness of God” (5:21). Note that we are the righteousness of God “in Him” (in Christ) (5:21). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:22). Once we are saved, when God looks at us, He sees Christ. (I must be “in Christ” in order to go to heaven. My works fail every time.) Ephesians 1:6 says that we are “accepted in the beloved.” “The beloved” is Christ, as seen in Matthew 3:17 when the Father said of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” The reason God was pleased with His Son, was because His Son always did and said what His Father wanted Him to do and say (John 5:30; 8:28-29). In other words, He had faith in the Father’s plan, and faith is what pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). Since we are in Christ and Christ always has faith in the Father and faith pleases God, then God is always pleased with us. Even when we sin, God is still pleased with us, because the body of sin is destroyed (Romans 6:6). So, when we sin, God says, “What sin? All I see is my beloved Son.” Praise the Lord for His unconditional gift of eternal life.

Believing the gospel = Life hid in Christ

Christ = Faith in the Father

Faith in the Father = the Father being well pleased with Christ

The Father being well pleased with Christ = God being well pleased with us

II Corinthians 6 – Approved as God’s Ministers by Shunning Religion

6 This chapter is about not receiving the grace of God in vain (v. 1). God’s grace working through us results in people being saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth. This happens when we prove ourselves as ministers of God in all things (vs. 3-5). We do this “BY” Christ living in us through His Word (vs. 6-8) “IN” the trials we face for godly living (vs. 4-5). This is a demonstration of God’s love, which separates us from the world “AS” being different (vs. 8-10).

Paul has spent a great deal of time with the Corinthians to get them to the point where they are approved as ministers of God (vs. 11-12). Now, Paul wants the Corinthians to pay him back by spending a great deal of time reading and believing God’s Word themselves (v. 13). If they do this, they will separate themselves from Satanic religion and be Bible believers instead (vs. 14-18).

6:1 We have been placed into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). This means that we are dead, and Christ is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). When we live by the sound doctrine in Paul's epistles, Christ lives in us, as we live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). This makes us "workers together with Him" (6:1). In other words, it is not us working for Christ, but it is Christ working in us. God the Father provides the Word, God the Holy Ghost teaches it to us, and Christ has the faith in the Word to apply it through us, as we present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1). We are not serving God ourselves, but our minds are renewed in Christ so that Christ does the living for God through us by His faith. This is how "we are workers together with Him" (6:1). Christ took our sin upon Himself and gave us His righteousness as a free gift (5:21). Christ then works His righteousness through our lives.

When Christ gave us His righteousness when we trusted in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), Christ did not stop there. He also gave us His life "that He might sanctify and cleanse [us] with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). When we believed the gospel, we were given the faith of Christ (Galatians 2:16). We were then taken from being under the law to being under grace (Romans 6:14). It is by the faith of Christ that "we have access [to God]...into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2), which can result in God's love coming through us to others (Romans 5:5).

When we agree to abandon our own ideas and simply trust in God's Word to us found in Paul's epistles, then we are living in grace so that God's love comes through us. However, if we decide to put ourselves back under the law, we live in the flesh and we have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:3-4). This is not to say that we lose our salvation, but it is to say that we do not operate in God's grace (Galatians 5:1-4). This is receiving the grace of God in vain (6:1).

Paul warned the Corinthians about this at the end of I Corinthians (I Corinthians 15:2). Your flesh is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). When the Corinthians first learned of their salvation, they operated in evil carnality because they knew they could not lose their salvation. This was the issue in I Corinthians. Then, when you learn that God wants you to get out of your carnality once you are saved, your deceitful flesh overcorrects by working to get you trapped in legalism. This is operating in carnality that appears to be good, because it is religious. This is what we see happening with the Galatians. We should desire to "die daily" (I Corinthians 15:31) to the flesh by not getting involved in evil things but also not getting involved in religiousity. Instead, we should seek to get our flesh out of the way and live by the faith of the Son of God as we make decisions based upon sound doctrine found in Paul's epistles. When we do this, "we receive not the grace of God in vain" (6:1).

6:2 This verse is a parenthetical reference and is a quote of Isaiah 49:8, which applies to the day of salvation for Israel. The Isaiah quote relates to the earth. Now, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we find that it also applies to us today.

When we hear about “NOW” being “the day of salvation” and “the accepted time” for Gentiles to be saved (6:2), it should remind us of a similar warning given to Israel. The author of Hebrews tells Israel to believe the gospel “while it is called To day” (Hebrews 3:13). In other words, believe while you have the chance to do so. Paul said something similar in Romans 11:21-22. There, he told of life in the Holy Ghost (the olive tree), and how Israel was part of that tree. However, because of their unbelief, they were broken off and Gentiles “wert grafted in among them” (Romans 11:17). The warning is that, “if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Romans 11:21-22). This does not mean that saved people can lose their salvation. What it does mean is that the Gentiles have a day or time of salvation, and that time is the dispensation of grace. Once the rapture of the body of Christ takes place, God’s focus will shift back to saving Israel (Romans 11:25-26). Therefore, Paul admonishes the Corinthians to work together with Christ to get people saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (6:1), while this “day of salvation” for the Gentiles is still in effect. Once the body of Christ is no longer working for Christ, we will be cut off, and Christ will resume Israel’s program.

6:3 We do not want our witness as ambassadors for Christ (5:20) to be cancelled out by not showing God’s love to others. Jesus told His disciples, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Paul warns, “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:15). Unfortunately, we see the biting and devouring one another, rather than the love of God, in Churchianity today. This is a big reason why people, who are seeking for the truth, do not turn to the church for the answer. This is sad, since “the church of the living God [is] the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15). When people can no longer find the truth, the dispensation of grace will end.

“Giving no offence” means not doing the works of the flesh as we take on the name of Christ. It does NOT refer to making sure we do not offend people with the truth. After all, the cross offends people, while the law does not (Galatians 5:11). This is why Churchianity puts people under the law, while Bible believers put people under grace (Romans 6:14), which means we only glory in the cross (Galatians 6:14), not in our performance. When we worry about not offending people with the truth, then we compromise with lies. Paul is talking about “giving no offence” in the sense that we live by God’s Word rightly divided so that people see God’s love coming through us. Then, when we speak truth, they believe it, rather than not accepting it because we offended them with our behavior not being in line with the truth.

We also need to keep in mind that, no matter how good our behavior is, people, who want to follow Satan’s lie program, will find other ways to be offended by us. Jesus is a great example of this. In Matthew 13:53-58, his own countrymen “were offended in Him” because they did not believe He could have such wisdom, being, as they supposed, “the carpenter’s son.” Then, just two chapters later, the scribes

and Pharisees were offended because He told them that “in vain they do worship [God], teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Jesus did not apologize or water down His message when He found out that the Pharisees were offended by what He just said. Rather, He said, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

Applied to us today, many people regard a man’s person over the message the person gives. So, when you give sound doctrine to Churchianity, they usually will not believe you because they think you are not “qualified” to override what their pastor and their church say. They also will not listen to you because you expose the lie program of their so-called “spiritual” leaders.

Paul is concerned with the small group of people, who are legitimately seeking out the truth. They will believe the truth when it comes from a reputable source, which would be someone through whom the love of Christ comes. It is this group of people that we should not offend by making sure that our lives are lived consistently with the gospel of Christ. Therefore, it is essential that we live out sound doctrine as “ambassadors for Christ” (5:20), so that the people, who are looking for the truth, will listen to it when we present it to them.

In addition, Paul became all things to all men so that they might be saved (I Corinthians 9:19-22). He took the opportunity to take on a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18-19), even though that is exclusively for Israel, so that unsaved Jews might listen to the gospel of grace he presents and become saved members of the body of Christ as a result. Therefore, not only should we refrain from doing works of the flesh, but we should also attempt to cater to what others think a Christian should be like so that they are more likely to listen to the gospel through us. Paul said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (I Corinthians 9:22).

Finally, we should note that, since we are all “ambassadors for Christ” (5:20), we are also all “ministers of God.” As far as God is concerned, the moment you trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sin, you are now an ordained minister of God. You are approved as ministers by the list of qualifications found in 6:4-10. What a contrast from Churchianity’s list, which I have come up with as follows:

Churchianity's Approved Minister List

"IN"	"BY"	"AS"
1. Perfect family	1. Paying tithes	1. "Good," but having secret sins
2. Great job	2. Going to church	2. "Helping" others, but leading them to hell
3. Nice house, car	3. Church member	3. "Righteous" ministers, but of the Devil
4. Physical healing	4. Life's guideposts	4. "Nice", but scamming people
5. Great health	5. Live by feelings	5. "Happy", but never joyful
	6. "Cunningly devised fables" (II Pet 1:16)	

6:4-10 In these verses, Paul shows that we are approved as ministers of God "IN" 10 things (6:4-5), "BY" 11 things (6:6-8a), and "AS" 7 things (6:8b-10). The 10 "IN" things are the trials we face for godly living (II Timothy 3:12). The first 9 "BY" things are the things we use in those trials for God's love to come through us to others. Predominately, the 9 things tie back to Christ living in us BY God's word. The last 2 "BY" things are how the body of Christ perceives us when we walk in the Spirit and they do not. The 7 "AS" things are how the unbelieving world views us versus how God views us.

6:4-5 Satan is the god of this world (4:4), and he has the world operating by his course (Ephesians 2:2). The result is that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). Therefore, we prove ourselves as the ministers of God when we suffer for living by sound doctrine. (Note that it says we approve ourselves as "THE ministers of God." In other words, those looking to be saved or to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4) know that God has salvation and truth, and so they are looking for the ministers of God to minister God to them. Bible believers are "THE" ministers of God. There is no other group that are ministers of God.) The life of Jesus is manifest in us when we bear in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus (4:7-11). This is how we approve ourselves as ministers of God in the following 10 things that Paul mentions in these two verses.

1) "Much patience": Waiting for the right time to give the gospel and sound doctrine. This is a hard one for most people. When we are first saved, we are anxious to share the gospel with loved ones. When we first learn right division, we are anxious to share this with them, as well. Then, we find out that they are not as excited about the truth as we are. Therefore, as ministers of God, we need to have the patience to wait until another person wants to know the truth before sharing it. Otherwise, they may avoid conversations with us, and so they will not give us the opportunity to share the truth with them when they are finally willing to listen.

2) “Afflictions”: Persecuted for presenting Christ to others. All of our trials are considered “light affliction” compared with the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4:17) that these afflictions produce in us. Colossians 1:24 says that, when we suffer, we “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [our] flesh for His body’s sake, which is the church.” We prove ourselves to be ministers of God by suffering afflictions for the truth. This results in the church being edified in sound doctrine, and it results in people being saved, which is why afflictions work an eternal weight of glory for us.

3) “Necessities”: Neglecting food, clothing, and shelter by putting the gospel first. Paul told the Romans that they should distribute “to the necessity of saints” (Romans 12:13). He also said that the Philippians helped him with his basic necessity (Philippians 4:16). This was true, even though Paul had the opportunity to make a bunch of money. After all, “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). If preachers today can get rich by doing fake miracles, how much more could Paul have gotten rich when God did real miracles through him! However, Paul counted “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8). Paul even took wages from other churches to help out the Corinthians (11:8), because he was afraid that he would “hinder the gospel of Christ” by taking money from them (I Corinthians 9:12). Therefore, he sometimes did not have basic food, clothing, and shelter because the spiritual was more important to him than the material was.

4) “Distresses”: serious threats to life, such as being put in prison and the potential of being killed. We should be clear that Paul was not distressed in his soul (4:8), but that he was in PHYSICAL “distresses for Christ’s sake” (12:10). Paul gave an example of this earlier in his epistle, when he mentioned of “our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves” (1:8-9). If Paul’s doctrine was of a crazy person, people would have left him alone, e.g., Acts 5:38-40. The fact, that he was persecuted and had serious threats to his life, shows that the truth of God’s Word through Paul was powerful, such that the powers of Satan wanted to put an end to Paul.

5) “Stripes”: Paul was beaten with rods at least three times, and he received 39 stripes from the Jewish religion at least five times (11:24-25). We should also note that Paul says, in II Corinthians 11:23, that he had more labours, stripes, imprisonments, and deaths than others, and the first three of these are mentioned in 6:5.

Referring to Jesus with regard to Israel, Isaiah 53:5 says, “with His stripes we are healed.” Almost every Christian quotes this as “by His stripes we are healed.” “By” means the one who made it possible. “With” means that it goes with you. Now, I Peter 2:24 does say, “By whose stripes ye were healed.” This means that Christ’s stripes brought about our healing. However, “with” is also true, as Isaiah 53:5

says, which means that Christ's stripes go with us. This is something that few Christians want. It's like the 12 year-old girl who does not want a hug from her daddy in front of her friends. They all know that it is "by" her daddy that she has clothing, food, and shelter, but she is ashamed to have him "with" her. Similarly, we know it is "by" Christ's stripes that we are healed, but our flesh is ashamed to have those stripes go with us. This is why Churchianity preaches a health-and-wealth gospel, even though II Timothy 3:12 says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

The reason that Christ's stripes go with us is that we "are the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27). When we recognize that we are crucified with Christ and we live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), then "the sufferings of Christ abound in us" (1:5). God wants us to have the treasure of Christ in us "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." By "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," "the life also of Jesus [is] made manifest in our body" (4:7,10). Therefore, Paul says, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). This leads us to Colossians 1:24, where Paul says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." In other words, when we suffer for the cause of Christ, Jesus' life is seen coming through us, and so we rejoice in these sufferings. Because God is outside of time, He saw all of the suffering of Christ for our sin placed upon Christ on the cross. Since we are Christ's body, we share in the afflictions of Christ. This is why it is "WITH His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). It is as if we were on the cross with Christ when He was crucified ("I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20).), and so His stripes go WITH us.

6) "Imprisonments": Being imprisoned for the gospel's sake shows they are ministers of God. Paul was put in prison at least three times for Christ's sake (Acts 16:23; 21:33; II Timothy 4:16-17). Paul actually sang praises to God while in prison (Acts 16:25). Therefore, Paul lived out the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ to us today to "rejoice evermore" (I Thessalonians 5:16).

The reason believers should not be surprised if they are imprisoned is that we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, while the world follows Satan (4:4) and his course (Ephesians 2:2).

7) "Tumults": Confusion created by a large group of people. Acts 19:28-34 is a good example of this. A silversmith, who made silver shrines for Diana, the queen of heaven, caused a big stir, because Paul taught people that idols were not really gods and so this man was losing business (Acts 19:24-27). This resulted in people crying for two hours: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:34). The townclerk was able to get this stopped, but Paul thought that he was going to be killed (1:8-9).

This is a great example of I Timothy 6:9-10 in action. Since Satan is the god of this world (4:4) and has people operating by his course (Ephesians 2:2). Those, who want to be rich, will invent ways to make money off of religion, which errs from the

faith. This is why I Timothy refers to this as “many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” We can expect tumults to take place when we go against established religion in favor of the truth of God’s Word.

8) “Labours”: You may think of labours as working hard at a job. However, the specific labour in view is studying God’s Word (II Timothy 2:15) and looking for opportunities to share the gospel and sound doctrine (Romans 15:16,19,23-24). Paul laboured more abundantly than the 12 apostles put together (I Corinthians 15:10). Paul is quick to point out that it was not because he worked harder, but it was because of “the grace of God which was with me” (I Corinthians 15:10).

The 12 apostles were taught by Jesus to “teach all nations” “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). This means that they were to teach the Mosaic law (Matthew 23:2-3) to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:4-6), who were scattered among the Gentiles due to Israel being under the fifth cycle of chastisement (Leviticus 26:33). The law was their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ that they might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). Therefore, the so-called “Great Commission” of the 12 apostles was to show Israel their sin by teaching them the law. By contrast, Paul had a Greater Commission, which was to tell people the mystery gospel (Romans 16:25-26), which is to recognize your sin and trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Thus, Paul’s commission was to reconcile people back to God (5:18-20). In other words, the 12 apostles were commissioned to show God’s mercy to Israel, which was God not punishing them for their sin, while Paul was commissioned to show God’s grace to the world, which is God offering eternal life to all who would believe his gospel. This is how 1 apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) could get more accomplished than 12 apostles in Israel’s program. Realizing this Greater Commission, Paul spent all available time he could, preaching the gospel to the unsaved and sound doctrine to those who were already saved under the mystery program.

Meanwhile, Churchianity is playing spiritual video games. II Timothy 3:1-13 tells us all about this. Because they love themselves and love pleasures more than they love God, they seek “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (II Timothy 3:5). (“The power thereof” is God’s Word, since Hebrews 4:12 says that “the Word of God is quick, and powerful.”) As such, they are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3:7), because they have strayed away from the truth, “giving heed to seducing spirit, and doctrines of devils” (I Timothy 4:1). So, they just go to church to feel good, but there is no godly substance behind their superfluous Churchianity. As such, it like they are playing spiritual video games, in which they are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14). Instead, they should continue in the holy scriptures (II Timothy 3:14-15), rather than things with a form of godliness that make them feel good. They are “playing church,” rather than labouring in God’s Word rightly divided.

9) “Watchings”: Probably refers to spiritual watchings. Paul says, in 11:27-28, that he has “the care of all the churches” upon him. This would be Paul watching over their souls. Of course, every Christian should be watching over his own soul to make sure false doctrine does not creep in. Jesus told His disciples to “watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). The temptation is to follow the flesh, rather than the Holy Ghost and the mind of Christ leading you into the things of God as you read and follow the Bible. Thus, Paul says, in Romans 16:17-18 to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

There are 5 times that Paul tells believers to watch: 1) I Corinthians 16:13, 2) Ephesians 6:17-18, 3) Colossians 4:2, 4) I Thessalonians 5:6, and 5) II Timothy 4:5. The Ephesians passage says to take “the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Thus, the way we “watch” is by reading and believing God’s Word and then applying God’s Word by praying it in our minds to God so that God can reveal what the mind of Christ is in a given situation. The I Thessalonians passage says, “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Sober-minded thinking comes when we pray God’s Word in our minds. When we do not read, believe, and think over the sound doctrine for today found in Paul’s epistles, we are sleepwalking through life, following whatever our feelings are in a given situation, rather than being in spiritual watchings for our soul and others’ souls.

10) “Fastings”: Churchianity tends to think of fastings as planned events, where they deprive themselves of food in order to get closer to God or to feel God’s presence. However, Paul is talking about forced fasts, not religious observances. He said, “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace” (I Corinthians 4:11). Later on, he will say that he is “in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (11:27). Paul did not choose to fast, but he was forced to fast, due to the persecutions he faced.

When Churchianity fasts, it is usually to satisfy the flesh. We see this with Israel. God had established 7 annual feasts for them (Leviticus 23), yet they established four annual fasts (Zechariah 8:19). God said, “Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:4-6). God wanted Israel to fast from their religion, rather than fasting from food.

But, depriving yourself of food for God makes you appear godly, which is why Israel did it. Paul calls this “a voluntary humility... in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh”

(Colossians 2:23). By neglecting the body, the one fasting is worshipping his own will. Then, when he accomplishes the prescribed fast, his flesh is satisfied, because it can exhibit pride in what it just accomplished. A great example of this is the Phraisee in Luke 18. He said, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11-12). In other words, the Pharisee thought he was righteous on his own because he fasted and gave tithes. He did not ask God to be merciful unto him, like the publican did (Luke 18:13), because he thought he would make it into the kingdom because he was a Jew. He further thought that he did not need God's help to have eternal life in God's kingdom. He then showed how righteous he was by fasting. Jesus said, "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:16-18). Fasting is a dangerous thing when it is done to make a fair shew in the flesh, because then you trust in your "form of godliness" (II Timothy 3:5), rather than having actual godliness.

However, fasting can be a good thing. It was good for Paul, because he valued dispensing the gospel (I Corinthians 9:17) to the heathen more than he did his food. Paul was not being prideful. Rather, he was fasting because he had to in order to accomplish what God had called him to do. The believing remnant of Israel will do the same thing in the tribulation period, as Job states: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

A fast is only good if its purpose is to get more of God's Word in your inner man. Therefore, if you want to fast today, try fasting from television, or some other activity that pleases the flesh, and read God's Word instead. Paul even told the Corinthians that fasting from sex is a good idea if a husband and wife both agree, and they use that time in prayer instead (I Corinthians 7:3-5). Just like with everything else, as long as you use fasting to bring glory to God by prioritizing the spiritual over the physical, then fasting is a good thing. If not, then it is not good.

6:6-8a So, we approve ourselves as "THE ministers of God" in all 10 of the things in 6:4-5. We do so "BY" the 11 things in 6:6-8a.

1) "Pureness": The uncorrupted Word of God. Psalm 12:6-7 says that "the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," and God has promised to preserve His words for ever. "Thy Word is very pure" (Psalm 119:140). "Every Word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). Living by God's Word will cause us to be approved as the ministers of God.

2) "Knowledge": Knowledge comes by reading and believing God's Word. I Timothy 2:4 says that God's will is for all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. When you have knowledge of God's Word you can use the mind of Christ to apply it to overcome the trials of 6:4-5.

3) “Longsuffering”: It is interesting that God is called “longsuffering” 9 times in the Bible (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Jeremiah 15:15; Romans 2:4; Romans 9:22; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:9,15). Jesus Christ is called longsuffering once (I Timothy 1:16). Then, the body of Christ is called to longsuffering 7 times (II Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; Colossians 3:12; II Timothy 3:10; II Timothy 4:2). The reason God suffers long is because He is holy and is of “purer eyes than to behold evil” (Habakkuk 1:13), yet evil continues while Satan is the god of this world (4:4). Therefore, God suffers long. Because Jesus Christ always does His Father’s will, He is the embodiment of God in the flesh. (“In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).) When God gave us eternal life by trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin, Jesus Christ shewed “forth all longsuffering” (I Timothy 1:16).

In other words, God’s longsuffering is seen in the mercy that God shows to man in giving him the opportunity to be forgiven of his sin. Since “Christ...is our life” (Colossians 3:4), we suddenly see that we are called to longsuffering 7 times. Believing Israel is not ever said to be longsuffering, probably because they do not receive the atonement until Jesus’ second coming (I Peter 1:7-9). We show Christ to others, which means we show God’s longsuffering to others. This is why longsuffering shows we are ministers of God, since God is longsuffering.

4) “Kindness”: “In the ages to come,” God will “shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). “God is love” (I John 4:8), and I Corinthians 13:4 tells us that God’s love or “charity is kind.” Therefore, kindness toward us is an eternal quality of God. Since we are “the elect of God” in Christ, we should exhibit kindness, in addition to longsuffering (Colossians 3:12). Paul tells us to, “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Thus, when we exhibit kindness, we show that we are ministers of God.

5) “Holy Ghost”: When we read and believe God’s Word, the Holy Ghost teaches it to us (I Corinthians 2:9-14). When we apply God’s Word, we suffer for it (II Timothy 3:12). The suffering results in tribulations, which work patience, which work experience, which work hope, which cause the love of God to be “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:3-5). So, the Holy Ghost teaches us God’s Word, and He causes God’s love to come through us to others when we apply it. Therefore, we show that we are ministers of God “by the Holy Ghost.”

6) “Love unfeigned”: This means genuine love, which builds upon what we just talked about with the Holy Ghost. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). The reason is because only God has genuine love. Man’s love is selfish, because there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). People may appear to love you, but it is not genuine, because it always has some selfish motivation behind it, if it is not

given in Christ. Only God has genuine love, according to the characteristics of love found in I Corinthians 13:4-8a.

Since our lives are “hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), when we let Christ live in us, we are showing God’s genuine love to others. In my opinion, this is the most important proof that we are ministers of God, because only believers in Christ can show genuine love to others. (Perhaps this is why this is the middle term of the 11 things “by” which we are approved as ministers of God. Similarly, God’s genuine love must be in the middle of our lives to be good ambassadors for Christ (5:20).) To those, who are looking for the solution to their sin problem, they will see the love of God extended to them through us and believe that Christ’s death is the full payment for their sin, since God commended His love toward us through Christ’s death (Romans 5:8). I mentioned earlier that Jesus said that men will know that His disciples belong to Christ by the love they show to others. It is the same for us today. Isn’t it interesting how people will call us crazy or part of a cult, yet, when they need advice, they come to us. Or, they may reject the gospel through us or not want to talk about the things of God, yet they come to us first when anything spiritual comes up. This is because they can see God’s genuine love coming through ministers of God, even if they allow their sinful flesh to deceive them most of the time.

7) “The Word of truth”: Of course, the word of truth is God’s Word. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). To be sanctified is to be set apart. The way we are set apart is that only believers can understand the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14). This means that only Bible believers can learn and apply the things of God in their lives, because we have the Holy Ghost to teach us God’s perfect Word and we have the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to apply it in our lives. This approves us as ministers of God to others, since only those in Christ can do this. Thus, “the Word of truth” is an integral part of this. In fact, we can say that most of the things on this list come by God’s Word (purity, knowledge, longsuffering, kindness, love unfeigned, the power of God, and righteousness).

8) “The power of God”: This is often associated with the Holy Ghost, because Jesus told His disciples, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). Pentecostals associate this with speaking in tongues and moving in the spirit. However, Hebrews 4:12 says that “the Word of God is quick and POWERFUL, and sharper than any twoedged sword.” Since we know that the Holy Ghost teaches us God’s Word (I Corinthians 2:9-14), the way the disciples received power with the Holy Ghost is that they could finally understand God’s Word (John 14:26). Therefore, “the power of God” is not some Pentecostal movement, but it is God’s Word coming through us to others.

Note what Jews thought of Jesus’ teaching: “The people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29). Jesus had the authority of God, because the power of God’s Word through the Holy Ghost was coming from Jesus to others. By contrast, the scribes had authority from man with their cemetery (seminary) degrees, but no

real authority from God. There was no power of God behind their words because they just gave others a “form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (II Timothy 3:5). “The power thereof” being, of course, God’s Word. (True godliness is when God is manifest in the flesh by Christ living in us through the Word of God. Then, when Christ is “preached unto the Gentiles,” He is “believed on in the world” (I Timothy 3:16) because they see the power and authority of God coming through the powerful words of God that we give them, as opposed to the religiosity of theologians’ dead words.)

9) “The armour of righteousness”: In Ephesians 6:11, we are told to “put on the whole armour of God.” The things listed as armour are: 1) Truth, 2) Righteousness, 3) Peace, 4) Faith, 5) Salvation, 6) God’s Word, and 7) Prayer (Ephesians 6:14-1). So, why is “the armour of righteousness” singled out here? Because it is “the breastplate” of the armour (Ephesians 6:14). The breastplate protects the heart, and the heart resides in the spirit once we are saved. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We do this by allowing the Holy Ghost to teach us the spiritual things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14). Thus, “the armour of righteousness” shows us that God’s righteousness comes through us to others by God’s Word coming through us as we apply it using the mind of Christ. This approves us as the ministers of God because we minister God’s Word to others by example.

I see “the right hand” and “the left hand” (6:7) referring to saved vs. unsaved people. In the judgment of the Gentiles in Israel’s program, Jesus puts the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left hand (Matthew 25:33). The sheep go into God’s kingdom (Matthew 25:34), while the goats go to hell (Matthew 25:41). This means that we are clothed in God’s righteousness regardless of what people we are around. This is important because it may be easy to exhibit God’s righteousness when we are around fellow Christians, but it is harder to show God’s righteousness when we are around unbelievers. However, we need to be “instant in season” and “out of season” (II Timothy 4:2). If we only exhibit God’s righteousness around believers, unbelievers will see us as being two-faced, which will not approve us to them as the ministers of God. We need to have Christ live in us on a consistent basis.

10) and 11) “Honour and dishonour” and “evil report and good report”: I see these last two things as being reactions of Christians to the first nine things. In other words, when we let Christ live in us, we have the nine characteristics in 6:6-7. Then, unbelievers look at how other Christians view us, which are items 10 and 11. These also prove that we are ministers of God. Christians can be divided into two, broad categories: 1) Bible believers, and 2) Religious people. Bible believers will see Christ live in us and honour us and give a good report of us. By contrast, religious people are just trying to make “a fair shew in the flesh” (Galatians 6:12). They have allowed Satan to deceive them into thinking that they are serving God in their flesh. When we come along and actually serve God by Christ living in us, they get jealous of us. After all, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17). Therefore, they “dishonour” us and give an “evil report” about us. They say that we are heretics following a cult, because we dare to go against thousands of years of

church traditions. Yet, it is okay for them to go against God's Word. They have no problem changing the Bible to fit their own tradition, but they object to us following the Bible over their church traditions.

Unbelievers may not believe the gospel, but they do watch Christians. For the most part, they see Christians as hypocrites. However, if they see the first nine things coming through us to others (6:6-7), they will see that we are different from the typical people in Churchianity. When they see hypocrites giving us dishonour and an evil report, it separates us from Churchianity in their minds. Similarly, when they see other Christians, who let Christ live in them, honour us and give us a good report, it also confirms that the genuine love of God is in us. This means that, if they recognize they have a sin problem and are looking for the answer, they will believe the gospel we give them, because they see Christ in us.

We should also note that being approved as ministers of God is not just for unbelievers looking to be saved. It is also for believers, who desire to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). This is especially true with these last two things, because believers know Churchianity better than unbelievers. Therefore, the different reactions to us from the two groups of Christians will also confirm to these Christians, who are looking for the knowledge of the truth, that we have it.

6:8b-10 There are seven "as...yet" statements in these verses. "As" is how the world looks at us, and "yet" is the spiritual reality that God sees.

6:8b 1) "As deceivers, and yet true": The world thinks we are deceiving people with lies, yet we are really standing on the truth. The reason the world perceives us as deceivers is that their "heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9), and so man's deceived heart makes deceived people think that we are deceived for believing the truth. Isaiah 5:20-21 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" I Corinthians 1:18-21 says that the preaching of the cross is foolish to those who perish. What God does with the cross is He destroys the wisdom of the wise. The world, in their wisdom, does not know God. Therefore, they are deceived into thinking that the truth of God's Word that we proclaim is lies.

6:9a 2) "As unknown, and yet well known": We are unknown to the world. Because they think we are deceived idiots, they do not know our names. One argument used against right division is to say that John Darby invented right division in the 1800s. They say that we should rely upon the hundreds/thousands of years of church history, rather than depending on some system that was invented recently. The truth of the matter is that there have been right dividing Bible believers throughout history. In fact, Jesus was a right divider, because He rightly divided between His first and second comings when He read Isaiah 61:1-2a, closing the book in the middle of the sentence because the rest of the sentence would be fulfilled at His second coming (Luke 4:17-21). Since Churchianity follows

Satan's lie program, they do not include these truths in their church history book. There have always been right dividing Bible believers, but they do not write church history books. We are not included in Churchianity's history books, which is why they do not know who we are.

However, in heavenly places, we are "well known." Churchianity's popular evangelists may have tens of thousands of people listening to them, while a right-division teacher does good if he has 30 people in his audience. However, Ephesians 3:8-12 says that the Lord Jesus Christ gave the mystery to Paul so that the church might let the principalities and powers in heavenly places know the manifold wisdom of God. Moreover, I Peter 1:12 says that "the angels desire to look into" the things pertaining to Israel's salvation. The angels want God's wisdom because they know that we will be over them in heavenly places (I Corinthians 6:3). This means that, while Churchianity's preachers have a much larger human audience, right-division preachers far outnumber them with their angelic audience in heaven. Churchianity may not know your name, but I guarantee you that heaven knows your name, as they see Christ live in you!

6:9b 3) "As dying, and, behold, we live": The world thinks we are dying, because we do not hold our own physical lives dear. We also have set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2). Therefore, we do not have a lot of money and/or power, and so the world thinks that we have given up, which is why they consider us to be dying. However, what we have done is seen the eternal things of heaven (4:18) and valued them to be "far better" than the things on the earth (Philippians 1:23). A good summary is Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Because I am crucified with Christ, the world sees me as dying. Nevertheless I live, but it is really Christ who lives in me, as I live by the faith of the Son of God, meaning that I live by God's Word to me today found in Romans thru Philemon. "Christ...is our life" (Colossians 3:4). Praise the Lord!

6:9c 4) "As chastened, and not killed": The world punishes us for not following their course (Ephesians 2:2). Therefore, they see us as being chastened. In fact, Churchianity enforces their legalism by claiming that, when we get sick or something bad happens in our lives, God must be chastening/punishing us to get us back in line. They say we are like the horse, "whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle" (Psalm 32:9). Therefore, we must turn from our sin and turn back to God. Because all of us sin, even after we are saved, this argument may fly with us. Job's three friends made a similar argument with him. However, we are not like the horse or "the mule, **which have no understanding**" (Psalm 32:9). God "hath abounded toward us in ALL wisdom and prudence" (Ephesians 1:8). Also, we are "blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), not with health and wealth on this earth. We are no more servants/children, but we are adult sons and daughters of God, who are heirs of God with Christ (Galatians 4:6-7). Just like you do not physically punish your children when they are adults, God does not physically punish us today.

Now, Paul does mention one time that God chastises us today, and that is found in I Corinthians 11:32. However, that verse says that the way we are chastened of the Lord today is when the world sees us as hypocrites for not following sound doctrine. Similarly, when you are an adult, the way you are punished is by the government, not by your parents. Since the world calls “evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20), the world thinks you are being chastised by God when you suffer for godly living, when the reality is that Christ is actually being strong in you (12:9-10).

The world may persecute us, but they cannot kill us spiritually, because we have the abundant life of Christ in us (John 10:10). Jesus said, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Therefore, no matter what man does to us, even if he physically kills us, we are not really killed because our souls live forever in heaven.

6:10a 5) “As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing”: We are not sorrowful. We rejoice evermore (I Thessalonians 5:16). Yet, the world thinks we are sorrowful because we do not get great things in this world (possessions, loving family, etc.). Instead, we have spiritual blessings in heaven (Ephesians 1:3). Because our affection is set on heaven and not on the earth (Colossians 3:2), we are “alway rejoicing.” Note that the verse says “alway,” not “always.” “Always” means that we rejoice in every circumstance. “Alway” means that we rejoice “all the way” to heaven. This is important to understand because we will not “always” rejoice, due to our sin nature, but we can rejoice all the way to heavenly places for all eternity.

6:10b 6) “As poor, yet making many rich”: The world looks at us from a material perspective. Since we value the things of God over the things of this world, not many of us will have riches in this world. Paul said, “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (I Timothy 6:9). If our focus is on Christ, our focus is not on this world, and so we are poor in this world. However, we make many rich, spiritually speaking. This is what Christ did. Paul says, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (8:9). This is what we should do. We should focus on the spiritual, which will probably make us poor in the material world. Then, when we share the gospel and sound doctrine with others, we make them rich in the spiritual realm. We have “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18), in heaven, and we have “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8) in God’s Word here on earth. You cannot be any richer than that!

6:10c 7) “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things”: We possess all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), but the world thinks we have nothing, because they look at the material, not the spiritual. Romans 8:32 says, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” We have all things, spiritually speaking, as a free gift from God.

6:11 Romans 10:10 says, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” We do not believe with our literal heart, as that is merely a blood pumping organ. Rather, we believe in our spirit when the Holy Ghost communicates the truth of the gospel to us. Therefore, we also do not confess with our literal mouth. We are a three-part being. When we are saved, our spirit believes and so our heart equals our spirit. The spirit communicates this information to our soul, and our soul confesses that we have believed, which makes the mouth our soul. Our flesh, then, should be presented to Christ as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

Thus, when Paul says that his “heart is enlarged,” it simply means that Paul is giving them the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, rather than the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). When Paul says that his “mouth is open unto” them, it means that Paul is bearing his soul to them. He will later mention how much he has suffered for Christ (11:22-29) so that they see that suffering is how ministers of God are approved.

6:12 A “strait” is a narrow or cramped area, while the “bowels” are the deepest part of a person. The Corinthians should be following Paul as he follows Christ (I Corinthians 11:1). Therefore, being “straitened in us” means to be constrained by the love of Christ (5:14) and to live according to the constraint of mystery doctrine. Instead, they are following their own flesh, which is what Paul means by “ye are straitened in your own bowels.” This is why Paul has to bear his soul and give a lot of sound doctrine to try to pull the Corinthians out of the depths of their flesh and get them to follow who they are in Christ.

6:13 Paul has spent a great deal of time studying God’s Word in order to enlarge his heart/spirit. He has also borne his soul to them by sharing such things as being “pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves” (1:8-9). Another example is how he shared that he had fears within when he went to Macedonia and did not see Titus initially (7:5-7).

Paul talks to them as he would to children, showing that he is willing to give everything of himself to the Corinthians to get them to walk in the Spirit. This makes sense because, spiritually speaking, Paul has begotten the Corinthians through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15).

Now, Paul asks them for a recompense. In other words, Paul wants the Corinthians to pay him back for all the work he has put into them. However, Paul does not ask for money. Instead, he says that they can pay him back by being enlarged themselves. He wants them to study God’s Word as a workman. Then, their spirits can be enlarged in sound doctrine so they can get out of their fleshly pursuits and walk in the Spirit. I can speak from experience that this is the best payment of all. Money will perish, but souls saved and spiritual growth lasts forever in heavenly places. I cannot wait to meet people in heaven who say, “You don’t know me, but I heard the gospel or I learned who I am in Christ through you.” What a blessing that will be!

6:14 In the same verse where Paul says he has begotten Israel through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15), he says that the Corinthians have “ten thousand instructors in Christ.” These would be the “unbelievers” of this verse (6:14). These “instructors in Christ,” then, may be unsaved. Paul will call them “ministers of Satan” in 11:15. This shows that the reason the Corinthians follow their own flesh is because they are being led that way by unbelieving ministers. This is exactly what is happening in Churchianity today. People allow their deceitful flesh (Jeremiah 17:9) to make them think that the form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5) of their church is of God, when they are really following Satan’s ministers.

This verse is often taken out of context to refer to not marrying an unbeliever, but Paul covered marital relations in I Corinthians 7, and said in I Corinthians 7:39 that believers should only marry other believers. Therefore, Paul has already covered this issue. In addition, marriage is not even mentioned in II Corinthians 6. “Unequally yoked,” then, means not to have “ministers of God” (6:4), i.e., the saved Corinthians, being in fellowship with Satan’s ministers (11:15), i.e., their 10,000 instructors in Christ. Thus, the question is asked, in 6:15, “What concord hath Christ with Belial?”

When a yoke was put on two beasts of burden, it was done so that the two beasts of burden could work together more effectively to get a job done. Paul considered himself to be a beast of burden, as he referred to himself as an ox (I Corinthians 9:9-12). Jesus said that his yoke is easy (Matthew 11:30). By contrast, Jesus said that the religious leaders “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”

Paul calls the law: “the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). What the Corinthians need to do is put on Jesus’ yoke of grace, rather than the yoke of the law, that they cannot successfully work under, as they will be transgressors under the law (Galatians 2:18). Members of the body of Christ need to be yoked with other members of the body of Christ, who are operating under grace. Even if the Corinthians are yoked with other Christians, if these other Christians are operating under the law, then they are “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (6:14). Thus, unbelievers are those who do not operate under grace and do not believe God’s Word, even if they are going to heaven, because they are under the yoke of the bondage of the law, rather than under Jesus’ yoke of grace.

In Philippians 4:3, Paul calls the Philippian church his “true yokefellow.” It is not enough for us to attend a church with Christians. Rather, we should have fellowship only with those who are Bible believers, seeking to live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), rather than with those attempting to make a fair shew in the flesh (Galatians 6:12). Thus, “unrighteousness,” in this context, refers to those serving the flesh, although their standing may still be in the righteousness of God (Romans 3:21), but they are under the law, which is unrighteousness, practically speaking. Paul says, “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid

them,” because they serve their own belly, not our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 16:17-18). In other words, an unequal yoke is not just someone going to heaven being in ministry with someone not going to heaven, but it also includes someone operating by the faith of the Son of God under grace being in ministry with a saved person going to heaven, who is operating under the law. This is an unequal yoke because the one under grace is letting Christ live in him, while the one under the law is serving the flesh; thus, the law person’s labour is in vain.

Paul also mentions that light has no communion with darkness (6:14). In Ephesians 5:8, Paul says, “now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” This shows that Christians can walk in darkness if they choose to do so, or else Paul would not have had to tell them to walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:11 says, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,” which is very similar to Paul’s admonition, in 6:14, that light has no communion with darkness.

6:15 “Belial” is mentioned 17 times in the Bible, and is a reference to the Devil. Remember that Paul refers to their 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15), as Satan’s ministers who have transformed themselves “as the ministers of unrighteousness” (11:15). I Timothy 4:1 also mentions that there will be “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” Thus, people, who teach Churchianity, rather than the Bible as their final authority, have concord with Belial. Another way to ask the question: “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” would be: **“What concord hath Bible believers with Churchianity and their form of godliness?”**

An infidel, in this context, is someone who does not follow sound doctrine for today from Paul’s epistles. (A dictionary definition of infidel is “one who opposes Christianity.”) So, this could still include people going to heaven but are not living by grace. This definition is supported by Paul’s use of infidel in I Timothy 5:8. There, Paul mentions someone headed for heaven as being “WORSE than an infidel.” Of course, infidels also include shysters, who are bound for hell, who are in it “for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11). Unfortunately, there are many of these people in the world today, who “subvert whole houses” (Titus 1:11) with their “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

6:16 “Ye are the temple of the living God.” Wow! What a statement! Churchianity is out there, thinking that they meet with God when they go to church. They invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to fill the building when they sing their worship songs. Yet, this verse makes it clear that each member of the body of Christ is a temple or “church” of the living God. I Corinthians 6:19 also says that “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.” Moreover, Galatians 4:6 says that “God hath sent forth the Spirit of Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Therefore, all 3 members of the Godhead dwell inside you. What a wonderful thing that I do not have to go to a building to meet with God, because God is inside me! This is why Colossians 2:16-17 says that we should not let anyone judge us in respect of the carnal ordinances of the Mosaic law (Hebrews 9:10), because these things “are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” God has a body to dwell in, and that body is all believers today.

Now, the promise of human bodies being the temple of the living God was given to Israel in Leviticus 26:11-12, which Paul quotes here: “As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Yet, because of Israel’s unbelief, you do not see this scripture fulfilled with Israel until the New Jerusalem comes down to the earth. Note how Revelation 21:3 says that, at the time that Revelation is written, the fulfillment of Leviticus 26:11-12 for ISRAEL is still future. This is because of the unbelief of Israel.

Yet, for us today, Paul states this in the present tense: “Ye ARE the temple of the living God” (6:16). Churchianity says that we meet with God in a church, and they invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to come and fill the church on Sunday mornings. Yet, I have all three members of the Godhead dwelling within me. Praise the Lord! This is because I have trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for my sin, while Israel remained in unbelief (Hebrews 3:19).

6:17a The Godhead dwelling within me is a wonderful thing to realize. I do not need to trust in a church to give me sound doctrine, because I have the Godhead Himself within me to teach me God’s Word. Israel had “pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture” (Jeremiah 23:1), and Churchianity has the same today. How wonderful that we have God Himself within us to teach us the things of His Word and actually live in us (Galatians 2:20) to His glory.

This is an awesome thing to realize, but it is also an awesome responsibility. I do not need to go to a building on the Sabbath day to meet with God, because He is with me all the time. Therefore, I should recognize this and not have fellowship with unbelievers, include Christians who do not take the Bible as their final authority.

This verse is a quote of Isaiah 52:11. Paul does not mention it here, but Isaiah 52:11 is for those “that bear the vessels of the Lord.” These would be the Levites, who were separated out for the service of the Lord. Remember that these are the ones who destroyed and scattered “the sheep of My pasture” (Jeremiah 23:1). Israel, as a whole, was in unbelief, but the Levites were called to be the mediators between God and Israel so that Israel might be clean and believe in God to save them. Yet, Israel was in unbelief, as the Jewish religious leaders led them into idolatry. In Isaiah 52:11, God calls the Levites to depart from idolatry and “touch no unclean thing.” If the Levites “go...out of the midst of her” [the Babylonian religious system (Revelation 17:1-5)], they can lead Israel into believing in God to save them. Since they did not do this, Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jewish religious leaders and be given to the believing little flock of Israel (Matthew 21:43; Luke 12:32). The problem was that Israel followed their religious leaders, rather than the believing remnant. Therefore, God set aside Israel’s program at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 and began the church, the body of Christ, with Paul in Acts 9:22-23.

Similarly today, if the believing body of Christ does not come out from among Churchianity and stand on the Word of God and be the pillar and ground of truth

as God has called us to be (I Timothy 3:15), more people will not be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). This will result in God cutting off the dispensation of grace and resuming Israel's program (Romans 11:20-26).

While the majority of people going to heaven live in their flesh, it is Bible believers, living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), who keep this dispensation going. In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells of the ten virgins. 5 of them are believers and make it into God's kingdom, while the other 5 are unbelievers who end up in hell. However, there is a third group, the believing remnant of Israel, who cry at midnight that "the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matthew 25:6). None of the 10 virgins would have made it into God's kingdom if not for the believing remnant warning them. Similarly, Bible believers are the reason that people get saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth today. When people stop believing their Bibles, the dispensation of grace will end, because the fulness of the Gentiles will be come in (Romans 11:25).

6:17b-18 6:17 ends with the statement "and I will receive you." This is not in Isaiah 52:11. This does not imply that we lose our salvation or that God will not receive us into heaven if we do not separate ourselves from Churchianity. It just means that, when we join ourselves with unbelievers, God will not receive our service because it is in the flesh, not in the Spirit. Remember that the context is "approving ourselves as ministers of God" (6:4), not our salvation from hell, as that was settled when we trusted in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin. We can see this by the next verse which says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (7:1). In other words, we should get rid of all sin in our lives, including being unequally yoked with unbelievers, so that our service is accepted by God.

6:18 quotes the Lord Almighty, saying that I "will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters." This comes from II Samuel 7:14-15, where God promises David's son that "I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But My mercy shall not depart away from Him." This is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27); therefore, it refers to us. This is why it mentions "if He commit iniquity." Obviously, this does not refer to Christ, because He did no sin (I Peter 2:22), but we, as the body of Christ, still sin. If we accept God's chastisement of us through His Word by letting Christ live in us then, from a practical standpoint, we are the sons and daughters of God. We are approved as ministers of God. If we do not do this, we still have salvation, "yet so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:15), but our service is not accepted by God, because we did it in the flesh.

Finally, note that this chapter ends with "saith the Lord Almighty." It takes the almighty power of God to overcome our sin to the point that He indwells us and we are "the temple of the living God" (6:16).

II Corinthians 7 – Comfort & Rejoicing in Christ’s Life Thru the Corinthians

7 Since we have the promises that God will walk in us (v. 1), we should desire to walk in the Spirit, rather than in the flesh. To do this, we need to receive Paul (v. 2), because the Lord gives us understanding in all things, only when we first consider what Paul says (II Timothy 2:7). Christ’s love came through Paul to the Corinthians (v. 3), and he is comforted that Titus is okay and, more importantly, that Titus gave a great report of the Corinthians that Christ is living in them now (vs. 6-7).

Paul had to make them sorry with his previous letter because it meant kicking out the man who was sleeping with his father’s wife. However, the Corinthians had godly sorrow, which led them to repentance regarding this sin (vs. 8-11). Paul’s main concern is that Christians have Christ living in them by coming into the knowledge of the truth. This is even more important than unbelievers being saved from hell (v. 12)! Having seen this change in the Corinthians, Paul now has confidence in them in all things (v. 16) that they will walk in the Spirit in all areas of their lives.

7:1 “These promises” would be God’s promises to dwell in us, walk in us, be our God, and be our Father (6:16-18). Now, just because these promises were given to Israel, this does not mean that we are spiritual Israel today. The only way, that we can claim the same promises as Israel has, is if the Holy Ghost has revealed to us through our apostle Paul that these promises apply to us, also. We are God’s children today, just like Israel is God’s children in their dispensation. We are God’s children because we are the body of Christ, and Israel is God’s children through marriage, since they are the bride of Christ. But, this does not give us license to claim every promise for us that God has made to Israel. If Paul tells us that these promises apply to us, then they do. If he does not tell us, then they belong only to Israel.

Paul also mentions that we are “dearly beloved.” This is because Christ is God’s “beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17). When we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin, we are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ (Romans 5:15; I Corinthians 15:22). Therefore, we are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6), making us “dearly beloved.”

This verse shows that Churchianity has things backwards. They are living in Matthew 6:14-15, which says, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Instead, they should be living in Ephesians 4:32, which says, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” In other words, Churchianity watches their works because they want to make sure they endure until the end and receive eternal life. By contrast, what the Lord Jesus Christ through Paul tells us to do is to let Christ live in us because we already have eternal life.

Because God dwells in us, walks in us, is our God, and is our Father, we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (7:1). This is not to say that we have any part in the atoning work of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Rather it is saying that, from a practical standpoint we should choose to let Christ live in us based upon who God says we are. Ephesians 2:8-10 sums this up well. It says that it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and so our salvation is “not of works.” This means, that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” We do not do the good works, but we walk in them. In other words, we use sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles to make the decision to live by the faith of the Son of God, such that Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). When we do this, we “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (7:1). Christ has already cleansed us and given us eternal life as a free gift (Romans 6:23). When we decide to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16) by practicing sound doctrine, we have cleansed our flesh and our spirit, because we are not letting our vile flesh and the spirit of the man within us to control us. Instead, it is Christ’s word, going along with the Spirit of Christ within us, that uses our flesh to walk in the good works of God that Christ does in us as He lives in us by His Word.

“Perfecting holiness” is an odd term. After all, isn’t holiness perfect by definition? Colossians 3:12 says that, in Christ, we are “holy and beloved.” However, this does not mean that we always walk in this holiness. The way we walk in holiness is by living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). We do this by applying God’s Word using the mind of Christ. Alternatively, we could choose to walk in the flesh. Paul says that, since God is our Father and our God (6:16,18), we should live according to our position with God. Instead of walking with the “filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (7:1), we should perfect holiness by reading and believing God’s Word and applying it in our lives. Thus, we perfect holiness by being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16) through God’s Word. As we grow in God’s Word, we grow “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We “perfect” holiness by growing in the “perfect” man of Christ by applying God’s Word in our lives.

7:1 goes on to say that we perfect holiness “in the fear of God.” This is not the fear that God will take away our salvation, as we were just told that God dwells in us and we are His sons. “Fear of God” is fearing His wonderful works coming through us, not fearing that He will punish us if we mess up. God has the power to use us to get people saved from hell and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. We should have a fear of this power, recognizing that we want God to use it to the maximum extent possible, which is why we are to perfect holiness. Philippians 2:12-13 is a good explanation of this. It says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” We should have some fear and trembling over the awesome power of God coming through us to do His will.

7:2 The Corinthians have 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15) who have been leading them to use the flesh and only give God lip service. Paul’s prayer

is for the Corinthians to receive his message of grace to them so that Christ lives in them.

Paul has not wronged or been dishonest with them. He has not corrupted them with false doctrine. He has not defrauded or taken money from them by being deceptive. These three things are right in line with his statement in 4:2, “But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” By contrast, the 10,000 instructors in Christ have wronged the Corinthians by dishonestly handling God’s Word; they have corrupted them by giving them false doctrine; and they have defrauded them by taking money from them but not helping them spiritually.

Basically, what Paul is doing, in 7:2, is calling out these 10,000 instructors by saying that they have done these things to the Corinthians, while Paul has not. So, why do the Corinthians receive the 10,000 instructors, but they do not receive Paul? Paul says, “For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face” (11:20). But, they do not want to follow sound doctrine for today. Why? Because Colossians 2:23 tells us that neglecting the body satisfies the flesh, and so the Corinthians receive the 10,000 instructors, and not Paul, because the instructors concentrate on the flesh, while Paul concentrates on the Spirit.

7:3 “I speak not this to condemn you” shows that Paul is calling out the 10,000 instructors. But, he is not doing this to make them feel bad; he is doing it so that Christ lives in them to a greater extent. This reminds me of John 3:17, which says that “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” First comes the opportunity for salvation. Condemnation only comes later if salvation is not accepted.

Similarly, the Corinthians have the opportunity to be saved from a religious lifestyle after the flesh by following the sound doctrine that Paul is giving them, rather than following the false doctrine of their 10,000 instructors. If they do not do this, their works will be condemned at the judgment seat of Christ, but their souls will be saved (I Corinthians 3:13-15). Therefore, why not make the correction now, so that they will not lose their reward in heavenly places? (It is no coincidence that I Corinthians 3:16, just after the judgment seat of Christ discussion, gives the statement that “ye are the temple of God,” just like II Corinthians 6:16 says that “ye are the temple of the living God” just before the warning to cleanse themselves “from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (7:1).)

When Paul says that the Corinthians are in his heart “to die and live with” them (7:3), he is not saying that Paul will lose his reward in heavenly places if the Corinthians lose their reward. After all, he presses “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Rather, Paul is saying that he is willing to go along with the Corinthians on their journey in Christ. They are all part of the body of Christ. When one member suffers, “all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with

it” (I Corinthians 12:26). Therefore, even if the Corinthians reject the sound doctrine Paul shares with them and they continue to listen to their 10,000 instructors, the Corinthians will still be in Paul’s heart. Paul is willing to help them in any way he can, rather they decide to die by following the flesh or they decide to live by walking in the Spirit.

7:4 Paul is bold in speech. In 10:1-2, Paul says that he would rather be bold in speech toward them in a letter so that he can be base among them when present with them. Paul wants to be bold with them in a letter, laying it all on the line, so that their issues, of walking in the flesh and thinking that Paul walks in the flesh, can be hashed out now. Then, they can rejoice together in person, rather than Paul having to correct them in person.

In spite of the fact that the Corinthians still have some issues, they have gone through some trials for being members of the body of Christ. This means that their “light affliction” is working for them “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4:17). Therefore, Paul can have great glorying of them. (7:4).

Paul is also filled with comfort (1:3-5). He started his letter by saying that “the God of all comfort...comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble” (1:3-4). So, Paul has received comfort from God, and he is “exceeding joyful in all [his] tribulation” (7:4), because: 1) He can give comfort to the Corinthians when they go through trials, and 2) Tribulation results in the love of God coming through his heart to others (Romans 5:3-5). Therefore, Paul is excited that he can show God’s comfort, love, and joy to the Corinthians so that they may also desire to go through tribulations so that they can have the same comfort, love, and joy that Paul has.

What a contrast between Paul’s attitude and the world’s attitude! The world’s attitude is to spend billions of dollars to try to get out of pain, while Paul is “exceeding joyful” that he gets to go through trials because of the spiritual and eternal weight of glory that results from his temporal suffering for Christ (4:17-18).

7:5-7 Acts 19 tells of the trouble that Paul and his companions encountered in Ephesus. He said, in 1:8, that “we despaired even of life.” Paul went to Troas to preach the gospel (2:12), but he did not stay in Troas because he did not find Titus (2:12). He was probably afraid that Titus had been killed, as the people in Ephesus were trying to do to Paul. Paul then went to Macedonia because he found out that is where Titus went (Acts 20:1-2). Apparently, things were not much better there, because he was “troubled on every side” (7:5). On the outside of Paul’s flesh, there were fightings going on. On the inside of Paul’s flesh, there were fears, which makes sense since he had despaired even of life in Ephesus. Paul must have been afraid that the Macedonians would kill him.

However, Paul got some comfort in Macedonia because he found Titus there (7:6). Paul’s comfort was not just from seeing Titus (7:7), but he also received consolation when Titus told Paul of the Corinthians’ “earnest desire,” “mourning,” and “fervent mind” toward Paul (7:7). What this tells us is that Paul had been

deeply concerned over the Corinthians when he wrote I Corinthians. They were carnal (I Corinthians 3:3), and so he wrote 16 chapters in order to deal with the major issues they had. Probably the biggest issue was that a man in their congregation had been sleeping with his father's wife, and they were bragging about this, rather than mourning over it (I Corinthians 5:1-2). Paul instructed them "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (I Corinthians 5:5), which I take to mean that Paul told them to cast him out of the church until he stopped this sexual relationship.

Given that the Corinthians were bragging about it, this may have caused the Corinthians to disassociate with Paul. Instead, they may have decided to follow their "10,000 instructors in Christ" (I Corinthians 4:15) by continuing their carnality. They may have ruined their testimony and suffered loss of reward in heavenly places (I Corinthians 3:15) by using their eternal security as a license to sin, rather than as the opportunity to live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). As such, Paul was genuinely concerned over the Corinthians' walk, and so he probably sent Titus to check on them. Titus reported that the Corinthians followed the first letter that Paul sent them. Before, Paul told them, regarding this issue of the man sleeping with his father's wife, "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (I Corinthians 5:2). Now, we have learned that they have mourned, and that they have an earnest desire and a fervent mind toward following Paul's doctrine (7:7). Therefore, Paul has great rejoicing, not only because Titus is alright, but also because the Corinthians are walking in the Spirit, rather than fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

Note also that God "comforteth those that are cast down" (7:6). 1:3-5 says that God is "the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

7:8-10 After Paul wrote I Corinthians, he wished he did not write the letter, because he was afraid that the Corinthians would stop listening to him and listen to the 10,000 instructors "in Christ" (I Corinthians 4:15), following their flesh instead. Now that he sees that they sorrowed "after a godly manner" (7:9), he is glad that he wrote the letter.

When someone is sorry over something, he is usually not truly sorry because, in our flesh, dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). He is just sorry that he got caught or suffered adverse consequences in his flesh. Our flesh wants "to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19). When someone discovers your uncleanness, your flesh is sorry that it cannot continue to carry it out. However, when you are a believer, the Spirit of Christ within you cries "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). If you use someone calling out your sin as an opportunity for the Spirit of Christ to live in you instead of living in the flesh, then you have sorrowed after a godly manner.

If you are just sorry that you got caught, then you have exhibited “the sorrow of the world” (7:10). “All that is in the world” is “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (I John 2:16). Therefore, the sorrow of the world uses sin to cover up sin. The three, main ways it does this are to: 1) Lie about the sin, 2) Try to justify the sin, and 3) Try to minimize how bad it is. (An example of this is when Cain killed Abel. When the Lord asked him where was Abel, he lied by saying, “I know not.” He tried to justify the sin by saying, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). Then, when the Lord doled out his punishment, Cain tried to minimize the sin by saying, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” (Genesis 4:13).) Whichever of the three methods you use, you are reacting to your sin by trying to cover it up with another sin, instead of recognizing the sin and seeking to correct it. Since “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), “the sorrow of the world worketh death” (7:10). Since carnal Christians (I Corinthians 3:3) usually continue in their carnality, Paul was regretting writing First Corinthians. However, now that Paul sees they have had godly sorrow, he rejoices instead (7:10).

We should note that the “salvation” of 7:10 is not salvation from hell, but it is salvation from living according to the course of this world. The Corinthians have been saved from living according to the flesh. Instead of boasting in the person getting away with sleeping with his father’s wife (I Corinthians 5:2), they have kicked him out of the church so that he might see how serious his sin is and so the Corinthian church will not be corrupted by his sin. This is godly sorrow that worketh repentance (a change of mind) mind regarding the sin.

Note that the sorrow was “but for a season” (7:8). Godly sorrow is always temporary sorrow, because it results in you changing your behaviour by Christ living in you so that you have nothing to be sorry about any more. If all you do is sorrow, you are catering to the flesh and letting Satan get the victory in a different way. For example, Colossians 2:23 says that you can satisfy your flesh by neglecting your flesh. In other words, you can use your knowledge of good (Genesis 2:17) to operate in the flesh instead of using your knowledge of Christ found in God’s Word in order to operate in the spirit. This shows how crafty Satan is. As 11:3 says, “As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3). Therefore, we want to make sure that we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices, lest he “should get an advantage of us” (2:10).

This is why Paul tells the Corinthians to forgive the man who was sleeping with his father’s wife (2:10). We have to make sure the church forgives a sinner, who repents of his sin, or else carnality will get a hold of the church through legalism. In other words, Satan can manipulate a church based upon the knowledge of good or based upon the knowledge of evil. This is why we must die daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) by reading, believing, and following God’s Word rightly divided. Otherwise, Satan will gain a stronghold in the church, either by evil or by good, and we will not even realize it.

The phrase “that ye might receive damage by us in nothing” (7:9) speaks to this, and also shows why Paul repented of writing I Corinthians initially. If he did not

write the letter, the sin may have continued. If he did write the letter, the sin may have been replaced by legalism. Either one would have been bad, and the legalism would probably be worse because it has a form of godliness attached to it (II Timothy 3:5). Perhaps this is why churches today rarely confront sins like this, except in more legalistic churches. Almost no one confronts sin in a godly manner because most everyone does not die daily to the flesh. However, in the Corinthians' case, they have gotten the sin out of their church and welcomed this man back as he is not doing the sin any more. Therefore, they received damage by Paul in nothing (7:9).

7:11 How does Paul know that the Corinthians sorrowed after a godly sort? Because he sees the following sevenfold result: 1) Carefulness (showing thought and attention in kicking out the man who was having sex with his father's wife), 2) Clearing (They were puffed up before (I Corinthians 5:2), which means they were participating in this sin. Now, that they have dealt with the sin, they are clear in this matter.), 3) Indignation (the church's anger over being dragged into this sin by the man committing fornication), 4) Fear (fear over Christ not living in them due to this sin), 5) Vehement desire (strong desire to get the sin out of their midst), 6) Zeal (strong action to get rid of the sin) (Jesus is a great example of zeal when He chased out the moneychangers in the temple (see John 2:15-17).), and 7) Revenge (casting the man out of their assembly to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (I Corinthians 5:5). This would be his punishment for inflicting harm to the Corinthians, and so this is how they would get revenge on him.). This shows that they carefully considered (1) how they would clear their name (2) in this sin by using indignation (3) against him so that they would not be afraid (4) of losing their reward in heavenly places. This led to a strong desire (5) and a zeal (6) to inflict revenge (7) upon this man so that sin would not ruin the church. The result was that the sin was taken out of the midst of the church. By the way, it is probably no accident that seven things are mentioned, here, because 7 is the number of spiritual completion in the Bible.

All of this means that they "sorrowed after a godly sort" (7:11). In other words, they identified the problem and dealt with the problem. As such, they approved themselves clear in this matter. If they used worldly sorrow, they would be sorry that Paul caught them and would not take care of the problem but would have tried to hide it from Titus when he was there with him.

7:12 Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians was written not for the man who was having sex with his father's wife nor for the husband of the wife with whom the man was sleeping. My guess, as to why this is the case, is because they were both probably unbelievers. We know the man having sex with his father's wife was an unbeliever, because Paul called him "that wicked person" (I Corinthians 5:13), while the believers in Corinth "are washed..., sanctified..., and justified" (I Corinthians 6:11). While Paul did want the man's spirit to be saved (I Corinthians 5:5), he was more concerned with the believers in Corinth letting Christ live in them (Galatians 2:20).

God's will is for all men to: 1) Be saved, and 2) Come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). If we were to concentrate on only one of the two, it seems that Paul is saying that our emphasis should be on coming unto the knowledge of the truth. This is probably the case because the rapture cannot take place until all positions in heavenly places (thrones, principalities, powers, might, and dominions (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16)) are filled with the body of Christ. Just like it is harder to fill the top positions in a corporation with qualified people, it is harder for Christ to fill the top positions in heavenly places. Once the top positions are filled, "the fulness of the Gentiles will be come in" (Romans 11:25), and the rapture can take place. Also, if more believers come unto the knowledge of the truth, then Christ is living in more people, which naturally results in more people being saved as a result. ("By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).)

Therefore, the church's focus should be more on getting sound doctrine into the inner man of believers, rather than focusing on getting people saved. Yet Churchianity almost completely ignores people coming unto the knowledge of the truth. They probably do this because they are teaching Satan's lies, and so they do not want the truth to be taught. If the truth is taught, they will lose their power over the people and will not be getting the money that they usually receive. Therefore, they preach legalism instead of grace. This is why the body of Christ has been going on for almost 2,000 years now, and the rapture still has not taken place! I focus on writing commentaries on the scripture for this very reason.

This verse shows that, the reason Paul addressed the issue of the man having sex with his father's wife, was to test the Corinthians to see if they would have godly sorrow over the issue or if they would have the sorrow of this world. Paul even says so in 2:9: "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things." He wants the Corinthians to see that God's love is coming through him to them. He loves them in Christ and so he wants them to let Christ live in them, even though confronting the issue may have caused them to disassociate themselves from Paul (This is probably why he initially regretted confronting this issue in his first letter to them (7:8)). This was a chance that Paul was willing to take, because he wanted them to come unto the knowledge of the truth, rather than following the lies of their 10,000 instructors in Christ (11:13-15).

7:13 Paul was comforted by the fact that the Corinthians repented of the sin of the man having sex with his father's wife. Kicking the man out would have been a tribulation that they faced, and Paul says that God comforts us "in all our tribulation" (1:4). (Paul certainly was facing tribulation (7:5-6).) Whenever something bad happens to us, loved ones will usually say, "Don't worry. Everything will be okay." They do this to bring comfort to us. However, I do not know if everything will really be okay. For example, when my wife went into the hospital with COVID, I did not know what would happen to her, and she did not come out alive. However, spiritually speaking, things are always okay for us. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Spiritually speaking, "all things work together for good to them that love God"

(Romans 8:28). The reason is because “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4:17). In heaven, “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Therefore, regardless of what happens to us on earth, we can take comfort in the eternal blessings and bliss that we have in heaven.

In the case of the Corinthians, they were comforted in that they grew in Christ living in them, even though they had to kick out a member of their congregation. This also comforted Paul, because he could see his spiritual children (I Corinthians 4:15) letting the word of Christ dwell in them richly (Colossians 3:16). “Therefore, we were comforted in your comfort” (7:13). Paul also received more joy when he saw Titus had joy because Titus saw the Corinthians letting Christ live in them. When one member of the body of Christ is “honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (I Corinthians 12:26), and so Paul rejoices in Titus’ joy from seeing Christ live in the Corinthians. All of this joy came from the Corinthians obeying the Word of God. This shows how important God’s Word should be to us. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

7:14 Paul boasted in who the Corinthians were in Christ. Even when they were carnal (I Corinthians 3:3), he thanked “my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 1:4). Now, Paul thanks God that Christ is working the flesh out of the Corinthians through the trials they are going through, because “when I am weak,” then Christ is strong through me (12:10). The Corinthians have been “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man,” Christ is dwelling in their hearts by faith,” and they are “being rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:16-17). What a blessing to see the Corinthians living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20)! Therefore, Paul is not ashamed of any boast he gave of Titus regarding them. Now, this boast would not be in the Corinthians’ flesh, but it would be in Christ living in them, since the only thing Paul would boast in is the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, Paul is boasting in Christ in the Corinthians, not in the Corinthians themselves. This is how his boasting “before Titus, is found a truth” (7:14).

7:15 Because Titus’ affection toward the Corinthians is an “inward affection” (7:15), it is of Christ. Since it is of Christ, then it is more abundant to look past their sin and look at who they are in Christ. Philippians 1:9 says, “That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” Titus has the knowledge of who they are in Christ, and so Christ’s love abounds toward the Corinthians through him. Also, note that Christ’s love should abound “in all judgment.” I Corinthians 2:15 says, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.” This is because he judges, not according to the flesh, but according to the constraint of the love of Christ, judging that, if Christ “died for all, then were all dead” that we should live unto Christ, not unto ourselves (5:14-15). Therefore, Titus looked past the Corinthians’ carnality, and looked at their obedience of Christ living through them.

Note that they received Titus “with fear and trembling” (7:15). This is not fear and trembling over losing their salvation or being scared of Titus. Rather, it is the fear and trembling of Philippians 2:12. The Corinthians recognized the incredible opportunity to have God to work His good pleasure through them (Philippians 2:13), and so they took it seriously, meaning that they worked through their flesh’s desire to continue in carnality and kicked the wicked person out of their midst instead.

7:16 Paul rejoices that he has confidence in the Corinthians in all things. In other words, Paul can share his heart with them in this letter and know that the Corinthians will see the importance of Christ living in them and take the sound doctrine of today’s dispensation seriously.

Among right dividers today, you usually see people do one of two things. Either they take eternal security as a license to sin, or they get involved in theological debates over things that do not matter, such as: 1) Flat earth vs. round earth, 2) Is the gap theory in Genesis 1:1-2 true? and 3) Is Cornelius part of saved Israel or the body of Christ? You cannot prove, with 100% certainty, that one or the other position of the three is true. Even if you could, the answer does not affect Christ living in you one iota.

The reason right dividers like to get in theological debates over such superfluous issues is that “the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Since most right dividers are Bible believers, the Word of God judges their flesh as sinful. Since “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Ephesians 5:29), we do not like the idea of dieing daily to our flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) and walking in the Spirit. At the same time, the Spirit of Christ within us cries, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Also, our flesh “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, it is very easy to fall into the trap of studying God’s Word, ever learning things but never coming to the knowledge of the truth, in order to have a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5-7) so that our flesh is satisfied (Colossians 2:23), and we are tricked into thinking that we are serving God. So, we get into debates about theological issues, but never learn of who we are in Christ and never let Christ live in us (Romans 6-8). This is a fleshly trap into which nearly everyone falls at one time or another.

Since the Corinthians have actually kicked out the guy having sex with his father’s wife and they have let him back into the church after he has turned from this sin and has been saved, Paul can be confident in them in all things. In other words, he sees that the Corinthians will not be tricked by their deceitful flesh, and so they will allow Christ to change other things in their lives as they grow in Christ through God’s Word working in them.

We should note that Paul never mentions speaking in tongues in II Corinthians, while he mentions tongue talking 14 times in I Corinthians 12-14. Why? Because they have become a man, spiritually speaking, unto the measure of the stature of

the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13), and so they have put away the childish thing of tongue talking (I Corinthians 13:11) for the pure Word of God either written down for them in Paul's epistles or spoken to them through prophets. All of this causes Paul to rejoice.

II Corinthians 8 – Material Giving in Christ Results in Spiritual Riches

8 This chapter's theme is that the more you have a willing mind to give of your finances to help others, the more the grace of God abounds in your life. Verse 1 talks about how the grace of God was "bestowed ON the churches of Macedonia," even though they are the ones who gave to the Jerusalem saints. Seeing this, Paul is sending Titus to the Corinthians so this same grace (v. 6) may abound in them, also (v. 7). Since the Corinthians are spiritual adults, Paul does not speak by commandment (v. 8) but gives his advice on what they should do (v. 10). He appeals to the Lord Jesus Christ's grace that He gave His spiritual riches to us, which made Him even richer spiritually (v. 9). This same principle will work for the Corinthians, as well. Giving material wealth for the glory of God will cause the Corinthians to grow spiritually (v. 14). Titus also sees this, which is why he is willing to pay his own way to come to the Corinthians to accept a gift from them to take to the Jerusalem saints (v. 16-17).

8:1-2 Romans 15:25-27 tells us that the Macedonians helped the poor saints in Jerusalem. Jesus had commanded the believing remnant of Israel to "sell that ye have, and give alms" (Luke 12:33). Because Jesus gave the kingdom to the little flock (Luke 12:32), its leaders were now the 12 apostles. All believers (not just those that felt "led" to do so) sold all their possessions and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35) to be distributed as every man had need.

The reason for this was because Jesus commissioned them to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-7), going city to city within Israel until Jesus' second coming (Matthew 10:23), which would have been within their lifetimes, according to the seventy-weeks timeline of Daniel 9:24-27. Also, when the tribulation period started, the mark of the beast would have been implemented halfway through the tribulation period. If they take the mark, they lose their salvation (Revelation 14:9-11). If they do not take the mark, they lose their possessions (Revelation 13:16-17). So, why not sell all of their possessions and use the proceeds to fund believers going from city to city in Israel while they can still participate in the economic system? This would also keep them from being tempted to take the mark, since they would not have any economic possessions to lose by that time for not taking the mark. Also, God promises to take care of the believing remnant of Israel during the last half of the tribulation period (Revelation 12:6). However, a problem arose in this plan when Israel rejected the gospel of the kingdom, and so Jesus put Israel's program on hold at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 and began the Gentiles' program (the body of Christ) with Paul in Acts 9:22-23.

II Corinthians was written around Acts 20:1-3, which is about 20 years after Acts 7. This means that the Jerusalem saints were now poor and dependent upon

believers in the body of Christ to help them out. This is where the Macedonians stepped in with some funds. Knowing this, you would expect 8:1 to say that Paul wanted the Corinthians to know of the grace of God bestowed FROM the churches of Macedonia. Instead, it says “we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed ON the churches of Macedonia.”

This is because living in grace means focusing on the spiritual over the material. For example, when Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take away the thorn in his flesh, Jesus would not do so. Instead, Jesus said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (12:9). Infirmities cause the power of Christ to rest upon you, because, when you are weak in the flesh, then Christ is strong in your spirit (12:9-10).

We learned, from 2:12-13 and 7:5-6, that the Macedonians were being persecuted. When they gave what little money that had to help the Jerusalem saints, they received Christ’s grace and strength in their inner man, just like Paul did when he had to suffer in the flesh. Therefore, “the grace of God [was] bestowed ON” the Macedonians when they gave money to the Jerusalem saints. In other words, the Macedonians learned to trust Pauline doctrine, rather than trusting in their own flesh. Romans 5:2-5 teaches us that standing in grace results in God’s love coming through us, and the Macedonians are a great example of this.

Their “deep poverty” (8:2), then, probably refers to the afflictions they faced for godly living, not monetary poverty, or else they could not have given to the poor saints at Jerusalem. 8:2 goes on to say that “their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” What this means is that their afflictions caused them to focus on the spiritual, such that they were liberal in giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem, and so their “riches” are the grace they have in Christ, not money. In fact, I do not think they were monetarily wealthy, because 8:4-5 seems to indicate that Paul did not want to take their gift. He preferred to get an offering from the Corinthians instead, because they were materially rich (I Corinthians 4:8) and had promised one year ago to give to the Jerusalem saints (8:10). “The riches of their liberality,” then, would refer to their spiritual riches, especially in light of Paul’s example of our Lord Jesus Christ in 8:9. They were also rich in joy (8:2), which is more important than monetary riches. The reason is because the riches of “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:17). Jesus said, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Therefore, it is better for the Corinthians to give some of their material wealth in order to gain spiritual wealth.

In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus says that “a certain poor widow” gave more “than all they which have cast into the treasury,” even though “many that were rich cast in much.” The reason is because all the rich “cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” The Macedonians, then, gave because of the liberality of their spiritual riches, while the Corinthians have physical riches and they have not given yet. This shows that there is usually an inverse relationship between serving God and money (8:14-15), meaning that God

blesses you spiritually when you give materially. Therefore, those, who do not give materially, are not blessed as much spiritually. This is just the opposite of today's health-and-wealth or prosperity gospel, which puts the focus on the earth, saying that God blesses people materially, not spiritually. But, why would God care about that, since "heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matthew 24:35)? If God cared about you getting materially rich, Jesus would have been materially rich.

This is yet another reason why Jesus had the little flock live in communism (Luke 12:33; Acts 2:44-45). Jesus Himself knew of this inverse relationship. Jesus had chosen 12 disciples. Judas Iscariot was a traitor, while the other 11 were believers. Matthew was used to handling money, since he was a tax collector before following Jesus (Matthew 9:9), and probably an honest one. Therefore, Matthew would have been the logical choice to be Jesus' treasurer. However, Jesus chose Judas Iscariot, who was a thief, and Jesus knew he was a thief (John 12:4-6; 13:29). Why choose the one guy, who would steal your money, to be your treasurer? Because He did not want His other disciples to be tempted by money and err from the faith as a result (I Timothy 6:10). Similarly, Paul wants the Corinthians to give to the Jerusalem saints, more for the Corinthians' spiritual benefit than for the Jerusalem saints' material benefit.

8:3-4 "For to their power" means that the Macedonians made the decision themselves to give to the Jerusalem saints. "Beyond their power" means Christ was working in them. This goes back to what we discussed in 8:1-2. Romans 5:2 says that it is by Christ's faith given to believers that we have access into Christ's grace. Therefore, the Macedonians used Christ's faith ("their power") to make the decision to operate in grace, rather than in the flesh. Then, the Macedonians stood in Christ's grace so that Christ's strength would be made perfect in the Macedonians' weakness (12:9). In summary, the Macedonians used Christ in them to make the decision to walk in the Spirit, rather than in the flesh. Once that decision was made, they lived by the faith of the Son of God, such that they gave to the Jerusalem saints "beyond their power" because Christ's strength worked effectually in them to give more than what their flesh would allow.

"Willing of themselves" means that Paul did not have to ask them to give, like he had to do with the Corinthians. They came up with the idea to give to the Jerusalem saints, and they followed through in this on their own without others suggesting it to them.

As mentioned before, the Macedonians were poor financially, and so they almost had to beg Paul to take their gift. This is what "praying us with much intreaty" means (8:4). By contrast, the Corinthians were rich financially, and Paul almost has to beg them to give, not so others can get their money, but so the Corinthians can become rich spiritually. Paul will even say, in 11:8, that he "robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do [the Corinthians] service." Although the Corinthians had money, they would not even pay Paul's expenses, and so Paul had to get support from other churches in order to minister to the Corinthians. Yet, here are the Macedonians, who do not have much money, begging Paul to take some of their money to help out the Jerusalem saints! This shows a general

principle that, if you need financial help, do not ask someone rich, but ask someone in a similar situation as you are in. Rich people are usually rich because they keep the money for themselves, while poor people freely give money to others because they know how hard it is to struggle to meet financial needs.

8:5 “Not as we hoped” makes it sound like Paul did not want the Macedonians to give because they did not have much money (8:4). Paul’s hope was probably for the Corinthians to give, not the Macedonians, so that there would be an equality between the Corinthians and the Jerusalem saints, as mentioned in 8:14.

Nevertheless, the Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord first, considering what Christ in them would do, over what Paul had wanted them to do. In other words, they put the Lord’s will over their own will, which is exactly what Jesus did when it came to the cross. (“Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).) This shows that Christ is living in them. The Macedonians also gave themselves to Paul in that they asked Paul to bring the gift to Jerusalem.

God’s will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). This is not saying that they prayed to be smack dab in the center of God’s will, and God gave them an inner impression to give, because God speaks through His Word today instead. Rather, their giving was based on the application of sound doctrine from Paul’s epistles to the situation. We will also be in the will of God when we read and believe God’s Word and use the mind of Christ to apply it to our situations (I Corinthians 2:9-16). Waiting for “God’s still small voice” to speak God’s perfect will to you is not only something that God is not doing today, but it is also the lazy man’s way out. We are to “STUDY” to shew ourselves approved unto God (II Timothy 2:15), not sit around eating peach cobbler waiting for God to speak His will to our hearts.

8:6 The Macedonians show that Christ working in them exceeded Paul’s expectations of what Christ in them would be. So much so, that now he wants Titus to finish the same grace in the Corinthians. This grace is what we studied in 8:1, which is that, by giving, they may suffer for godly living (II Timothy 3:12), resulting in Christ’s grace being sufficient in the Corinthians, resulting in Christ’s strength being made perfect in the Corinthians’ weakness (12:9-10).

The issue is that, when you are rich in this world, it is easy to be poor spiritually, because the love of money can take over, causing you to err from the faith (I Timothy 6:10). This is why Paul wants the Corinthians to give to the poor saints in Jerusalem. He has seen the Macedonians’ spiritual growth, as a result of giving, and so he wants to see this same growth in the Corinthians.

8:7 The Corinthians abound in faith by believing sound doctrine. They abound in utterance by speaking in tongues and having other things to say, like a psalm, a doctrine, or a revelation (see I Corinthians 14:26). They abound in knowledge by studying the Bible. They abound in diligence by continuing to work on their problems, such as the ones mentioned in I Corinthians. They abound in love to

Paul by following what he says to do. Now, they need to abound in grace spiritually by giving materially.

Giving money is usually the last stronghold of the flesh. You will see friends, families, and marriages broken up over their greediness for money. Civil lawyers primarily make their money by finding legal loopholes to get money for their clients, while pocketing a large sum for themselves. “There is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9), and so it should not surprise us that the Corinthians were taking each other to court (I Corinthians 6:1). This would indicate that they are also controlled by greed, at least to some extent. If they can abound in the grace of freely giving their money to help the poor saints in Jerusalem, it will be a major step toward them walking in the Spirit as a whole. This is why Paul spends two chapters (chapters 8 and 9) on the issue of giving.

When Churchianity thinks of grace, they think of God forgiving them of their sin and giving them eternal life. They are right, but salvation from hell is just the BEGINNING of God’s grace toward us. God puts us under grace the moment we are saved (Romans 6:14). We then operate in that grace when we live by the sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles. In the current context, this means the Corinthians should give to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Yet, Churchianity thinks of giving as a requirement, because they are told that they must give 10% of their income to the church. Giving under the law is not rewarded by God because it is in the flesh. This is why Paul is careful to handle the Corinthians’ gift in such a way that it is given out of grace. How sad that so few Christians today will be rewarded for their giving, because it is done out of compulsion and not out of grace. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (I Corinthians 13:3).

8:8 Unlike Israel, who was required to tithe (Malachi 3:8-10), Paul does not speak by commandment. Today, we are spiritual adults in Christ (Galatians 4:1-7), as opposed to being spiritual children, which Israel was under the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 25:55, Revelation 1:1, and Revelation 21:7). Therefore, Paul is giving his advice to the Corinthians (8:10), not commanding them.

Macedonia was forward in their giving, even though Paul did not ask for money from them (8:4). Thus, the Macedonians are examples that the Corinthians should follow, especially when you consider that the Corinthians are in a better financial position to give than the Macedonians were. Their forwardness shows that it is time for the Corinthians to give as they had promised.

“To prove the sincerity of your love” is another way of saying, “Put your money where your mouth is.” The Corinthians have already abounded in their love toward Paul (8:7). Now, they should prove the sincerity of the love of Christ in them by giving materially to help the poor saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). If they do so, Christ’s love will come through them to a greater extent, making them better ambassadors for Christ (5:20).

8:9 We saw God's grace on Macedonia by giving to Jerusalem in their deep poverty (8:1-2). We see that Titus is trying to accomplish this same grace in the Corinthians (8:6-7). Now, Paul mentions the ultimate example of grace giving, which is by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' grace is that He gave His spiritual wealth to us. "He was rich" in the things of God. He then became sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (5:21). Jesus was rich spiritually; He became poor by becoming sin. He then defeated sin and death, which makes us rich in righteousness. This is what is meant by us being made rich through His poverty (8:9). ("The righteousness of God without the law is manifested..., which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:21-22).)

Jesus' example of grace giving is the greatest example of all, yet it is the one that does not involve money. A lot of times, we think that we help people by throwing money at them, but that usually does not help at all. What that does is it makes a person dependent upon a bailout. The old saying is, "Give a man a fish, and he eats for one day. Teach a man how to fish, and he eats for life." If someone needs money, it is best to give him a job or better equip him to get a job, instead of giving him a handout. Then, he can take care of himself.

Similarly, Jesus did this for us spiritually. He made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself, obeyed His Father unto death, and was highly exalted as a result (Philippians 2:7-9). He will now fill heavenly places with the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:19-23), who He makes qualified for these positions "by the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Now, the Corinthians are seated together with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5-6), and they can give up their material riches to help the saints at Jerusalem materially, which will help the Corinthians spiritually. This is why it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). We should be willing to do the same today. However, our greatest grace gift is not money. It is the gift of Christ's love coming through us as we use the mind of Christ to apply in our lives the sound doctrine that we have learned from Paul's epistles. When we do this, people will know that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:35), which will give us the opportunity to present the mystery gospel and doctrine to people so that they may go to heaven and bring greater glory to God. We can also pray for them on a regular basis. These are things that last for eternity, as opposed to giving money, which is temporal. Therefore, you should not feel like you are not able to give to others if you do not have the financial means to do so. Instead, you can administer grace to others that will have an eternal impact in their lives. Praise the Lord!

8:10-11 The Corinthians have been talking about giving to the saints in Jerusalem for one year now. Again, because the Corinthians are spiritual adults, Paul does not command them to give, but he gives his advice. Since they have already said that they would give to the saints in Jerusalem, it is important that they follow through with this. Believers should always keep their word, because this is a way of showing Christ's love to others. For Israel, Psalm 15 goes over who will dwell on Mount Zion with Christ in the kingdom (Psalm 15:1). The qualifications include those, who swear to their "own hurt, and changeth not"

(Psalm 15:4). In other words, it is important to keep your word, even if it hurts you, because this is a way that people see Christ in you. Therefore, Paul tells the Corinthians that, since they have been promising for one year to give to the Jerusalem saints, it is expedient for them to do so now. In 9:7, Paul says that we are to give as we purpose in our heart. The Corinthians, then, need to give according to what they purposed in their heart one year ago.

Note also that there should “be a performance also out of that which ye have” (8:11). What they have now are faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love to Paul (8:7). These are things that they did not have that much of when Paul wrote I Corinthians. God hates lip service. Jesus spoke of how the Pharisees had a form of godliness with their traditions, but they rejected God’s commandments. He said, “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8). God said to religious Israel in the Old Testament, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them” (Amos 5:21-22). One year ago, the Corinthians could have given a huge gift to the Jerusalem saints, but God would have actually hated the gift if it was given to make a fair show in the flesh. However, now that the Corinthians have abounded in spiritual things, they can give out of a willing mind, and they will grow spiritually as a result, which is how God rewards them.

8:12 You can have a willing mind to give all that you want to, but that gift can only be accepted if you actually give it. Also, it is only “accepted according to that a man hath.” In other words, I may want to give you one million dollars, but I cannot give it to you, because I do not have that kind of money. This shows that the reason Paul did not try to get the Corinthians to give in the first epistle is because they were carnal.

Now that the Corinthians have abounded in faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and in love toward Paul (8:7), they have the spiritual riches to give materially. In other words, if they give now, it will be out of “a willing mind” of Christ in them, not in order to make a fair shew in the flesh (Galatians 6:12) or for a tax deduction. It will be godly giving, rather than the giving of this world (7:10). In other words, the Corinthians now have the spiritual wealth, as well as the material wealth, to give to the poor saints at Jerusalem, like Jesus had the spiritual wealth to conquer sin, death, and hell for us (8:9).

8:13-15 Paul does not want to burden the Corinthians in order to ease the Macedonians. Rather, Paul recognizes the inverse relationship between spiritual and material wealth. The Corinthians have material abundance, but not spiritual abundance. The poor saints in Jerusalem have spiritual abundance, but material lack. When the Corinthians are willing to give materially, they are putting emphasis on the spiritual, and so the Jews’ spiritual abundance is a supply for the spiritual want of the Corinthians, just like the material abundance of the Corinthians is a material supply for the poor saints at Jerusalem. This is how giving to Jerusalem creates an equality between them and the Corinthians.

I Timothy 6:17-19 is a great explanation of this. It says that the “rich in this world” should not “trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.” When they do this, they will be “rich in good works.” This lays “up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” This is not saying that they will not have eternal life if they do not give. They already have eternal life, but they lay hold on it when they give, meaning that Christ’s eternal life lives out through them when they trust in the living God over material riches. This is how they will be living in heaven in eternity. Therefore, they can lay hold on this life right now by operating in the spirit by the living God, instead of operating in the flesh by their own lusts.

This principle is also mentioned in Exodus 16:18, which Paul quotes here. In its original context, Israel was collecting manna in the wilderness to eat. Some gathered more than an omer of manna and some gathered less, but there was an equality among them, because they had enough according to their eating (Exodus 16:16-18). In other words, those, with too much food, gave to those with too little food. Similarly, the Corinthians have more than they need, while Jerusalem saints have less than they need. Therefore, the Corinthians should give to the Jerusalem saints in order to create an equality.

This is why Jesus created a communism society among the little flock in early Acts (see Acts 2:44-46 and 4:34-37). By having all things in common, material strife among believers is eliminated so that the focus is on the spiritual (This is sometimes why private schools have their students wear uniforms.). This is something the Corinthians need because they were already having fights over material things. For example, when they got together for “the Lord’s supper”, some were eating and getting drunk, while others were going home hungry (I Corinthians 11:20-22). Contrast this with the believing remnant of Israel, who were “continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house.” They “did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God” (Acts 2:46-47). This fellowship shows the difference between a poor church and a rich church. You see this today, as well. People at city churches go to church, do not talk to anyone except for maybe a polite “hello,” and then leave after an hour to go about their business. Meanwhile, churches, out in the country, will have potlucks, have a great time of fellowship, and spend a few hours together, enjoying each other’s company. This was especially true in poor areas of the United States in the early 1900s. This is because, when you are poor, you have nothing else to do except enjoy each other’s company, while, if you are rich, you are busy with the cares of this life. Giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem will help the rich Corinthians gain a little of the spiritual wealth that the poor saints have.

8:16 Titus has the same care for the Corinthians that the Corinthians should have for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Because of this, he was willing to go to the Corinthians to help them overcome their carnality that we see in I Corinthians, even though they probably had much more money than he did. This is because, when you let Christ live in you, you “know...no man after the flesh” (5:16), but after the spirit. Therefore, Titus sees the Corinthians’ spiritual poverty, rather than

their material riches, and desires to make them rich in Christ, as Christ has made Titus spiritually rich.

8:17 Paul desired Titus to go to the Corinthians a second time (8:6) so that they would learn to have Christ live in them instead of just stopping their carnality but not getting rid of legalism. But, the choice to do so belongs to Titus, because he is under grace, not under the law. Not only does Titus decide to go to the Corinthians, but he also went “of his own accord.” Perhaps this means that he paid for his own way, because he saw the opportunity for Christ to live in the Corinthians, having come out of their carnality in his first visit to them. This shows how that, in grace, there is no ulterior motive. There is just the opportunity to share God’s love with others, and so Titus goes to the Corinthians of his own accord.

8:18-19 It is interesting that Titus is mentioned by name six times in chapters 7 and 8, but this “brother” is not even mentioned by name once. Based upon what is said about him, this brother appears to be Luke. Luke wrote the book of Acts, but his name is only mentioned twice in the Bible—in Colossians 4:14 and II Timothy 4:11. When referring to Paul’s apostolic journeys in Acts, Luke uses the term “they” until Acts 16:10, where he starts using the term “we.” This shows that Luke joined Paul, Silas, and Timotheus at this point. Therefore, “whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches” (8:18) probably refers to Luke joining with Paul, since Luke is not ever mentioned as being with Jesus.

Churchianity uses the term “gospels” to refer only to Matthew – John, yet Paul uses it to refer to the book of Acts. Perhaps, then, Paul uses the term “the gospel” to refer to “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) that is preached in Acts 9-28. Perhaps Paul refrains from using Luke’s name, because Luke was saved under Israel’s gospel of the kingdom. Maybe the reason, that Luke’s praise is “throughout all the churches,” is because he helped out Israel by writing Luke and Acts, and he helped out Paul by going on apostolic journeys with him. Thus, his praise is in “all” churches, because he helped out both programs—both Israel and the body of Christ. In any event, both Luke and Titus are coming to the Corinthians.

“This grace” (8:19) would go back to “the same grace” in 8:6 and would be a reference to taking up a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Perhaps this explains why Luke began traveling with Paul in Acts 16, i.e., he was chosen to bring offerings from churches to the saints at Jerusalem. This makes sense because his praise is in all the churches. Therefore, both the Jewish and the Gentile churches would trust Luke with offerings.

This idea makes sense in light of the fact that Paul refers to “the SAME Lord” receiving the glory. The word “same” probably indicates that Jesus Christ is Lord over both Israel’s program and the body of Christ’s program. (Only right dividers would see this.) Paul mentions this at least two other times in his epistles. I Corinthians 1:2 says that there are saints “in every place [who] call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Jesus is “their” Lord, meaning the Lord of Israel’s program, and “our” Lord, meaning the Lord of the body of Christ’s

program. Paul also uses the term in Romans 10:12. He says that “whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:11). Why? Because “the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him,” both Jew and Greek (Romans 10:12). Note that Paul also mentions the Lord’s riches in Romans 10:12, which would be the spiritual blessings that He gives us for believing the gospel, whether it be the gospel of the kingdom for the Jews or the gospel of grace for the Greek.

“Declaration of your ready mind” (8:19) would be a reference to the Corinthians declaring a year ago that they wanted to give to the poor saints at Jerusalem (8:10). So, their mind is ready. Now, they just need to follow through with their giving. By contrast, if they gave “to make a fair shew in the flesh” (Galatians 6:12), this would be giving for material reasons, rather than spiritual reasons. The Jerusalem saints would have the money just the same, but it would not be an administration of grace. Grace is administered by Christ living in the Corinthians, not by doing things to puff up the flesh.

8:20-21 Paul desires to avoid having blame placed upon him in the administration of the Corinthians’ gift to the poor saints at Jerusalem. This is why Paul sends Titus and Luke to the Corinthians to obtain the gift. In other words, if Paul took care of everything himself, in relation to the offering, there could be people who accuse him of keeping some of the money for himself. Therefore, he has checks and balances set up so that no one will question his honesty in this matter.

I work as an accountant for the government. We have auditors who make sure measures are in place to keep funds from being embezzled. For example, I handle accounts payable, but I have no access to the payroll system, so that I cannot launder money from one system to the other in order to give it to myself. When I was the pastor of a small church, I handled the money because no one else wanted to handle it. When I counted the offering, I did it in the presence of another person and had that person initial that they verified the amount of the offering. That way, no one could accuse me of stealing funds.

This is what Paul does here by having Titus and Luke handle the offering. This accomplishes two things: 1) It keeps Paul from being tempted to steal funds, and 2) It keeps others from falsely accusing him of wrongdoing. This is important when you teach the truth. Since you can do nothing against the truth (13:8), those, who try to destroy your ministry, will do anything they can to attack you. Therefore, we need to live above reproach and do not even appear to do something dishonest, as I Thessalonians 5:22 says, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” This is why all churches need internal controls on their money as much as possible, because, if people cannot attack you based on doctrine, you do not want to give them the opportunity to attack you personally.

“This abundance” refers to grace giving. The Corinthians have already abounded “in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us.” They should now abound “in this grace also” (8:7). If they do, then Paul, Titus, and Luke can administer the abundance of grace from the Corinthians to the Jerusalem saints.

“In the sight of the Lord” means “in secret,” and “in the sight of men” means “out in the open.” For example, if you are an alcoholic, you may try to hide your problem and maybe you are able to convince people that you do not have a problem. (Legalists are really good at hiding sins.) However, the alcohol problem will still hurt your life. Therefore, you also need to get rid of the problem in the sight of the Lord. Similarly, megachurch pastors may be able to look good to others, but they are not being good ambassadors for Christ if secret sin is controlling their lives. The Pharisees are a great example of this. They did not teach as one having authority, like Jesus did, because they were so worried about what people thought of them, rather than God (Matthew 7:28-29).

By having Titus and Luke work with Paul regarding the money, there are two witnesses. This shows that they are handling the money honestly “in the sight of men.” Of course, they would also do this “in the sight of the Lord.” However, they need to make sure that everyone knows that they are handling the money honestly, not so they look good to others, but so others are drawn to the Christ living in them (Galatians 2:20), instead of blaming them, because man judges on the outward appearance (I Samuel 16:7).

8:22 “Our brother” is someone with Titus and Luke. Perhaps this is Timothy, because he is also called “our brother” in 1:1. Timothy certainly meets the qualification of being proven diligent “oftentimes.”

“But now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you” (8:22). If Paul has great confidence in the Corinthians and they have great material possessions (I Corinthians 4:8), then Paul thinks they will give a large offering to the poor saints at Jerusalem. This means that Timothy will have to be “much more diligent” than before, because the temptation to steal funds will be greater, and he wants to make sure he keeps the money safe, since it may be a lot of money. I can tell you from personal experience at work that I am diligent when I cut small checks, but I am “much more diligent” when I cut large checks. You can also see the importance of getting all of the offering to those in Jerusalem by the fact that Paul sent at least three, faithful men to do the job.

8:23 The Corinthians were probably expecting Paul himself to collect the money and give it to the Jerusalem saints, since Paul had begotten them through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15). From this verse, it appears that Paul put Titus in charge of collecting the money, probably because he had already built up a good relationship with the Corinthians (7:6-7). It is one thing for Titus to visit the Corinthians and report back to Paul on how they are doing. It is quite another thing to turn over a large sum of money to Titus. Therefore, Paul puts in the letter that Titus “is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you” (8:23). In other words, giving the funds to Titus is just as good as giving them to Paul himself. “Our brethren,” then, would be Luke and Timothy. They are called “the messengers of the churches” because both have been involved in getting the mystery gospel to churches all over, both Jews and Gentiles.

What an honor to be called “the glory of Christ” (8:23). This shows that we bring glory to Christ when we present our bodies a living sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 12:1) and live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).

8:24 Since Titus, Luke, and Timothy were known in many churches, how the Corinthians treat them will probably get back to other churches. Therefore, not only do the Corinthians have the opportunity to help the Jerusalem saints and to help themselves spiritually, but they also have the opportunity for other churches to see Christ living in them. This will prove Christ’s love coming through them and possibly give them the opportunity to serve other churches to the glory of God. This would also make Paul look good, because his confidence in Christ living in them would be proven correct. This is not to feed Paul’s pride, but it is to magnify his office as “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). This means that Paul would also have more opportunities to minister to others, which means Christ would also get greater glory through Paul (8:23). Therefore, it is important that the Corinthians entrust Titus, Luke, and Timothy with the offering to give to the Jerusalem saints.

II Corinthians 9 – Christ in You Giving God’s Love to Others

9 This chapter continues the subject of chapter 8, which is giving to the Jerusalem saints. The Corinthians had already pledged one year ago to give (8:10). In fact, their pledge “hath provoked very many” to give, including those in Macedonia (v. 2). Paul believes it is necessary to exhort the Corinthians to give right now (v. 5) for the spiritual benefit of all (v. 4). Paul wants to be sure that the Corinthians give as they purpose in their heart (v. 7), not because they have to or want to look good to Paul. This way, they will be rewarded by God by all of God’s grace abounding to the Corinthians, resulting in spiritual fruit (v. 8), as promised in Isaiah 55:10. This results in God’s unspeakable gift (v. 15) of God’s love coming through the Corinthians “unto all men” (v. 13), as they stand in God’s grace (v. 14). Therefore, Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians goes far beyond the monetary and reaches into the spiritual realm of administering God’s love to others by operating in grace, rather than in legalism.

9:1-2 Corinth was the capital of Achaia, and Achaia is also sometimes called Greece in the Bible. Therefore, when Paul says “that Achaia was ready a year ago” (9:2), he is referring to the Corinthian church. These verses show that the Corinthians actually led many others to give to the Jerusalem saints, even though they had not given themselves.

II Timothy 3:5 talks about some people “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” You will notice that some people like to talk about how much they love the Lord or their church, but you do not really see Christ living in them. They live like unbelievers, but they try to cover it up by talking in Christianese, by wearing Christian t-shirts, or by displaying Christian bumper stickers on their vehicles, for example. I get the impression that the Corinthians were like this when they said they were going to give to the Jerusalem saints. They have money, but yet, it is one year later, and they still have not given. They were carnal when Paul

wrote to them before (I Corinthians 3:3). Now, they have grown in Christ. Therefore, Paul says, “It is superfluous for me to write to you” regarding “ministering to the saints” (9:1). They had led the way in the idea of giving to the Jerusalem saints; they just had not done it yet. Paul had been boasting of them to the Macedonians, such that the Macedonians went ahead and gave, and here are the Corinthians, still sitting around, picking their noses, having given Jerusalem diddly-squat. Paul is basically saying, “Let’s get on with it, Corinthians!”

The word “godliness” appears 15 times in the Bible (I Timothy 2:2,10, 3:16, 4:7,8, 6:3,5,6,11; II Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:3,6,7, 3:11). The first appearance is in I Timothy, because you must have sound doctrine operating in your inner man before you are godly, i.e., Christ lives in you. Christ did not die just to save you from hell. He died “that He might sanctify [you] and cleanse [you] with the washing of water by the word, that He might present...to Himself a glorious church” (Ephesians 5:26-27). Now that the Corinthians have moved on from the carnality of the first epistle, Paul is trying to build true godliness in the Corinthians in this second epistle.

9:3-5 Paul has sent Titus, Luke, and Timotheous (8:16-22) to the Corinthians to collect their gift to the Jerusalem saints. One reason is so that the Corinthians do not look bad to the churches who have given already, especially those who gave in the first place, because they heard the Corinthians were going to give. A second reason is that, if Paul brings some Macedonians with him, it will really look bad, given that the Macedonians have given already when they did not have much (8:1-4), while the Corinthians have not given when they have a lot (I Corinthians 4:8). Third, it will make Paul look bad that he had “confident boasting” (9:4) in the willingness of the Corinthians to give, when they have not yet given one, plug nickel, much less one, red cent. Fourth, and most importantly, Paul wants their giving to be “as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness” (9:5). In other words, “God loveth a cheerful giver,” not those who give “grudgingly or of necessity” (9:7). To God, MOTIVE IS EVERYTHING!

This last reason is completely backward from what Churchianity does. They try to hit you with as much guilt as possible so that you give them the big bucks to ease your guilty conscience. (This is not much different from the selling of indulgences that so enraged Martin Luther that it started the Protestant Reformation.) Paul, on the other hand, wants to make sure that the Corinthians give as they purpose in their heart and not out of covetousness, to ease a guilty conscience, or to look good to Paul. Therefore, he sends three people in his place first. They can then collect the gift from the Corinthians’ willing mind so that they are rewarded by God for their giving. Churchianity, on the other hand, is only concerned with funding their programs. Therefore, they have you “give until it hurts,” rather than giving as a cheerful giver (9:7).

9:6 Churchianity likes to use a verse like this to support their health and wealth gospel. They will say something like, “If you sow a seed of \$100, God will give you \$1,000.” However, this verse is referring to spiritual blessings, not physical ones.

In fact, even in Israel's program, the material blessings that they receive will be in God's kingdom on earth, not while they are going through the tribulation period.

Churchianity likes to quote Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." They do not bother to read the verses preceding this. Verse 35 says to "love...your enemies, and do good...and your reward shall be great." Verse 36 says to be merciful. Verse 37 says not to judge, not to condemn, and to forgive. Therefore, the giving, in the context, is giving spiritual things, not money, so that the lost sheep of the house of Israel may be saved. When they do this, then men will give into their bosom. This will happen in God's kingdom on earth, not during the Antichrist's rule. Isaiah 61:6 says regarding Israel, "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." This takes place in Jesus' millennial reign on earth, which is after His second coming. It does not happen before then, because Satan is "the god of this world" (4:4). As such, he has his Antichrist ruling the world during the last half of the tribulation period, and believing Israel cannot get food because they cannot buy or sell because they will not take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17).

In fact, Jesus specifically spells this out to the twelve apostles. Peter tells Jesus, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, **in the regeneration** when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:27-29). Therefore, Jesus' apostles were called to forsake **all** and not be rewarded for doing so until Jesus sets up God's kingdom on earth (Revelation 5:10). Of course, the moneygrubbers of Churchianity will not tell you these things.

This same principle, of sacrificing now to be rewarded in God's kingdom, applies in the dispensation of grace. II Timothy 3:12 says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." When Satan is the god of this world (4:4) and people follow his course (Ephesians 2:2), why would we expect anything different? You may say, "But my pastor is doing well materially, and he is a man of God." He may be doing well materially, but that is because people in his congregation are causing him to do well. If he were teaching the truth, they would probably reject him because he is not scratching their fleshly ears (II Timothy 4:3-4). Most churches are man-made systems, and the leaders in those churches do well as long as they operate within the system. However, once someone goes against the course of this world, he is persecuted by his flesh and by those following their flesh, which is the majority of those attending church.

Instead, we should expect to suffer persecution for godly living. We should look for our reward in heaven, not on this earth. 4:17-18 says, "For our light affliction,

which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Paul is a case in point. He says that he “profited in the Jews’ religion above many [his] equals” (Galatians 1:14). “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8). Paul was a man of God. In fact, he was “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). Yet, he was wealthy before he became a Christian and struggled to survive materially when Christ was living in him, because he was going against the course of this world. Churchianity is not going to tell you that Paul “suffered the loss of all things” in order to “win Christ.” But, that is okay, because Paul will reap bountifully because he sowed bountifully. However, his reward is in heaven, not on the earth. He is “blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). He forgets “those things which are behind,” which would be the things of this world, and reaches “forth unto those things which are before,” which would be the things of heaven. He presses “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14), not toward health and wealth in this present world.

9:7 “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart” means that you should create a budget and give according to that. In other words, do not give based upon emotion, give as you plan. This results in spiritual giving, not fleshly giving.

Man’s church system tries to make you feel guilty if you do not give a 10% tithe. And, you had better give in the pastor appreciation offering, or you must not love God. They do this because they can get more money out of emotionalism, than out of people giving what they purpose in their heart. The only way you will purpose in your heart to give a lot of money is if: 1) You study and believe God’s Word to the point that you value spiritual things over material things (few Christians ever do this), and 2) You see your church taking the Bible as their final authority and so God’s will is done through them (very few churches ever do this). And, even if both of these things are true, you still may not give a bunch of money to your church, because they probably do not need it because they will be small if they teach the truth. Both of these points take a whole lot of work. It is much easier for a church to create an emotional stir within shallow Christians to give them a bunch of money, since the church’s material prosperity is more important to them than the spiritual prosperity of Christ through believers.

So, they will say that you are robbing God by not giving your tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8). However, the tithe was for Israel for the Levites to live off of, since they administered the Mosaic law. They were the mediators between God and Israel. Not giving your tithe was robbing God because God set up the Levitical system, the Levites needed food to survive (They were to bring the tithes (food) into the storehouse, not the offering bag (Malachi 3:10).), and the law had many

requirements that took a lot of time to read, understand, and apply (Jesus called these people “lawyers” (Luke 7:30, 11:45-46, 14:3), and you know that lawyers today make the big bucks.).

Today, Jesus is the mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5). Jesus is in heaven; therefore, He does not need your money like the Levites did. Granted, there are bishops (overseers) of God today (I Timothy 3:1-7), but these are people who teach sound doctrine and make sure no false doctrine is allowed to infiltrate the church (I Timothy 1:3-4). They are not mediators of God. They are not required to be in a temple, know the Mosaic law, and make sure everything is done according to that law. Today, Jesus’ blood saves people and His Word to us today through Paul sanctifies us. We do not have to go to a pastor, because the Holy Ghost is given unto us to teach us the things of God and we have the mind of Christ to apply these things to our lives (I Corinthians 2:9-16). Granted, bishops (overseers) can help us with doctrine, but it is the Godhead Who ultimately teaches it and applies it in our lives. Therefore, there is not the need for the full-time support of bishops like there was a need for full-time support of the Levites. Granted, large churches do require full-time staff, but a large church is man’s doing, not God’s doing. When Paul wrote to the Romans, there were at least 5 house churches that he wrote to, not to a megachurch (Romans 16:5,10,11,14,15). Therefore, the organizational structure of the body of Christ does not necessitate full-time staff, because our head is Christ, not a pastor or bishop (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Having said that, you can still give to support those who are being good ambassadors for Christ. After all, getting God’s Word out to people does involve some monetary expenses, but the spiritual growth of a pastor will probably be greater if he supports himself, rather than you supporting him, just like the material well-being of your adult child is better if he gets a job than if he relies upon you to support him. More importantly, you can also give to saints who need help, like the Corinthians have said they will do for the Jerusalem saints.

However, if you give based upon emotion, you will not be rewarded by God. Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1). Even if you give secretly, but you give out of a guilty conscience or as a way to pay for your sins, God will not reward you, because it is of the flesh. God is not looking for lip service. Jesus said to Israel, in quoting Isaiah 29:13, “This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Mark 7:6). Saul said, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord,” but Samuel told him, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (I Samuel 15:20-22). This is why God told Israel, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them” (Amos 5:21-22). Put in today’s terms, even if you go to church and give 20% of your income, if you do so for fleshly reasons, rather than based upon faith in God’s Word rightly divided, God does not accept your giving. Therefore, you can give all the money that you have,

but if the giving does not come from what you purpose in your heart, the Lord will not reward you for it.

By the way, before you are saved, your “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). Once you are saved, your heart is circumcised, such that it now resides in your spirit, which is alive in Christ (Colossians 2:10-12). Therefore, purposing to give in your heart is something that comes from your spirit, which is based upon sound doctrine built up in your inner man, rather than being based upon emotions, which are of the flesh and of the devil according to James 3:15.

You cannot buy off God. God wants you to serve Him out of a pure heart based upon sound doctrine, not out of a feeling of obligation. You are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14), but people do not want grace because the flesh cannot manipulate it. They also do not want the responsibility of adulthood that grace brings. They would rather be like the “weaned child” of Psalm 131:2. Yet, even under the law, God looked for a willing heart to give, because only faith pleases God, not our filthy-rags performance (Isaiah 64:6). “Take ye from amongst you an offering unto the Lord: **whosoever is of a willing heart**, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass” (Exodus 35:5).

Because God was looking for a willing heart, Paul sent Titus, Luke, and Timotheous ahead of him. He did not want people to give in an attempt to impress Paul. He only wanted them to give as they purpose in their heart. That way, they will be rewarded by God. Thus, a cheerful giver gives out of the motivation of letting Christ live through him, living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), not because the pastor guilted him into giving.

9:8 God making all grace abound toward you does not mean that God is promising them material riches. 12:9 says that Christ gave Paul grace for Christ to be strong through his thorn in the flesh. “Grace,” then, does not mean money or possessions. Rather, it means that Christ lives in them. Remember 8:1, where Paul mentions “the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.” They gave money to the poor saints in Jerusalem, yet they received grace from God, meaning that they grew spiritually. They were “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16) because giving up their physical possessions caused them to have God’s perspective that the spiritual is what matters. Therefore, God’s grace abounding to the Corinthians means that they will grow spiritually by giving to the poor saints in Jerusalem, valuing the spiritual over the material. It does not mean that God will give them a wad of cash!

When they operate in God’s grace, they are living by the faith of the Son of God. God’s grace, then, gives them “all sufficiency in all things” (9:8), meaning that they will have the spiritual capacity, by God’s grace, to show God’s love to others, no matter the situation. Jesus told His disciples, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Christ in them is sufficient to overcome their vile flesh (Philippians 3:21). They can present their bodies a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1) to God, and Christ through them will cause them to “abound to every good work”

(9:8). Therefore, this does not mean that, if they give, God will give them even more money so that they can use it to help more people out. If that were the case, the richest people in the world would also be the most godly, and that is definitely NOT the case!

9:9-10 This is a parenthetical reference, quoting the Old Testament passages of Psalm 112:9 and Isaiah 55:10. We need to keep in mind that God made a material covenant with Israel. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 says that Israel will receive material blessings for their faithfulness. God promises to bless them materially in God's eternal kingdom on earth when they give up material possessions for the cause of Christ. We see this in Matthew 19:29, where Jesus said, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." The book of Job is a type of this for the nation of Israel in the tribulation period.

However, for us today, we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in HEAVENLY places" (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, our reward is in heaven, not on the earth. Since we have a different contract with God than Israel does, we also have different promises. Paul does not give us verses 9-10 to tell us that God will give us bread (Matthew 6:11) or bless "the fruit of thy ground" (Deuteronomy 28:4). Rather, these verses are here to show us that God takes care of His children, according to the unique promises He has given them, according to their specific dispensation. Therefore, God will fulfill His promises of material blessings to Israel (For example, Psalm 37:25 says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."), and God will fulfill His promises of spiritual blessings to believers today in the body of Christ. (Note that God also required physical sacrifices from Israel. They were required to pay a tithe. When the kingdom of heaven was at hand in Acts 1-7, they were REQUIRED to sell all that they had and lay the proceeds at the apostles' feet (Luke 12:33; Acts 2:44-47, 4:34-37). Today, we are told that we are worse than an infidel if we do not take care of our own household (I Timothy 5:8). This is why it is so important that we rightly divide the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), recognizing which instructions and promises belong to us and which belong to Israel.)

Note also how these verses are geared toward the spiritual, even for Israel, because this is what God is ultimately concerned with, even for them. Verse 9 says that God has given to the poor, which means that "His righteousness remaineth for ever." In its original context, this means that God has dispersed the gospel and given eternal life to the believing remnant of Israel. These believers would also be "the poor" of this verse. They recognize their sin, making them "poor in spirit," and so God gives them His righteousness (Matthew 5:3). This is how "His righteousness remaineth for ever" (9:9).

Receiving God's righteousness means that they now can have Christ multiply their seed "and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (9:10), meaning that others can be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth through you. This shows the Corinthians that, by sowing material riches to the poor saints in Jerusalem,

their own spiritual riches will increase (8:14). However, if they give grudgingly or of necessity (9:7), this will not be the seed of God's righteousness, which means they will not receive spiritual riches. This is why it was important for Paul to send Titus, Luke, and Timotheus to collect the offering ahead of him coming there so that they would not be giving in the flesh, i.e., giving to impress Paul. Therefore, the context of 9:10 means that God will minister spiritual seed (God's Word) to the Corinthians, resulting in an increase in their fruits of righteousness as a result of giving to the poor Jerusalem saints.

9:11 You can read the Old Testament and see God being faithful to His promise to give blessings to believing Israel. This is an example to us that God will also enrich us "in every thing to all bountifulness" (9:11). Again, this is spiritual for us, because God made a spiritual covenant with us, not a material one. Even in Israel's program, we see the believing remnant being poor in the tribulation period, relying upon sympathetic Gentiles (Matthew 25:31-40) and praying to God daily for food (Matthew 6:11). So, Israel does not receive material blessings until the kingdom, and that is the same with us Gentiles today. Therefore, the "bountifulness" that we receive is of people being saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). This is why the bountifulness causes thanksgiving to God. How wonderful that this thanksgiving to God comes through us. God said, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?" (Isaiah 66:1). The place of God's rest is Christ. Since Christ lives in us, God uses our bodies to demonstrate His love to mankind. This only happens when we live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). We then have the distinct privilege of having God live in our yielded vessels.

A note on Israel's material blessings: When Israel came out of Egypt, they were a bunch of pagan unbelievers. Then again, so was everyone else. God showed mercy upon Israel, placing them above the nations (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; 7:6; 10:15-16; 14:2) so that the Gentiles, starting in Acts 9, would accept God's love when God started the dispensation of grace (Romans 11:30-32).

God's mercy was that He placed Israel under His rules. Since God created the nations, He knows how to prosper them. To the extent that Israel obeyed God, they were blessed materially. To the extent that Israel disobeyed God, they were cursed materially (Deuteronomy 28). Israel remained in unbelief throughout their whole history (Acts 7:51). This resulted in God bringing them under Gentile rule in Daniel's day, and this continues until Jesus' second coming (Daniel 2). During these "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), Israel is generally treated poorly. Once Jesus comes back, believing Israel will be kings and priests on the earth with Jesus (Revelation 5:10), and they will "eat the riches of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 61:6).

Therefore, Israel's material blessings and cursings are based upon a special covenantal relationship that God made with them. The covenant God made with Gentiles today is that, when we trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), we are seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6) and "blessed...with all spiritual blessings"

(Ephesians 1:3) there. This is a completely different contract than what God made with Israel. Therefore, we should not expect God to bless or curse us materially on the earth today. Instead, we are blessed when we go along with whatever the world is doing, and we are cursed when we do not. Since Satan is “the god of this world” (4:4), we can expect to suffer persecution for godly living (II Timothy 3:12). However, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4:17).

9:12 “This service” is giving God’s love to others, which are also the fruits of righteousness (9:10). In this case, “the want of the saints” (9:12) is to have enough money for food, clothing, and shelter. It is interesting how spoiled modern society today thinks that their wants are needs. We all would probably agree that food, clothing, and shelter are needs. Yet, Paul says that they are wants, because what we really need is all spiritual, e.g., salvation from hell, sound doctrine in the inner man, and the fruit of the Spirit through our lives. When you think like Christ does, which we can do since we have the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), everything is flip-flopped from “the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2). This is because you “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Paul told the Philippians that he “rejoiced in the Lord greatly” that they had taken care of Paul (Philippians 4:10). Then he added, “not that I speak in respect of want” (Philippians 4:11). Paul was not rejoicing because he had some extra dough. Rather, he was rejoicing that the Philippians yielded themselves to Christ so that God’s love came through them so that others may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Paul said that he had “LEARNED, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). He learned this by valuing the spiritual over the physical, by dying daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) by reading and believing God’s Word. This means that he had to let the word of Christ dwell in him (Colossians 3:16) in order to overcome the appetites of the flesh (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16)). He then said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). The “all things” is to overcome the flesh. It is not to graduate from college, run a marathon, or become president of a company. Christ in you strengthens your spirit to overcome the flesh (This is why Christ is identified as “which”, not “who.” It is the action of Christ in your inner man that is in view here. The action of Christ through God’s Word is the thing that strengthens you.). With this mentality, fleshly needs are viewed as wants, because our true needs are spiritual, because the spiritual is eternal, while the things of this live are temporal or temporary (4:18). This truly makes us other-worldly creatures (Philippians 3:20).

The way that the Corinthians’ service is “abundant” (9:12) is by it helping others spiritually, as well. Every life yielded to Christ has a snowball effect. Christ’s love coming through you helps the person receiving it, and it creates a desire for that love in the hearts of others, who see it. Paul said that the Corinthians’ zeal to give “hath provoked very many” (9:2). This is how the Corinthians’ administration of this service brought about “many thanksgivings unto God” (9:12).

Remember, from 5:11, that the life of Christ coming through us is “made manifest unto God,” but Paul also wanted Christ to be made manifest in the Corinthians’ conscience. Here, we see a practical example of this. If the Corinthians give to the Jerusalem saints, their service of God will supply “the want of the saints,” which will result in “many thanksgivings unto God.”

In other words, giving sound doctrine to the Corinthians SHOULD make Christ’s life through Paul manifest in the Corinthians’ conscience. But, giving to poor saints, who cannot give you money back in return, makes the Christ life in the Corinthians clear to everyone, including those who walk by the flesh, because giving is a fleshly manifestation of the spiritual life of Christ coming through them. The flesh looks for ulterior motives, because in your flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). But, when the Corinthians give to people they will never see in person and those Jerusalem saints cannot do anything for them in the flesh, the possibility for an ulterior motive is eliminated and so many thanksgivings go to God.

Note also that this verse mentions “the administration of this service.” So many Christians wonder how they can serve the Lord. They may think they need to lead worship at church, be a Sunday school teacher, become a deacon, be a missionary, or something else that has been identified by Churchianity as a ministry position in which you serve the Lord. However, serving the Lord is simply accomplished by reading God’s Word and letting the Holy Ghost teach it to you (I Corinthians 2:9-16). You have then let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16). You are then strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16), and you can use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to apply that sound doctrine to your situation. The result is that you serve God, even in the mundane tasks of life, such as giving a little money to help saints with material needs. This may not get a lot of attention from others, but our goal should be to let Christ live in us, not to receive the praise of men.

9:13 Chemists are known for conducting experiments, where they mix chemicals to see the reaction from doing so in order to create something new and useful. For example, two hydrogen atoms can be combined with one oxygen atom to create water. Here, Paul calls the giving to Jerusalem saints “the experiment of this ministration” (9:13), which is “the administration of this service” to Christ. The experiment is that they mix living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20) with the Word of God (Romans 10:17) in the living sacrifice of their bodies (Romans 12:1). The new and useful thing then created is “the love of God” being “shed abroad in [their] hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:5).

Note that the Corinthians have a “professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ” (9:13). Of course, the Corinthians are already saved, but they still subject themselves unto the gospel of Christ. The reason is because no good thing dwells in your flesh (Romans 7:18), and so you should only glory in the cross of Christ, even after you are saved (Galatians 6:14). The only way you can do this is by recognizing your eternal security. If you subject yourself to just one law, you have fallen from grace operating in your life (Galatians 5:3-4). You are now operating

under the law, and Christ CANNOT live in you. “I through the law [Christ’s fulfillment of the law] am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Galatians 2:18). Once I learn that “the body of the sins of the flesh” (Colossians 2:11) has been destroyed and I am under grace (Romans 6:14), sound doctrine can operate in my life. Romans 11:6 teaches that grace and works do not mix. If I am under the law, I am “a debtor to do the whole law” (Galatians 5:3). Therefore, in order for Christ to live in us, our souls must have a “professed subjection to the gospel of Christ” (9:13). Legalism is living to myself. Grace is living unto God by Christ living in us. Therefore, eternal security is not a license to sin, but it is the unique opportunity to have Christ living in us, which, by the way, is the only way we can fulfill the law anyway (Romans 13:10). Therefore, if you want to live for God, stop trying in the energies of the flesh, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly instead (Colossians 3:16) so that you live unto God.

Given the context of sharing God’s love by being subject unto the gospel of Christ, “your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men” (9:13) is the distribution of God’s love to others. This is manifest to the Jerusalem saints by giving them money. Their liberal distribution of God’s love through Christ living in them (Colossians 3:4) is manifest “unto all men” in various ways, whether it be by prayer or actions. What is important is the attitude of love coming from the Corinthians to others. This is how Christ is ministered to others, not by shoving the gospel down someone’s throat. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

9:14 You can see the liberal distribution of God’s love from the Jerusalem saints to the Corinthians by their prayer for them. Love, not money, is the currency of heaven, and so God is pleased with His love comes through us to others. This is why God made man in the first place, as a vehicle of God’s love. Therefore, when we distribute God’s love, we bring glory to God by living by sound doctrine in the inner man. It does not have to be by giving money to others.

This love of Christ in them is “the exceeding grace of God” (9:14). Romans 5:1 and Galatians 2:16 say that we have been justified by the faith of Christ. It is by Christ’s faith that we have access to stand in grace, not the law (Romans 5:2). When we stand in grace, we live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), which means living by sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles (Romans 10:17). This means that we live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2), while the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2) is to live by the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). This results in “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12). This tribulation works patience, which works experience, which works hope, which results in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:3-5). This is an explanation of “the exceeding grace of God in you” (9:14). This grace exceeds our sin, our flesh, Satan’s lie program, and the other things of this world so that others get a glimpse into what heaven will be like.

9:15 “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) is “the exceeding grace of God in you” (9:14), which is God’s “unspeakable gift” mentioned in this verse. I

believe it is called “unspeakable” because God’s love, lived out “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), cannot be put into words. It is God’s words plus Christ in you that equals God’s love. By contrast, legalism can be put into words: “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal,” etc. (Exodus 20:13-15). But, eternal life is in God’s very words (John 6:63), and so we must get sound doctrine in our inner man so that Christ can live in us. I John 4:8 says that “God is love.” Our bodies “are the temple of the living God” (6:16). Therefore, God’s “unspeakable gift” to us is God living through us. This cannot be put into words, which is why it is God’s “unspeakable gift” to us. For Abraham, it was manifest by offering Isaac upon the altar (James 2:21-22). For Rahab, it was manifest by lying to the government (James 2:25). For Paul, it was manifest in physical suffering (11:23-28). For the Corinthians, it is manifest by giving a monetary offering to the Jerusalem saints. How is God’s unspeakable gift of Christ in you, the hope of glory, manifest through your life?

II Corinthians 10 – Pulling Down the Flesh’s Strong Holds

10 Paul is bold toward the Corinthians in this letter, because he would rather get the bad stuff out of the way before he comes so that they can rejoice together in person, instead of it being a time of correction (vs. 1-2, 8-11). Therefore, he uses this chapter to correct their way of thinking, so that they judge after the inward appearance, rather than the outward (v. 7), because our battles are spiritual and of the mind; they are not physical (vs. 3-6). Paul then gives the example of himself and how he lets Christ live through him as he fulfills Jesus’ commission to him to give the mystery gospel to unbelievers and sound doctrine to these same people once they become believers (vs. 14-16). In this way, Paul only glories in the Lord (v. 17). Paul uses this example to separate himself from the Corinthians’ ten thousand instructors in Christ so that the Corinthians will stop following the flesh and start walking in the Spirit.

10:1-2 Apparently, some, in the Corinthian church, are accusing Paul of walking according to the flesh. Maybe they think he has only come to the Corinthians to try to get their money, or maybe they think he is power hungry. Whatever the reason, Paul will now spend chapter 10 showing that our battles are in the spirit realm, not in the physical realm.

First, note that twice, in these verses, Paul beseeches the Corinthians. Because they are spiritual adults (Galatians 4:5-7), he beseeches them. He does not command them (8:8). The law commands, i.e., “Thou shalt not,” but grace beseeches, i.e., strongly encourages, because God’s love is commanded in grace (Romans 5:8), not in law.

Paul beseeches the Corinthians based upon “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” Although Christ “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6), “He humbled Himself, and became obedient [to God] unto death” (Philippians 2:8). Since Christ lives in us, we are told to have the same mind in us that Christ had in Himself (Philippians 2:5). At His first coming, Christ was as meek as a lamb (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 21:5), because He gave His life “a ransom for all” (I Timothy

2:6). At His second coming, Jesus will destroy His enemies (Revelation 19:15). Since we are ambassadors for Christ (5:20), we should also show Christ's meekness and gentleness to others (Matthew 11:29), as Paul does here with the Corinthians.

Paul is base among the Corinthians in person so that they see Christ in him. Contrast this with the "ten thousand instructors in Christ" (I Corinthians 4:15), who use fleshly tactics to get the Corinthians to follow them. These fleshly tactics include bringing them into bondage, devouring of them, taking of them, exalting themselves over the Corinthians, and even smiting the Corinthians on the face (11:20)! Paul wants the Corinthians to see the meekness and gentleness of Christ in him, so that they may also let Christ live in them in this way so that others are saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

However, Paul needs to be bold toward the Corinthians in letter because they have not done what they promised to do one year ago, i.e., give to the Jerusalem saints. Being bold in letter is much better than being bold in person, because it is easier to see Paul walking according to the Spirit, rather than according to the flesh. Just like Jesus had to be bold in person against the moneychangers (John 2:13-17), Paul may have to be bold in person against those who are accusing him of walking according to the flesh. But, it is better to do this with a letter, rather than in person, or else Paul may look like he wars after the flesh, as we mentioned that some in Corinth do, as seen in 11:20.

10:3 "We walk in the flesh" means that we still have physical, vile bodies, so "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (4:7). It does not mean that we walk according to the tactics of the flesh. This is what is meant by warring after the flesh. So, we still walk in our vile bodies, but we operate according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). In other words, the tactics that we use are according to God's Spirit living within us. Thus, Paul does not contradict what he says in Romans 8:1-4 or in Galatians 5:16. Note that Paul says that "we walk IN the flesh," but "we do not war AFTER the flesh" (10:3). Romans 8:1,4 says that we "walk not AFTER the flesh, but AFTER the Spirit." Thus, the problem with the flesh is if we let it control us. The problem is not being IN the flesh, because Christ already "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3) through His death, burial, and resurrection. God can actually use our bodies for His purpose when we present them to Him as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). It is when we listen to the lusts of our flesh that we have a problem.

10:4 This parenthetical verse says that, although we are in the flesh "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (not of the flesh), because sin has been condemned in the flesh. Our weapons are spiritual and are of Christ. These weapons are detailed for us in Ephesians 6:14-18. They are: 1) Truth, 2) Righteousness, 3) The gospel of peace, 4) Faith, 5) Salvation, 6) God's Word, and 7) Prayer. We have seven spiritual weapons with seven being the number of spiritual completion in the Bible.

These weapons are what pull down “strong holds.” Ephesians 6:12 says that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Our war in the spirit is against Satan and his forces, which are still in heavenly places from the Satanic rebellion that occurred shortly after they were created. Revelation 12:3-4 says that 1/3 of the angels rebelled with Satan. Daniel 10:21 seems to indicate that Michael and Gabriel are the only high ranking angels who remained with God. Therefore, “the heavens are not clean in [God’s] sight” (Job 15:15).

This means that, when we decide to walk in the Spirit, Satan and his forces try to keep us from doing so. However, Romans 8:38-39 says that none of these powers are “able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The way we access the love of God in Christ Jesus is by reading God’s Word, believing what it says, and then the Holy Ghost teaches it to us (I Corinthians 2:12-13). We then use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to apply these truths, resulting in us using the whole armour of God as listed in Ephesians 6:14-18.

What happens then is that these mighty, spiritual weapons pull down the strong holds that Satan and his forces have in our minds, so that we are no longer captive to do the devil’s will (II Timothy 2:26), but we have yielded our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1) so that God’s will (People being saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).) is done in us as ambassadors for Christ (5:20).

Note the term “strong holds”. Since they are strong, it is not easy to overcome these things. This is why, if you have been in religion for years, it is very hard to: 1) Go against what you have been taught, and 2) Continue to believe in the truth of God’s Word over the strong holds in your mind. For example, if you were taught conditional salvation and you now see the truth of eternal security, you know that you are going to heaven no matter what happens. However, you are still inclined to confess your sins, ask for forgiveness, and feel like you have lost your salvation after you sin, because you have conditioned your mind to think this way. It is a strong hold in your mind. Therefore, you have to keep telling yourself the truth of God’s Word over and over in order to pull down the strong hold of the false doctrine of conditional salvation that is in your mind.

10:5 The strong holds of Satan’s forces in our lives are “imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” (10:5).

“Imagination” reminds me of Romans 1. Man knows there is a God, that God can save him (Romans 1:19-20), and that man is worthy of death for his sin (Romans 1:32). The Romans 1 response to this knowledge is to try to snuff it out through sexual sin (Romans 1:24-28) and to make himself God through “vain...imagination....Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man” (Romans 1:21-23). In other words, man’s response to God is the same as

Satan's response: "I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14). Notice that these are all in man's mind before they are manifested in outwardly in sins of the flesh.

We should also cast down "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (10:5). This reminds me of Romans 2. In that chapter, man does not pretend there is no God and then insert himself as God in order to do his evil deeds. Instead, the Romans 2 man acknowledges God but believes that he can please God through his flesh, rather than recognizing that he must be crucified with Christ and live by the faith of the Son of God instead (Galatians 2:20). Man's belief, that he can please God in his own flesh, would be the high things of this verse. When Adam ate of the forbidden tree in the garden, he received the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:22). Man can then use his flesh either to do the evil, which would be the "imagination," or to do the good, which would be "every high thing" (10:5). Granted, the Corinthians are saved, which means they have already overcome the problems of Romans 1 and 2 when it comes to believing the gospel. However, after we are saved, we still have our vile flesh (Romans 7:18; Philippians 3:21), and so we can choose to allow "imagination and every high thing" to exalt "itself against the knowledge of God" (10:5).

The more of the knowledge of God that we get into our inner man, the more likely we will bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (10:5). This is where our spiritual weapons come in (10:4). If we use the sharp sword of God's Word against the imaginations and high things of the flesh, we will pull down strong holds (10:4) so that Christ obeys God's Word through us. The way we do this is by reading the Bible, believing what it says, and letting the Holy Ghost teach it to us (I Corinthians 2:13-14). This is how we "let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly" (Colossians 3:16). We are then "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). We can then use the mind of Christ within us (I Corinthians 2:16) to live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), rather than operating in the lust of the flesh. This is how we use the might of the Spirit to take captive every fleshly thought and pull down the strong holds of the flesh (10:4). In other words, reading, believing, and applying God's Word in our daily lives is how we lock up the flesh.

10:6 What in the world does this verse mean? "Having in a readiness" means you have something stored up waiting for an event to happen. For example, I cannot say that "I am ready" to go to the store until I get out of bed and put on some outside clothes. Similarly, you cannot say "I am ready to obey God" until you are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man via sound doctrine found in God's Word rightly divided. In such an unprepared state, you will side with the flesh, when you make a decision, if your spirit has no input to give. This is why it is so important to read and believe God's Word.

Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Therefore, if I obey Christ by taking every thought captive and pulling down the strong holds of my vain imaginations, my flesh is going to retaliate. This means that I need to be strong, not just in the scripture to

make the initial decision to walk in the Spirit, but I also need to watch, “stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Corinthians 16:13) in my flesh’s retaliation against the Spirit. Since Satan is the god of this world (4:4) and my flesh is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9), the tendency will be for me to question if I really did the right thing when I acted on sound doctrine, because I will suffer for godly living, since “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12).

However, if I stand fast in the faith and am strong, I can “revenge all disobedience, when [my] obedience is fulfilled” (10:6). In other words, I will continue, in the future, to stand in sound doctrine and let Christ live in me, even though my flesh suffers, because I am “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16) so that I do not let my flesh deceive me into letting it get the upper hand next time. This explanation makes sense in light of the next verse’s question of: “Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?” (10:7).

10:7 The Lord told Samuel, “The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). Paul asks the Corinthians, “Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?” (10:7). In other words, we should look at things based on the inward, not on the outward. Yet, how can we do this if “man looketh on the outward appearance” (10:7)?

The answer is that, the moment we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), we are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ (Colossians 3:3). Galatians 2:20 says that “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” When we choose to “cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (10:5), we are choosing to let Christ live in us. Since Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11), then He looks on the heart through us, as we present our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Therefore, only in Christ, can we judge by the heart, rather than by the outward appearance, and Paul is chastising the Corinthians for not doing this. We are to walk by faith, not by sight (5:7). Specifically, we are to “live by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

However, we have to cast down our imaginations before we can do this, which means we cannot operate by our knowledge of evil (“imaginations” of 10:5) or by our knowledge of good (“every high thing” of 10:5). (Forgiveness of past sins takes care of “imaginations.” Forgiveness of future sins takes care of “every high thing.”) Only when we know of our eternal security in Christ will we not operate by our knowledge of good. So many Christians think they are serving Christ by their legalism. They cannot even consider that the way they serve God is by believing their Bibles over what a church says. They think they must be going against God, if they go against a church. This is because of what the Lord told Jeremiah: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Until legalistic Christians allow the Lord to live in them, then the Lord will not reveal to them that

they have been deceived by legalistic religion. They will not do this until they recognize that they cannot lose their salvation, because they will hold onto their legalism until then.

Once the Corinthians have confidence in their eternal security, they will then trust to themselves that they are Christ's (10:7). They will then mind spiritual things, rather than fleshly things. They will then judge by the heart, because they will allow Christ to live in them as they let the word of Christ dwell in them richly (Colossians 3:16). They will then judge Paul by the heart and know that he is also Christ's (10:7).

The issue in First Corinthians is that they were carnal. They relied upon their eternal security as a license to sin, and so they participated in the things of this world, operating in the flesh according to their knowledge of evil ("imagination" or Romans 1). Now, in Second Corinthians, they are in danger of overcorrecting and judging people legalistically, according to their knowledge of good ("every high thing" or Romans 2). Therefore, they are in danger of exalting their 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15) over Paul, and so Paul will actually have to brag about his suffering for Christ (11:16-30) just to get them to judge according to the heart, rather than according to the flesh. Similarly today, Bible believers are viewed by the world as crazy, believing in the myths of the Bible, while Churchianity views them as heretics and cult members for not conforming to church traditions that go against the sound doctrine found in Paul's epistles (Romans – Philemon). This is why Paul says, "we are troubled on EVERY side" (4:8). How do we get Churchianity to see Christ living in us? We brag about our sufferings via the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14), instead of promoting a health-and-wealth gospel. Only those with godly lives suffer for Christ. That is something about which Churchianity's charlatans will not brag. In other words, Paul has to become a fool in glorying about something in his flesh (12:11), i.e., his sufferings, just to separate himself from the religious people because the Corinthians are still judging after the outward appearance!

10:8 Paul's authority is that he is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), and a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto him (I Corinthians 9:17). A parent can tell his son, "Do it because I said so," and the son will do it. However, it is much better if the parent tells his son why he should do something. Then, the son can later apply that same logic to other situations and make the right decisions. In other words, it is better for Paul to teach sound doctrine to the Corinthians than to tell them just to do something.

If Paul just told them to do something, it would help them in the short term but not in the long term. Paul would then be ashamed that he did not really help them. Therefore, he would much rather write them a tough letter and they get the doctrine settled in their spirits right now so that Christ is already living in them when he comes to visit them. He can then rejoice with them, rather than being ashamed that they switched from fleshly evil (I Corinthians) to fleshly good (II Corinthians).

Today, we also have the authority, as those who are spiritual and use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:15-16), to edify believers. It may seem like we are trying to destroy fellow Christians by getting them to suffer like us. However, this actually gets them to focus on the spiritual, rather than the physical. If they are focused on the spiritual, they will have gold, silver, and precious stones at the judgment seat of Christ. If they are focused on the physical, their works will be destroyed at the judgment seat of Christ (I Corinthians 3:13-15). Therefore, edification in sound doctrine results in an eternal, spiritual reward, even though those walking by sight will see the suffering and think Paul has set them up for destruction.

10:9 If you are walking by faith, not by sight (5:7), and you have your affection set on things above (Colossians 3:2), then you will not be terrified by the prospect of suffering for godly living (II Timothy 3:12). Instead, you will glory in your infirmities because it means that the power of Christ is resting on you (12:9), and the love of God is coming through you to others (Romans 5:3-5).

10:10 Paul has a reputation in Corinth that he is afraid of confrontation, and so he will only write a letter to confront bad news because he is a wimp in person. The reason is because, when Paul went to the Corinthians at first, he was “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (I Corinthians 2:3), because: 1) He was genuinely afraid that the Corinthians were bound for hell, and 2) He wanted the Spirit of God and the power of the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 2:4; Romans 1:16) to do the talking for him so that the Corinthians would obey (believe) the gospel from the heart (Romans 10:17), rather than just saying that they believed in order to please Paul.

Now, Paul writes a weighty letter to the Corinthians because he wants to rejoice with them when he comes to them, rather than having to correct them in person. In other words, he wants to get the bad stuff out of the way with a letter so that they can have a good time together when Paul comes to see them.

Therefore, what we see is that Paul has been “weak...and...contemptible” in person and “weighty and powerful” (10:10) by letter, not because he is afraid of confrontation, but because those were the proper attitudes in those situations for spiritual reasons. In other words, Paul uses spiritual tactics, not fleshly tactics. Why? Because “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (10:4). Contrast this with the Corinthians’ 10,000 instructors in Christ, who use fleshly tactics such as bringing them into bondage, devouring them, taking of them, and smiting them on the face (11:20). (By the way, smiting them on the face probably happened physically but, more importantly, it also happened spiritually, because we see “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6) when we read God’s Word in a spirit of belief, i.e., “with open face” (3:18). This is the “face to face” of I Corinthians 13:12. Smiting them on the face, then, means that their false doctrine keeps the Corinthians from being edified in sound doctrine from Paul’s epistles because they are viewing God’s Word to them through the lens of religion.)

In other words, when you believe God and His Word, you have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). The world is crucified unto you, and you unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

“Contemptible” means that it is worthy of being despised. This is what Churchianity thinks of sound doctrine from Paul’s epistles. They despise it, because it goes against the “fair shew in the flesh” (Galatians 6:12) of their legalism. This is why church folks often will not even listen to the sound doctrine of right division and taking a King James Bible as your final authority. They will not even endure such doctrine, because they have turned their ears away from the truth and toward fables (stories with a moral to them, rather than sound doctrine) (II Timothy 4:3-4).

10:11 Paul’s way of dealing with things is not based upon being in person or writing a letter. It is based upon what is the most spiritually beneficial method at the time. When he came in person at first, the most spiritually beneficial method was to come “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (I Corinthians 2:3). Now, the most spiritually beneficial method is to come in boldness and in power. This has to do with the content of his message, not his way of handling things. This is why he says here that he would handle this situation the same way, regardless of whether he does so by a letter or in person.

Jesus was the same way. He was bold in person when He rebuked the Pharisees for their religion (Matthew 23:1-36) and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers for their thievery (John 2:13-17), but he was compassionate when he saw the lost status of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39; John 11:31-35).

10:12 “The number” would be those who judge by the flesh, rather than by the spirit. Romans 12:3 says that we are to think according to our measure of faith. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Therefore, we are to think according to what we know about God’s Word. In other words, we are to use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), rather than our fleshly mind (Colossians 2:18).

However, the Corinthians’ 10,000 instructors in Christ are judging by the flesh (I Corinthians 4:15). The flesh judges by measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves among ourselves (10:12). Since “there is none that doeth good, no not one” (Romans 3:12), and “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18), a flesh contest results in biting and devouring one another (Galatians 5:15). **This is what hell will be like.** Everyone is trying to outdo others by their own works, but all they are doing is sinning, since your flesh cannot do anything good. However, when a fleshly person compares himself with another fleshly person, it looks good.

The way we are saved is that we recognize our sin and trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). The way we live for Christ is by recognizing that our flesh is no good, such that we live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). It is impossible to please God without

faith (Hebrews 11:6). If we are comparing ourselves among ourselves or measuring ourselves among ourselves, we do not see our failings, and we do not live for God. In other words, man becomes the standard, and so we just have to do better than the other person (The man running from a bear only has to be faster than the slowest person not to get caught, but nothing good comes from the bear. Similarly, those, living by the flesh, just have to make themselves look better than others, but nothing good comes from the contest. This is why the perceived morality of Churchianity is slightly better than the world. They create and follow rules that they do not mind following so that they feel spiritually superior, when all they are doing is creating a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5) in order to puff up their flesh (II Timothy 3:2-4).). But, since no good thing dwells in our flesh, they do not serve God. However, if they compare ourselves with God's holy, perfect standard, they will see that they fall short. They will then stop trying to live in the flesh, and they will live in the spirit instead, living by Christ's faith through what the Holy Ghost has taught them in God's Word. Therefore, those, who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves amongst themselves are not wise (10:12).

“Measuring themselves by themselves” (10:12) means that man's religion is the standard. They measure their performance by man's performance standard. “Comparing themselves amongst themselves” (10:12) means to try to make themselves feel better by trying to outdo the other person in their flesh contest. This reminds me of Romans 2:15, which says that man's thoughts accuse or else excuse one another. The way that I feel good about myself in a flesh contest is that I either accuse someone of wrongdoing so that I do not focus on my own wrongdoing, or I try to excuse my own wrongdoing by saying that I am not as bad as the other guy.

But, 10:5 says that we are to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Therefore, when our conscience tries to make us feel good about ourselves via a flesh contest, we need to take these thoughts captive and recognize that our conscience has been purged “from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). Instead, we should measure ourselves by faith in God's Word and present our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1) so that Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). We then compare ourselves with God, not with others. This eliminates pride because any good thing that comes through me is not myself, but it is Christ living in me. Thus, Paul says that he dares not make himself like those who have a flesh contest. Instead, he will look at things from a spiritual perspective.

10:13 Since Paul is going to measure himself by God's standard, rather than the standard of the flesh, Paul measures his ministry by “the rule which God hath distributed to us” (10:13). This rule is that he is to get the mystery gospel to all unbelievers (“the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15)). He had already spread the gospel to half of the world by going from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:19). He now needs to go to the rest of the world by completing his journey to Spain (Romans 15:24). Paul wrote Romans and II Corinthians around the same time in Acts 20:1-3. Since he thought about this when he wrote Romans, it makes sense that he also thought about this when he

wrote II Corinthians. Because the Lord Jesus Christ entrusted Paul with dispensing the gospel to all unbelievers (I Corinthians 9:17), Paul would not “build upon another man’s foundation” (Romans 15:20). That is the rule here, as Paul defines the rule in 10:15 as “not boasting...of other men’s labours.” Therefore, this is a different measure than the measure of 10:12.

Since Paul had begotten the Corinthians through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15), this measure of not boasting of other men’s labours or building on other men’s labours still allowed Paul to reach to the Corinthians. This means that Paul should still edify the Corinthians (10:8) in sound doctrine. This is another proof that Christ is speaking in Paul (13:3).

10:14 Therefore, Paul did not stretch himself beyond his measure when he came to the Corinthians with the gospel and then with follow-up letters. By contrast, the 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15) are trying to scam the Corinthians by using fleshly tactics to get money from them, while Paul was willing to rob other churches to give the Corinthians service (11:8). This shows that Paul is letting Christ live in him for the Corinthians, while other ministers are following the flesh. Yet, the reason that the Corinthians think that the others are serving Christ is because the 10,000 instructors are warring after the flesh (10:3), and the Corinthians are still judging “after the outward appearance” (10:7). Therefore, Paul has to get the Corinthians to stop focusing on the flesh and start looking at the spirit by engaging in a flesh contest himself with the 10,000 instructors.

This is not Paul going against judging by the measure of faith. Rather, it is in line with it, because Paul changes the stakes from health and wealth to suffering. Since “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12), suffering for Christ is a sign of godly living. However, the only way someone will see this is if he is walking by faith, not by sight (5:7). Therefore, by engaging in a flesh contest in chapter 11 over suffering for Christ, Paul is actually getting the Corinthians to focus on the spiritual, rather than the carnal.

10:15-16 Remember that Paul’s commission from the Lord Jesus Christ was to reach all unbelievers with the gospel of grace (Acts 9:15). He still needs to go to half of the world by completing his journey to Spain (Romans 15:24). Therefore, Paul’s focus is on reaching unbelievers. However, reaching believers with sound doctrine will also help him reach unbelievers, because the word will spread about what God is doing in the mystery dispensation, by Christ living in these believers.

The measure, that Paul uses, is not “of other men’s labours” (10:15), but it is of reaching unbelievers with the gospel and then with sound doctrine. Paul has a confident expectation (“having hope”) that this letter to the Corinthians will increase their faith (“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).). The result will be that Christ lives in them to a greater extent. The word of this will get to “the regions beyond you” (10:16), which gives Paul a greater opportunity (abundantly enlarged (10:15)) to preach the gospel in these other regions so that others may be saved. Paul concentrates only on those he has reached with the gospel and those who have not been reached by anyone with the

gospel, because “a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me” (I Corinthians 9:17). Thus, Paul is being true to his call by the Lord Jesus Christ by not building on other men’s labours.

Today, churches try to increase their missionary program by saying that they need to get the gospel to the unreached nations, because Paul would not build on other men’s labours. They then throw in Matthew 24:14, where Jesus says, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” This gives the church carte blanche to raise as much money as possible for missionaries. Yet, I have heard “missionary” reports from these same churches where teenagers went to New York and “made a friend” or they went to other places in the United States. Even if they go to other nations, they are usually building structures, helping educate kids, and getting the natives vaccines and clean water. They are not preaching the gospel of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin, because they themselves may not even know this gospel. Therefore, the missionary program amounts to helping people have their best lives now (the goal of secular humanists, not Bible believers), both the missionaries (free vacation) and those they “reach for Christ,” instead of giving them Paul’s gospel, which will take them out of an eternal lake of fire and give them all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3, 2:5-6).

We need to understand that Paul was commissioned to give his gospel to all unbelievers. This was a commission that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to Paul, not to the body of Christ as a whole. This is seen in that Paul did not ask the Corinthian church to go with him on his apostolic journeys. Rather, he wanted Christ to be lived out through them where they live, not as missionaries in unreached territories. In general, this is the best way to be ambassadors for Christ. Since God’s will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4), why not spend our time reading and believing God’s Word, instead of spending it learning a different language, a different culture, and working extra hours to save up money to go on an expensive missionary trip to people who probably will not listen to me anyway because I am an untrusted outsider? In fact, I think most churches do short-term missionary trips, and the missionaries do not even bother to learn the language. How does this help the natives go to heaven? It doesn’t! Churches say, “But, the natives are really receptive to our coming.” Of course they are, you are giving them free stuff. If they are starving to death, they will say anything, including renouncing their own beliefs, in order to get food. This does not mean that they actually believed the gospel, even if you gave it to them, and that they are now going to heaven. It just means that they want to keep receiving handouts. I have observed this kind of behavior in America. I am sure it is much more prevalent in countries with a much lower standard of living.

As far as Matthew 24:14 is concerned, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” i.e., the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 10:6-7). At Jesus’ second coming, all the lost sheep of Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). Since the Jews were scattered among the nations due to Israel’s apostasy

(Leviticus 26:33; John 7:35), “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). Therefore, this commission is to believing Israel, not to you today. Israel, scattered among the nations, will be reached during the tribulation period, and they will reach the unsaved Gentiles in the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20) during Jesus’ millennial reign. Moreover, the commission of II Corinthians 10:15-16 is specifically to Paul, not to you today. Your commission is to read God’s Word, believe what it says, let Christ live in you, and you will be a good ambassador for Christ, regardless of how that plays out in your specific circumstances (5:18-20). If that results in building upon another men’s labours, so be it. God’s will being done through you is all that matters. But, this message does not get the church a lot of money and free vacations, which is what those churches are concerned about, more than they care about the truth. Therefore, they manipulate the Bible to fit their own agenda.

10:17 Saved people, who use the mind of Christ to judge things spiritually (I Corinthians 2:15-16), know that they can only glory in the Lord. In Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians, he said that God has chosen the foolish and base things of the world to confound and bring to naught the exalted things of the world. God does this so that no flesh can glory in His presence. We then have wonderful spiritual things in Christ. Since we have to become base in order to be saved by trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection alone as atonement for our sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), our attitude should be that the only glorying we can do is in the Lord (I Corinthians 1:27-31).

However, religion comes in with the idea that, once we are saved, we can serve God in the energies of our flesh, and so churches turn into flesh contests where they try to one-up the next person (In Galatians 5:15, Paul calls this biting and devouring one another.). The only reason that the Corinthians’ ten thousand instructors in Christ are glorying in themselves (I Corinthians 4:15) is that they are not really saved or they are leading people down the religious path, i.e., the wide gate and broad “way that leadeth to destruction” (Matthew 7:13). Since Paul is saying, “Yet not I, but Christ” (Galatians 2:20), his attitude is completely different, such that he only glories in the Lord. He is trying to get the Corinthians to do the same thing.

10:17 is also a quote from Jeremiah 9:24. It is the one, bright spot in a chapter of judgment because Israel served other gods. The only way out of apostasy is to glory in the Lord, rather than in yourself, idols, or other religions. Similarly for the Corinthians, the only way out of living in the flesh is to glory in who they are in Christ (Galatians 6:14), rather than seeking after the things of this life and trying to puff up their flesh through religion.

10:18 If you follow the flesh, you will brag about yourself. God will not brag in your flesh, because no good thing dwells in it (Romans 7:18). Therefore, you have to create a flesh contest with others and brag about what you are doing in order to get the upper hand. In 10:12, Paul said that those doing this are not wise. Why? Because, at the judgment seat of Christ, the works that survive and receive a

reward of a position in heavenly places are only those centered on Christ living in you by sound doctrine. The Lord will commend the work only if you are walking in the good works that God designed you to do in Christ (Ephesians 2:10). If the works are of the flesh, they will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ, because Christ's glorious church is "holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). No one is going to trick the Lord Jesus Christ with his fleshly works. Therefore, the Corinthians should seek to let Christ live in them through faith in His Word rightly divided, rather than biting and devouring one another with fleshly works to try to look good to others (Galatians 5:15). They may get the praise of men, but this praise is only temporary (Matthew 6:1-7). God's praise is eternal (Ephesians 2:7).

The Corinthians need to understand what Jesus said in John 6:63 that "the flesh profiteth nothing." Sure, they may gain wealth and power in this life, but neither of these things transfer into the spiritual realm. However, if they set their affection on things above (Colossians 3:2), they will suffer for godly living (II Timothy 3:12) and this suffering will work for them an eternal weight of glory (4:17-18). Therefore, if they want eternal rewards, they should operate by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2), because "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

II Corinthians 11 – Bible Believers Should Expect to Suffer

11 Paul begot the Corinthians in the gospel, and he is afraid that their 10,000 instructors will lead them away from the truth into religious lies (I Corinthians 4:15). They may do this by preaching "another Jesus," "another spirit," and/or "another gospel" (v. 4). These things are of the flesh, while Paul's preaching is according to the Spirit. Since the Corinthians are looking at the flesh, Paul will be foolish by glorying in the things that concern his flesh (v. 18). However, since Paul only glories in the cross (Galatians 6:14), the only thing in his flesh in which he will glory is his infirmities (v. 30).

Knowing that the Corinthians are looking at the flesh, Paul did not take any money from them (vs. 7-9). The 10,000 instructors did take of them (v. 20), and yet they have cast Paul as the bad guy (v. 11). This is because the 10,000 instructors preach a health-and-wealth gospel, while Paul preaches the doctrine of suffering. In other words, the flesh likes the message of the 10,000 instructors, but not Paul's message. Paul uses his authority as their spiritual father (I Corinthians 4:15) and apostle (Romans 11:13) in hopes that they will see that God is concerned with the spiritual over the physical, as demonstrated by Paul's long list of sufferings for Christ (vs. 23-27).

True godliness leads to suffering (II Timothy 3:12), while a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5) can lead to economic prosperity (vs. 13-15), because people want to live in the flesh but appear to be serving Christ. This is why Churchianity today is in apostasy and brings in the big bucks. This is also why Paul needs to correct the fleshly thinking of the Corinthians before they get mired in a form of godliness and the snare of the devil (II Timothy 2:25-26).

11:1 The Corinthians should be concentrating on the spiritual, rather than the physical. Since they are looking at the flesh, Paul will now use himself as an example to talk about what the flesh should look like when Christ is living in a person. Paul calls this flesh view “folly” (11:1), because the flesh is dead with Christ (Romans 6:3-8). It is foolish to brag about something that is dead, but the Corinthians’ concentration on the flesh has forced Paul to do so. Also, Paul says in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Therefore, the only “bragging” Paul will do in his flesh is about how the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has caused his flesh to suffer so that he may be “made conformable unto [Christ’s] death” (Philippians 3:10). Even so, this is still folly to brag over things happening to his dead flesh, but he has to do so in order to get the Corinthians to switch their mentality from glorying in the flesh to the spirit. This is why Paul calls it “my folly” (v. 1) and speaking “foolishly” (vs. 17, 21, and 23). After all, you would not go to a cemetery and hear people in the graves bragging about their accomplishments to others, because all of those things have passed away when they died. Similarly, Paul has “suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that [he] may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8). Yet, he has to bring up things that pertain to his dead flesh so that the Corinthians see that the only good things that come from the flesh are death/suffering for Christ because those are the only things that bring spiritual fruit through the flesh, since no good thing dwells in the flesh (Romans 7:18).

11:2 Remember, from I Corinthians 4:15, that Paul begot the Corinthians through the gospel. One of God’s names is “Jealous” (Exodus 34:14). We often think of jealousy as a sin, because it often translates into the tenth commandment: “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17). This is because fleshly jealousy results in a desire to have that thing that we are jealous about, which means we follow the flesh, which is a sin. However, Paul’s godly jealousy, in this context, is to get the Corinthians out of following the flesh and have Christ live in them instead, which is having faith in God, which is not a sin (Romans 14:23). Paul has this godly jealousy because Christ is living in Paul. God was so jealous over man that He sent His Son to die for his sin. This shows that it is a very good thing that one of God’s names is Jealous.

The reason Paul is jealous over the Corinthians is because he espoused them to one husband, “that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (11:2). Right dividers believe that we are the body of Christ, while saved Israel is the bride of Christ, which is what scripture teaches. (I Corinthians 12:27 says, “Ye are the body of Christ.” Revelation 21:9-12 says that believing Israel is the bride of Christ.) Fundamental Churchianity, who teaches that we are spiritual Israel, will use this verse to try to show that we have become the bride of Christ, due to the unbelief of Israel.

However, one dictionary definition of marriage is to “interconnect or join; to unite.” For example, I can plug a keyboard into a computer using a male USB cable and plug it into the female USB port on the computer. The keyboard and the computer are then “married” together. This is the sense that Paul is using in 11:2. Christ is

the head of the church, and we are His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). When “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25) at the rapture, Christ’s body will be married or connected to His head. Note that Paul does not call the Corinthians “the Lamb’s WIFE,” as Revelation 21:9 calls saved Israel. He says he wants to present the Corinthians to Christ “AS a chaste virgin” (11:2). “Virgin” is used instead of bride or wife, and “AS” is used, which is a simile or a point of comparison. He does not say they ARE a chaste virgin, but that they will be AS a chaste virgin. Psalm 42:1 says, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” This does not mean that the Psalmist is a hart panting after water, but it is giving a comparison of how his soul relates to God like a hart relates to water. So, too, Paul does not say that the Corinthians are a chaste virgin, but they are AS a chaste virgin.

Ephesians 5:25-27 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” This shows that Christ’s love for the body of Christ is like a husband’s love for his wife. In fact, one of the reasons God created the marriage relationship is so we could understand our relationship to Christ. The marriage relationship between a man and a wife is where the two become one FLESH (Genesis 2:24). Paul even says, “For two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (I Corinthians 6:16-17).

When Christ died for our sins, His work in us had only begun. He saved us from hell, and then He began sanctifying and cleansing us with the Word so that, at the judgment seat of Christ, we will be the complete body of Christ without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27). (This is much like your work only beginning when you adopt a child, for example.) If we live according to the flesh after we are saved, our work will be burned up at the judgment seat of Christ, and we will not have a good position in heavenly places in the body of Christ. If we “let the Word of Christ dwell in [us] richly” (Colossians 3:16), the spiritual riches of gold, silver, and precious stones will be formed in us, resulting in us being a significant part of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 3:11-15). Because Paul begot the Corinthians in the gospel, he has a godly jealousy over them as their spiritual father to see no impurities in them at the judgment seat of Christ so that they may be of great use to Christ in heavenly places for all eternity “AS a chaste virgin” is to the husband (11:2). This is why Paul uses this language here. The body of Christ is married to Christ as the head at the judgment seat of Christ. We are NOT the bride of Christ.

11:3 The idea of a chaste virgin is appropriate here as well, due to the spiritual naivety of the Corinthians. Paul says that “the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (11:3). The devil attacked the woman because she is the weaker sex, when it comes to spiritual things. This is not my opinion, but it is the Word of God. I Peter 3:7 says, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto **the weaker vessel**, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” I Timothy

2:14 says, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” In other words, Adam knew he was disobeying God, but Eve honestly thought she was doing what God wanted her to do by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The reason is that she was deceived by Satan’s subtility.

So, too, Paul fears that the Corinthians’ minds will be “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3). Churchianity makes serving God complicated. You need to follow all their rules. When you fail, you need to ask God for forgiveness in order to maintain your salvation or at least maintain your fellowship with God. However, this is false doctrine. The truth is that everything is really simple in Christ. You just simply believe in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Then, you simply read and believe God’s Word, let the Holy Ghost teach it to you, and then use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:9-16) as you present your body a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). No performance is necessary because Christ lives in you (Galatians 2:20). Christ does the performing, not you.

Now, just because it is simple, does not mean that it is easy. When I trained for a marathon, it was simple. I got a pair of running shoes and a five-month training schedule. All I had to do was follow the schedule, and I could run the marathon. That was very simple. However, it was not easy, because I had to overcome my body’s desire to sleep in and not run five days per week for five months. I had a daily battle with the flesh to overcome in order to complete the marathon. Similarly, Paul says that he dies DAILY to his flesh (I Corinthians 15:31). In other words, he makes the daily decision not to follow the lusts of his flesh and to read God’s Word and use the mind of Christ in everyday situations.

The marathon analogy is appropriate, because Paul says that we should run the spiritual race in order to obtain (I Corinthians 9:24) “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). He says that “every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (I Corinthians 9:25). For the believer, striving for the mastery means that we are going to make the decision to say “no” to the flesh and say “yes” to the Spirit of Christ within us by reading and believing God’s Word and following what it says. This is how we bring our body into subjection to God’s will (I Corinthians 9:27) of us coming unto the knowledge of the truth and sharing God’s love with others as a result. This is simple, but it is not easy.

However, the Corinthians have 10,000 instructors in Christ who have brought them under the bondage of their made-up rules (11:20). They have used “sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,” in order to toss the Corinthians “to and fro, and [carry them] about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). In fact, Paul calls them the ministers of Satan (11:15). Thus, Satan could beguile the Corinthians like the serpent beguiled Eve. Eve was beguiled by Satan because she was not confident in the Word of God. So, too, the Corinthians could be beguiled of their reward in heavenly places (Colossians 2:18) with words that entice their flesh (Colossians 2:4) into deceiving themselves

(Jeremiah 17:9) into following Satan's lie program. Therefore, Paul gives the Corinthians sound doctrine so that they will not be tricked by Satan's deception program through these 10,000 instructors.

Note also that Paul says that their "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" "by ANY means" (11:3). This means that the 10,000 instructors in Christ will put godly labels on their false doctrines in order to trick the Corinthians into thinking they are serving God. In verse 4, we learn that they preach "another Jesus" and have them receive "another spirit" and "another gospel" (11:3). In other words, the instructors appeal to the Corinthians' desire to do good, not evil. This is exactly what Satan did to Eve. He told Eve that nothing bad would happen to her if she ate of the forbidden tree. Rather, something good would happen: "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Satan transformed himself into "an angel of light" and tricked Eve into sinning. Today, Satan's ministers have transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness (11:13-15), as they had in the Corinthians' day.

11:4 With this in mind, we will now discuss the specific deceptions about which Paul warns the Corinthians: 1) Another Jesus, 2) Another spirit, and 3) Another gospel.

We will start with "another gospel," because I believe understanding this one will make it easier to understand the other two. There is only one gospel for today, and it is to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). However, someone may add to or take away from this gospel to create "another gospel." The Galatians had people do that with them. Paul told them, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8). In other words, some have perverted the gospel of Christ by adding to it or taking away from it, and so they are now following "another gospel," but it is not really another gospel, because it is not the one, true gospel for today, but a false gospel.

Paul does not say that the Corinthians have actually followed another gospel, like the Galatians had; he is just afraid that they will do so. Churchianity has followed another gospel today.

People add the following to the gospel:

1) Invite Jesus into your heart (Revelation 3:20 refers to Jesus coming to the house of Israel to lead believing Israel to the marriage supper of the Lamb and His Father's house. It has nothing to do with a heart. Besides, Jesus does not want to dwell in your sinful heart until He cleans it out first!)

2) Make Jesus the Lord of your life (Romans 10:9 means to confess with your soul that Jesus is Lord, which is what happens automatically the moment you believe

the gospel. It does not mean that you declare Jesus to be your Lord. In fact, you have no power to do so. God has already declared Jesus to be Lord, whether you like it or not (Acts 2:36.)

3) Make a public confession of faith (I John 1:9 is talking about Israel making a national confession of their sin, like Daniel did in Daniel 9:3-19 in accordance with Leviticus 26:40-42 and 2 Chronicles 6:25-27. It is not saying that you have to tell everyone your sins.)

4) Turn from your sins (“Repent” means to change your mind, but Churchianity has changed the definition to turn from your sins. This is impossible for us to do because Christ died for us “when we were yet without strength” and “ungodly” (Romans 5:6) and “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8). If we could turn from our sins on our own, then we would not need Christ’s life, because we would have life in ourselves.)

5) Walk an aisle (This is a physical show, rather than an internal change of mind. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). In fact, if anything, walking an aisle displeases God, if it is done to look good to man.)

6) Say a prayer (We are saved when we believe the gospel, not by “vain repetitions” (Matthew 6:7).)

7) Get water baptized (Israel was saved by being water baptized (Acts 2:38), but we have spiritual baptism (Colossians 2:11-12), which is being identified with the body of Christ—His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Water baptism was a shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:16-17).)

8) Join a church (We are part of the church, the body of Christ, the moment we believe the gospel. It is a spiritual church, not a physical one.)

9) Serve the Lord (While we should serve the Lord after we are saved, Christ made the full payment for our sins through His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 3:24-25). We do not have to “do” anything to be saved, except believe the gospel.)

Gospel preachers also take away Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection by saying something generic like “trust Jesus” or “believe in Jesus.” What does that mean? Plenty of people have trusted and believed that Jesus lived on this earth and died on a cross, but that does not mean that they are saved. These preachers also may not even mention “sin”, since a lot of people do not believe in that any more, because secular humanism has taught them that truth is relative. So many people today are not going to heaven, because they never trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection alone as atonement for their sin.

Even if they have believed this gospel, by following another gospel, they are glorying in something other than the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14), which means they are working in the flesh, which will not be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. This is the danger with the Corinthians (and the Galatians), not that they

will not make it into heaven, but that Christ will not live in them because they are following “another gospel: which is not another” (Galatians 1:6-7). The result will be that they will not be good ambassadors for Christ (5:20), not bringing God much glory, neither here on earth nor in heaven.

So, we have seen that “another gospel” does not mean that there are two, valid gospels. It just means that the Corinthians are in danger of following a false gospel if they do not have the sound doctrine in their inner man to combat Satan’s deception through his ministers, who concentrate on the flesh, instead of the spirit. Therefore, “another gospel” involves the flesh.

The same is true, then, of “another Jesus.” There is only one, real Jesus, but the 10,000 instructors in Christ may preach a Jesus after the flesh, rather than the true Jesus they trusted in to have eternal life. Paul has already warned the Corinthians, in 5:16, that “though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” “Another Jesus” after the flesh, today, is probably best understood as red-letter Jesus, the one who was in the likeness of sinful flesh on earth about 2,000 years ago (Romans 8:3). The Jesus, that Churchianity preaches, is the one who did physical miracles, cast out devils, and preached the Mosaic law (a fleshly covenant – Hebrews 9:10). They walk by sight and not by faith (5:7), and so they walk after the Jesus they see in the flesh.

However, after Jesus went to heaven, He sent the Holy Ghost to believing Israel (John 16:7) and gave Israel one year to believe the gospel of the kingdom and be saved (Luke 13:6-9). Instead, they stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:59-60), and so Jesus stood in judgment of Israel (Acts 7:55-56), setting aside Israel’s program. He then called Paul to preach the mystery gospel (Acts 9:15; I Corinthians 9:17) and sound doctrine related to that mystery (Ephesians 3), found in the Bible only in Romans – Philemon, and has been building His body ever since, in order to fill heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20-23).

This is the Jesus we should be following—the Jesus in heaven who has given instructions to us through our apostle Paul (Romans 11:13), not the Jesus who walked on this earth. Jesus said that “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). I Corinthians 14:37 tells us that Paul’s epistles are the commandments of the Lord. Romans 16:25 says that Paul was preaching “Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery,” while, on the earth, Jesus was preaching prophecy information to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). If we are following red-letter Jesus, we are following a fleshly covenant pertaining to Israel, and there is not life for us today in those instructions, because they are not the words that Jesus spoke unto us. But, Churchianity likes to follow red-letter Jesus because they walk by sight, not by faith. This is “another Jesus”, that the Corinthians are in danger of following, if they allow Satan to beguile them through his subtilty of being scriptural but not dispensational.

Finally, Paul warns the Corinthians that, if they are not trusting in sound doctrine from his epistles, they may also receive “another spirit.” This would be “the spirit

of the world,” when they should be following “the spirit which is of God” (I Corinthians 2:12) instead. Just like “another Jesus” is a fleshly Jesus, “another spirit” is a fleshly spirit. Romans 5:5 says that the Holy Ghost has been given unto us. Galatians 4:6 says that we have received the Spirit of God’s Son. Ephesians 1:13 says that we are “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” Yet, many churches today will begin their “worship service” by inviting the presence of the spirit to fill this place (a fleshly request, since the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ already resides within all believers).

John 14:16 and I Corinthians 2:9-13 teach that the Holy Ghost is given to us to guide us into the truth of God through the Bible. Most churches are not interested in this. Instead, they want a good feeling. They do not think God’s Spirit or God’s presence is with them unless they FEEL that presence. However, James 3:15 says that earthly wisdom is sensual and of the devil. This means that, by wanting to feel God’s Spirit, they are actually inviting in the presence of a devil. That would be “the spirit of the world” (I Corinthians 2:12), because Satan is “the god of this world” (4:4).

God will give you what you want. If you do not want to serve God, He will allow the spirit of this world to guide you. Ahab was an evil king of Israel, who worshipped Baal. When Ahab desired to go to battle against Syria, he asked his prophets, and they said, “Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king” (I Kings 22:6). However, Micaiah, a true prophet of the Lord, gave Ahab an accurate prophecy. He said that He “saw the Lord sitting on His throne.” The Lord asked, “Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” One spirit said, “I will persuade him....I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets” (I Kings 22:19-23).

Because Ahab was not believing the Lord, God allowed a lying spirit to speak through Ahab’s prophets. Similarly, because people today have not believed the Lord, God has allowed a lying spirit to speak through the mouths of today’s prophets, i.e., pastors of denominations and megachurches. Paul says that these people “are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (11:13). Paul told Timothy that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Paul is afraid that this will happen with the Corinthians as they follow the lying spirit of this world if they reject Paul’s sound doctrine to them. (In my sermons, I often share thoughts and verses that come to me on the spur of the moment. Is this the leading of the Holy Ghost? Probably. Similarly then, if Satan’s ministers (11:15) are giving sermons, why can’t “seducing spirits” lead them to share “doctrines of devils” with their listeners (I Timothy 4:1)?)

We also know that, under the Antichrist, a similar thing will happen. Because people “received not the love of the truth, that they may be saved,...God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II

Thessalonians 2:10-12). If the Corinthians will hold “forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:16), this will not be a problem.

Thus, we see that “another gospel” caters to the flesh, “another Jesus” is the Jesus, Who came in the flesh to Israel, and “another spirit” is the spirit of the world, which makes you feel good in the flesh. In other words, what Paul is saying is that he is afraid that these 10,000 instructors in Christ will lead the Corinthians astray by getting them to follow the flesh. Therefore, he is going to show that, if Christ lives in them, they will SUFFER in the flesh, as opposed to feeling good in the flesh. This is why Paul will speak as a fool in talking about the things of his flesh as they relate to Christ living in them. This way, the Corinthians will see that the Christ life, as pertaining to the flesh, is the opposite of what these 10,000 instructors in Christ are saying, so that their minds are not “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3).

11:5-7 Paul is “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). Jesus chose 12 apostles for Israel’s program, and Paul, in comparing himself to them says, that he is “the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (I Corinthians 15:9). Yet, when it comes to serving Christ, Paul says, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I Corinthians 15:10). Therefore, when Paul says, “I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (11:5), I believe he is saying that he is right up there in rank with “the very chiefest apostles” (11:5) due to the more abundant grace of God that Christ gave him. This is not Paul bragging about his labours, but he is trying to get the Corinthians to understand that they should be followers of Paul (I Corinthians 4:16, 11:1), rather than followers of their 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15), who are not bringing in the spiritual fruit that Paul is. In other words, I think Paul is saying, in 11:5, “Why are you following those other guys when I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles?”

In 11:6-7, Paul posits two, possible reasons why the Corinthians are not following him: 1) He is rude in speech, and 2) He did not charge to preach the gospel of God to them. This shows, again, that the Corinthians are looking at the flesh, if they are judging Paul: 1) Not based upon knowledge, but based upon how he speaks, and 2) Not based upon the content of his message, but the lack of money he is charging them to hear the message. The Corinthians are all form and no substance. In other words, they are judging Paul based upon the flesh, not based upon the spirit. This is why Paul fears that the Corinthians may have their minds “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3), because Satan will try to beguile them through their flesh.

I love how Paul says that he is “rude in speech.” Churchianity gravitates toward the eloquent speakers; those who use the Greek, use different Bible versions, and consult various scholars. They throw around theological terms. Granted, you may not understand what they are talking about, but they sound like they know what they are talking about. This impresses people to follow men, rather than to follow God’s Word, and it gets people to think that they cannot understand the Bible, and

so they leave Bible study up to “the experts.” Therefore, they will give lip service to God through a church.

By contrast, Paul was “rude in speech.” Paul did not have to be rude in speech. He was a blameless Pharisee (Philippians 3:5-6). He “profited in the Jews’ religion above many [his] equals” (Galatians 1:14). He was brought up “at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), who was “a doctor of law” (Acts 5:34). All of this tells us that Paul could have spoken very eloquently, just like megachurch pastors today. However, he came to the Corinthians, “not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.” His speech “was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2:1,4-5).

This shows us that it is better that we speak the simplicity of Christ in the mystery gospel and doctrine than to try to impress people with theological words and fancy cemetery degrees. We should not love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43). By contrast, Churchianity wants professional liars to scratch their itching ears because they will not endure sound doctrine (II Timothy 4:3-4). Note that Paul did not tell Timothy that they do not follow sound doctrine, but that “the time will come when they will not ENDURE sound doctrine.” In other words, sound doctrine is an endurance to the flesh that those, with a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5), have no desire to even listen to.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). If people are impressed by us, it should be by the doctrine that we declare, not by the big words we know or the fancy clothes we wear. Jesus came down to our level by taking on the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3) and bearing our sins. He even rode “the foal of an ass” (baby donkey) (Matthew 21:5), because our flesh, which is asinine, cannot support the things of God. The way that Christ lives in us, then, is by giving people the simple words of life that they need. “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (3:12).

Paul says that he has “been throughly made manifest among [them] in all things” (11:6). The problem is that he has done this, spiritually speaking, but not physically speaking. Paul did not boast of his degrees, did not wear expensive clothes, or use eloquent speech, while the ten-thousand instructors in Christ were doing these things. Above all, he abased himself by preaching the gospel of God to them freely (11:7). The reason for this was so the Corinthians “might be exalted,” spiritually speaking (11:7).

Paul knows that Satan will use “any means” to keep the Corinthians “from the simplicity that is in Christ” (11:3). Therefore, when Paul preaches mystery doctrine, Satan does what he can to stop people from believing it. If Paul were to ask the Corinthians to support him, which he had every right to do so, the gospel of Christ would be hindered, because they would accuse Paul of preaching for money (I Corinthians 9:12-15). Therefore, Paul abased himself by not taking

money from the Corinthians so that more people would be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

11:8 Paul did not literally go to the Corinthians, hold a gun in their face, and say, “This is a shtick up!” What he means is that, when he was helping out the Corinthians, other churches supported him, in addition to him supporting himself by making tents (Acts 18:1-3). In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul said that, since he had sown unto the Corinthians spiritual things, they should help him out with carnal things (I Corinthians 9:11). He even quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 to support this (I Corinthians 9:9). At the same time, the Corinthians were probably the most materially rich church to which Paul ministered (I Corinthians 4:8). If anyone could have afforded to pay for all of Paul’s expenses, it would have been the Corinthians. Yet, Paul takes money from other churches instead. This is because the Corinthians were also carnal (I Corinthians 3:3). If Paul took money from them, he would have been accused of being in it for the money, which would have hindered the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 9:12). Therefore, Paul “robbed” or took wages of other churches to support his ministry to the Corinthians.

Paul “preached to you the gospel of God freely” (11:7), while the ten thousand instructors in Christ brought them into bondage, devoured them, took of them, exalted themselves against the Corinthians, and smote them on the face (11:20). Yet, they followed the instructors while not following Paul, even though Christ commanded them to follow Paul (I Corinthians 4:16, 11:1). Why? Because they evaluated their ministers based upon the flesh. This is why Paul has to boast in his sufferings for Christ to show them how foolish it is to judge things based upon the flesh.

It is no different today. Bible believing pastors often lead small congregations and support themselves with jobs, while Churchianity’s pastors get wealthy off of their congregants. Churchianity is willing to give big bucks to fleshly pastors because they satisfy their flesh while also easing a guilty conscience. Bible believing pastors teach God’s Word which discerns the thoughts and intents of the flesh (Hebrews 4:12) as evil (Jeremiah 17:9). Since Churchianity wants their ears to be tickled (I Timothy 4:3), Bible believing pastors struggle to survive, while Satan’s ministers (11:13-15) flourish in Churchianity.

11:9 Paul needed some financial help when he was with the Corinthians. He knew that, if he asked them to help him out, they may use that against him and not listen to the sound doctrine he had for them. Therefore, the Macedonian brethren helped him out, even though they themselves had “deep poverty” (8:2). This illustrates a general principle, that it is usually the poorer folks, who are willing to help someone financially, because they know what it is like to struggle to make ends meet. The rich, who can afford to help, often do not.

Paul says, here, that he will keep himself from burdening the Corinthians with needing financial help. Today, the church, as a whole, is like the Corinthian church. They have material riches and spiritual poverty. Yet, very few pastors are willing to go without financial support from their congregations. They are quick to

use Paul's quote of Deuteronomy 25:4 that, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" (I Corinthians 9:9). But, they do not read three verses later, where Paul says, "We have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ" (I Corinthians 9:12). Grace living is not about what you are entitled to, but it is about what is the most expedient thing to do (I Corinthians 10:23). Pastors need to put the spiritual needs of others over the physical wants of their own. In addition, I have noticed that those, who are the most busy, often get more done. This means that pastors, who support themselves, are probably more likely to grow in doctrine and share the love of Christ with others than those who are financially supported by their congregation.

11:10 In Galatians 6:14, Paul says, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). We even see Paul saying three times in 2 Corinthians 11 that he is a fool to glory in his fleshly sufferings (vs. 1, 21, 23). Therefore, when Paul says that he boasts in not taking any money from the Corinthians (11:10), his boast must be in Christ living in him and not in Paul himself. In other words, he boasts in the excellency of the power of God coming through his earthen vessels (4:7). He is glorying in Christ. The moment he starts taking money from the Corinthians, he would be following his flesh. Therefore, he will not do that. His boast is in his flesh being abased (11:7), because, when he is weak, then Christ is strong through him (12:10). (By the way, "the regions of Achaia" is where Corinth is located.)

11:11 No good thing dwells in your flesh (Romans 7:18). Your flesh also lusts against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). Therefore, your flesh will twist every situation around to have its way. If Paul took money from the Corinthians, their flesh would not want to listen because they would accuse Paul of doing it for the money. Since Paul did not charge them, their flesh is now claiming that he must not love them enough to take money from them. What?! That is ludicrous! This shows just how desperate the flesh is to try to get its own way. Whatever Christ does through you, the flesh will claim that it is wrong. (Is it no wonder that, whatever the Republican party does, the Democrats say that it is wrong, and vice-versa?) There is no logical argument that Paul can make against this, and so he simply says, "God knoweth." If the Corinthians will judge spiritually, rather than physically, they will know what God knows, which is that the love of Christ is shining through Paul to them.

11:12 This verse sounds like doubletalk. What Paul does (continue to minister to the Corinthians without charging them), he will continue to do. That way, he "may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion." In other words, the ten thousand instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15) are looking for any excuse they can find in order to invalidate Paul's ministry, because he poses a threat to the money they are getting from the Corinthians. Since they are in it for the money, they would love to accuse Paul of this, so that the Corinthians can continue their moneygrubbing ways. Therefore, Paul will continue not to accept money from the Corinthians so that he cuts off the ability of the ten thousand instructors to try to keep Christ from working through Paul to the Corinthians.

“Wherein they glory” is the flesh. “They may be found even as we” means that, by cutting off occasion from these ten thousand instructors, they will be found to have no good thing dwelling in their flesh either, just like everyone else (Romans 7:18).

In summary, Paul is taking a two-step approach to getting the Corinthians to stop trusting in the flesh and look at the spiritual instead. The first step is for Paul not to accept any money from the Corinthians. This shows that he is not trying to get something good in his flesh. Paul profited in the Jewish religion more than many others (Galatians 1:14), yet Paul has suffered the loss of all things and counts “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8). The second step is to eliminate the fleshly boasting of the other instructors by glorying in his sufferings for Christ, rather than in health and wealth. Step one eliminates the other instructors’ ability to find fault with Paul regarding his relationship with the Corinthians. Step two shows that nothing good can come from operating in your flesh. These steps are how Paul hopes to get the Corinthians to “henceforth know...no man after the flesh” (5:16).

11:13 Paul was called from heaven by the Lord Jesus Christ to be “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). There were also others that the Lord Jesus Christ called from heaven to be apostles of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11). The Corinthians’ instructors claim to be apostles of the Lord as well, but they are really “false apostles” (5:13). How do we know? By the doctrine they espouse. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 gives the test for a prophet. If what he speaks does not come to pass, he is a false prophet. Similarly, Paul wrote “the commandments of the Lord,” and the prophets of the body of Christ verified this to be the case (I Corinthians 14:37). The ten thousand instructors are getting the Corinthians to look after the flesh, while the Lord Jesus Christ, through Paul, is getting the Corinthians to look at things after the spirit. This shows that the ten thousand instructors are false apostles and should not be followed.

“Deceitful workers” are those who claim to be something that they are not. In this case, the ten-thousand instructors are claiming to be “in Christ” (I Corinthians 4:15), when they are really Satan’s ministers (11:14-15). (A modern example of people transforming themselves into something they are not are transgenders. They pretend to be loving, non-judgmental people, when they really have judged God to be beneath them and they have exalted themselves so high that they think they are God in that they can choose their own gender, when God made their gender in the womb (Psalm 139:13-14).) When Christ ascended to the Father, He gave the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to complete the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11-13). Now that we have God’s completed Word, which we had when Paul penned his last epistle (Colossians 1:25), we should “henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14). This shows that Satan’s ministers lie in wait, looking for a chink in the Christian armour that they can exploit with false doctrine that appears to be correct. However, most Christians do not know their doctrine is false, because they do not have sound doctrine built up in their inner

man in order to identify false doctrine. Another reason for this is because the flesh is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). If a Christian is not willing to die daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) and read and believe God's Word (I Corinthians 2:9-16), these workers will deceive him. In fact, these workers even oppose themselves, being taken captive by the devil to do his will by teaching a false gospel and false doctrine that keep people from being saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 2:25-26; I Timothy 2:4).

In the immediate context of the Corinthians, the doctrine in question is the doctrine of suffering. For those like the Corinthians, who look at the flesh, these ten thousand instructors are deceiving them into thinking that they serve the Lord while Paul does not, because Paul is suffering. Yet, II Timothy 3:12 says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." This shows that the false apostles are spreading deceit to get the money and power over the Corinthians. Meanwhile, Paul is not taking any money from the Corinthians, and these deceitful workers have somehow made Paul out to be the bad guy!

By teaching doctrines of devils (I Timothy 4:1), they are "speaking lies in hypocrisy" (I Timothy 4:2) with a form of godliness that denies the power of God's Word (II Timothy 3:5). By having this form of godliness, they have transformed "themselves into the apostles of Christ" (11:13). Christ did not make them to be apostles, but those, not grounded in mystery doctrine, are spiritual children who are easily fooled because they are looking at the flesh. (Today, there are plenty of people fooled into following "apostles" and "prophets", when those offices do not exist any more.)

This is why, earlier in this chapter, Paul said that he feared that the Corinthians would "be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (11:3). Simplicity does not mean that the Christian life is easy. With the flesh lusting against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), it is far from easy. In fact, Paul says that he dies daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31). The simplicity is reading and believing God's Word. The difficulty is in trusting God's Word over what family, friends, Churchianity, and, most importantly, your own flesh says. Thus, it is easy to be deceived by these false apostles teaching doctrines of devils. This is seen today in that most of Churchianity is deceived into thinking they are serving God, when they are really serving their own flesh.

"For they that are such [teaching doctrine contrary to Paul] serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18).

11:14 It should not come as a surprise that these false apostles have transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ, because "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (11:14). God made Lucifer to be the anointed cherub that covereth God's throne (Ezekiel 28:14). Cherubs have four wings (Ezekiel 10:20-21), while angels have no wings, looking like a man instead (Revelation 21:17). Yet, most pictures of angels show them having two wings. The reason is because Satan took his body, that has four wings, and changed its appearance to have two wings

and got man to go along with his change. Thus, man's picture of an angel looks more like Satan than an angel.

Note that Satan has also transformed himself into an angel of light. Ephesians 6:12 says that "we wrestle...against the rulers of the darkness of this world." The Bible associates the Lord Jesus Christ with Light (John 1:7-9) and us as "children of light" (I Thessalonians 5:5). It associates Satan with "the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13; Luke 22:53). Yet those, not strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16) by sound, mystery doctrine, will follow Satan's doctrines and be deceived into thinking that they are following Christ. To this world, evil is good and good is evil (Isaiah 5:20).

11:15 We should also, then, not be surprised that humans follow the devil by trying to transform themselves from boy to girl, girl to boy, and gender to non-gender (whatever that is). In doing so, they are following their master, the devil, in clear defiance of how God made them, because Satan did the same thing by transforming himself from a cherub, who had fallen into darkness, to an angel of light.

Man changing his own gender is part of Satan's attack to blind "the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (4:4). God designed three checks against the sin nature: 1) Marriage, 2) Kids, and 3) Nationalism. God made men and women with different minds, which means their sin nature manifests itself in different ways. By one man and one woman being married, they can each keep the other person's sin nature in check. They also can show each other how awful their sin nature is. Then, when they have kids, they desire not to sin, so as to set a good example for their kids.

Psalms 139:13-18 states that God made us in our mother's womb. Any three-year old child knows whether he is a boy or a girl, and that boys and girls are different. He knows this before he learns how to tie his own shoes! My spreading the lie that we can choose our own gender, Satan tries to overthrow God's checks against our sin nature of marriage and kids. Satan also goes against God being our creator. Everyone knows that God has created us and has the eternal power to sentence us to death in hell or to give us life if we turn to God for the answer (Romans 1:19-20, 32; John 1:9). However, if Satan can brainwash people into thinking that they are the creator (they create their own gender), rather than God, then man becomes God. If man is God, then he is not subject to the true God's judgment, because God has been replaced by self. This results in man not recognizing his sin nor turning to God for the answer of the gospel, because man does not see his sin problem. Thus, man will not be saved. Therefore, the issue of changing genders has nothing to do with coming up with your true identity, and everything to do with destroying God in the mind so that Satan can become God. Gender identity equals worshipping the creature more than the creator and epitomizes the downward spiral of sin found in Romans 1:21-28, leading to a reprobate mind that will never believe the gospel and be saved. This is why the tribulation period will only last seven years. Otherwise, no flesh would be saved (Matthew 24:22),

because all flesh would become a hodgepodge of Satan's creation, united with evil in the Third Adam (the Antichrist) by taking his mark and worshipping his image (Revelation 13:14-18).

For those, who reject Satan's brainwashing of society as a whole to follow evil, as seen in Romans 1, Satan has ministers, who have transformed themselves into "ministers of righteousness" (11:15) to operate within Churchianity for those who seek to follow good in their flesh, as seen in Romans 2. These ministers take God's Word and corrupt it. Paul says that "many" do this (2:17) by dishonestly "walking in craftiness [and] handling the word of God deceitfully" (4:2). They use "sleight of men and cunning craftiness" to deceive people (Ephesians 4:14) into following "doctrines of devils" by "seducing spirits" (I Timothy 4:1). Examples of their deceit are:

- 1) Changing meanings of Bible words by appealing to the original languages, to scholars, and to corrupt modern versions
- 2) Twisting meanings by taking verses out of context, e.g., Galatians 2:7 and Acts 2:38
- 3) Being scriptural but not dispensational (following Biblical instructions not written specifically to us today), e.g., taking the miracle of Mark 8:22-26 of seeing "men as trees, walking" to mean that, if you are not physically healed, it is because you do not have unwavering faith, when the truth is that God is not performing physical miracles through healers today
- 4) Replacing the teaching of the truth with the teaching of stories or fables (II Timothy 4:3-4). Fables deal with the physical; truth deals with the spiritual. By focusing on the physical, churches focus on social justice/causes. They have serve teams to clean up graffiti, build community centers, have "celebrate recovery" meetings on Friday nights, etc., while the gospel of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sin goes unpreached
- 5) Appealing to the authority of church leaders (pope, cardinals, church apostles, church prophets) over God's Word. The pastor's or the Sunday school teacher's opinion is accepted as truth, while what the Bible says is rejected. The reason is because Churchianity has brainwashed people into thinking that they cannot understand the Bible. Therefore, they leave serious Bible study up to the "experts"
- 6) Following church history and tradition instead of the Bible. Right division is rejected because it is "too new." They claim that right division was made up by Darby and Scofield (Darby lived in the 1800s; Scofield lived in the mid-1800s to early 1900s.), while Churchianity's beliefs have been around longer and have been more widely accepted. Somehow, these are reasons that can overcome what the Bible says. By the way, the idea of right division being new is false. Bible believers have been rightly dividing the Word of truth since Paul wrote down his epistles. In fact, Paul commanded Timothy to be a right divider (II Timothy 2:15) before the Bible was even completed. Also, Luke records Jesus being a right divider. In Luke

4:17-21, Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2, closed the book, and said that this scripture is fulfilled in their ears. Jesus closed the book at the first comma in Isaiah 61:2. He did not finish reading verse 2, nor did He read verse 3, which completes the thought. The reason is because verses 2b and 3 refer to Jesus' second coming, while verses 1 and 2a refer to His first coming. This shows that Jesus rightly divided between His first and second comings. Therefore, right dividers follow Jesus, not Darby and Scofield! There has been a faithful remnant of Bible believers from Jesus down to today, who rightly divide the Word of truth. However, Churchianity has not heard about them, because they believe the truth. Following right division exposes the lies of Churchianity, and so right dividers are not mentioned in the church-history books that Churchianity writes. (When I was expelled from Calvary Chapel Bible College, the dean of the college told me he had never heard of right division before me. This is the experience of most of us when we mention right division to people in Churchianity. They then look it up on the Internet and claim it is heresy without properly examining it, because they follow what the Internet authorities say over what God says to us today through our apostle Paul. This is because they are prideful in their religious beliefs and do not want to give up the safety net of their religion in favor of the truth.)

All of these things have "a form of godliness" but deny "the power thereof" (II Timothy 3:5). The power of godliness is the truth of God's Word, as "the Word of God is quick and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). They are "ever learning" the things above, but are "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7), because they are of Satan's lie program, following their father the devil (John 8:44), rather than the truth of God's Word. Therefore, they "resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (II Timothy 3:8). These reprobate leaders teach lies because they love money. Therefore, they have "erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10). The average Christian prefers to believe lies so that he does not have to believe the truth that no good thing dwells in his flesh (Romans 7:18).

With regard to these ministers of Satan, their "end shall be according to their works" (11:15), meaning that, assuming that these ministers never believed the gospel, they will be punished in the lake of fire. In fact, their punishment will be greater than the "evil" people (murderers, rapists, drug dealers, etc.) of this world, because they have deceived people, making them think that they were serving God, when they were really serving the devil. Thus, many people followed their deceit. All of this is due to leaving the "simplicity of Christ" (11:3) by following "another Jesus," "another spirit," and/or "another gospel" (11:4).

11:16-18 A fool is someone who does not believe there is a God (Psalm 14:1, 53:1). This is also seen in people following false doctrine, because they are acting as if there is no God to give them true doctrine. Otherwise, they would not follow the false doctrine (Romans 1:21-22). Because the Corinthians are walking by sight, rather than by faith, they think that Paul is a fool, i.e., not following God, because he is suffering and is not rich like they and their instructors are. After all, the pride of rich people is to think they are rich because God blessed them, not because they followed Satan's course of this world (Ephesians 2:2).

Since the Corinthians are looking at the flesh, Paul is going to give them fleshly criteria to show that he is serving Christ. These fleshly criteria will be the suffering that he has done for Christ. Yet, it is still foolish to glory in the flesh, even if he glories in suffering. The reason is because “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Our boast should only be in the cross, and it is by the cross that the world is crucified unto us (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, our boast should only be in what Christ is doing through us, not what the world is doing to us. Another reason is because “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). It is foolish for a dead person to speak of his sufferings, because he is dead. Instead, we should speak of our life, which is Christ (Colossians 3:4). This is why Paul says that he is speaking as a fool when he boasts himself a little by glorying in his fleshly sufferings.

When he says, “I speak it not after the Lord,” he is not saying that this is not God’s Word. Rather, he is saying that the Lord would have us glory in the things of Christ, not in the world. Yet, Paul has to glory in his sufferings in order to get the Corinthians to see how foolish they are being by judging things after the flesh. In other words, Paul has to speak foolishly to make the Corinthians see that he is not a fool. He has to speak foolish words to show the folly of those boasting in their health and wealth in the flesh.

11:19 The Corinthians are wise in the things of this world, which is why they allow spiritual fools to be in their midst (11:19). “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (I Corinthians 1:21). This is because “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (I Corinthians 1:25). This is how much God’s wisdom is above the wisdom of men. God on His worst day is better than man on his best day. (I know that God does not have a “worst” day. I just say this as an illustration to help us understand how much wiser God is than man is.) So now, Paul uses the foolishness of God, i.e., suffering for the cause of Christ, to show the Corinthians how foolish their earthly wisdom is compared with God. “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (I Corinthians 1:27). Therefore, God can use Paul’s suffering for Christ to confound the earthly wisdom of the Corinthians’ ten thousand instructors. This demonstrates how God’s foolishness is wiser than men.

Since God uses the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (I Corinthians 1:21), we cannot even fathom how great God’s wisdom is. Ephesians 3:10 says that, when we learn and apply mystery doctrine, we are showing principalities and powers in heaven the manifold wisdom of God. God’s wisdom has many folds or many facets to it. Ephesians 2:7 says that, once we are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, God will show, “in the ages to come,...the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” God uses the foolishness of preaching to give us the gospel in order to be saved. Salvation is like us dipping our toe in the great ocean of God’s wisdom. In each age, God will unfold a new aspect of His wisdom toward us. What a wonderful

thing to look forward to in eternity! These are the true treasures that are hid in Christ (Colossians 2:2-3).

11:20 The Corinthians allow their instructors to bring them into bondage by not operating in grace by the faith of Christ (Romans 5:2) and by being entangled with the yoke of bondage to the law instead (Galatians 5:1).

“If a man bring you into bondage”: When you read and believe God’s Word, the measure of the faith of Christ grows in your life (Romans 10:17). You can then make decisions based upon that faith (Romans 12:3), which means you will not sin (Romans 14:23) and you will live out your life in Christ instead. By contrast, if you put yourself back under the law after you are saved, the law will work with your sin nature to cause you to sin more (Romans 7:7-13). This is why Romans 4:15 says that “the law worketh wrath.” Galatians 2:18 says, “For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” This means that, if I put myself back under the law after I am saved, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). It is by Christ and His faith that we have access to stand in grace so that we can live by the faith of Christ as we apply God’s Word to our lives, which causes God’s love to be shed abroad to others by the Holy Ghost within us (Romans 5:2-5). This is why “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). But, if I put myself under the law, I am in bondage to the law and will sin due to the sin nature working with the law. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). If I put myself under the law, I have yielded myself over to death. If I put myself under grace and live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), I have yielded myself to “obedience unto righteousness” (Romans 6:16). Therefore, the Corinthians have allowed other instructors to bring them into bondage by putting them under the law. Like the Corinthians, Churchianity has things backward. They think they serve God by putting themselves under the law, when they are really putting themselves in bondage to sin.

“If a man devour you”: The only other use of the word “devour” in Paul’s epistles is in Galatians 5:15: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” The way they would “devour one another” is by using their liberty in Christ as an occasion to the flesh (Galatians 5:13). In other words, they “devour” Christ living in them by frustrating the grace of God in living under legalism. Therefore, the Corinthians allowed men to bring them into bondage and then to devour them through this legalism, such that Christ does not live in them.

“If a man take of you”: This would be a reference to their reward in Christ being taken away from them. We saw, in 11:3, that Paul is afraid that the Corinthians’ minds will be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, as the serpent beguiled Eve. This corruption would result in them being beguiled of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hid in Christ with enticing words of the flesh (Colossians 2:2-4). They would then be vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind,

resulting in them being beguiled of their reward in heavenly places (Colossians 2:18). Thus, by following the legalism of their ten thousand instructors, the Corinthians have allowed them to take their reward away from them. (Of course, taking from them could also refer to monetary giving, but the spiritual taking is more important.)

“If a man exalt himself”: Ultimately, when a person teaches legalism, instead of grace, he is exalting himself. He is saying, “The cross work of Christ is not enough to save you. You either need to have works to maintain your salvation or to show that you had true, saving faith.” In other words, the legalist puts the focus on the person, rather than on Christ. As such, he exalts himself above Christ.

Churchianity is careful to exalt their leaders. They like to call them “Apostle”, “Reverend”, “Bishop”, “Pastor” and other names. They put the pastor on a platform so that everyone is looking up to him. Church members also like to brag about how good their church is, based upon how good their pastor is. They may say things like, “Reverend Apostle So And So is a great man of God.” By contrast, Paul abases himself (11:7). This exalts Christ in Paul, and it does not cater to the flesh of the Corinthians.

If a man smite you on the face”: I have heard of preachers in some cultures actually smiting people on the face. However, everything else in this verse (bondage, devour, take of you, exalt himself) is spiritual, and so this would be as well.

3:14-16 says that, when Israel reads the Old Testament, a veil is on their heart due to their unbelief. In other words, they cannot see the purpose of the law; they are blinded to the truth. This veil is taken away when they turn to the Lord. Since believers today have turned to the Lord, “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (3:18). I Corinthians 13:12 says that, when it comes to reading the things of God, they are now seeing “through a glass, darkly.” But, when God’s Word is completely written down, they will then see “face to face.” “Face to face” means their face beholding Jesus Christ’s face, because He is “the Word” (John 1:1). This is supported by II Corinthians 4:6, which says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Therefore, when we come to God’s Word, believing what it says, we clearly see the spiritual things of God. When Paul says that the Corinthians allow a man to smite them on the face (11:20), it means that, by following the legalism of these instructors, they are no longer looking at God’s Word, but the words of man. If you are looking at the words in your Bible and someone smites you on the face hard enough, your head will turn sideways so that you are no longer looking straight ahead. That is what legalism does to people. It smites them on the face to get their eyes off of God’s Word and onto man. This is worse than having a veil, like with Israel, because, with a veil, at least you are looking at God’s Word. Perhaps you will allow God’s Word to convict you to the point that you recognize your sin and

believe the gospel, and then the veil is taken away. But, if you are looking at man, you are not even seeing the convicting words of God. Instead, you become vainly puffed up by your fleshly mind (Colossians 2:18), thinking that you are following God's Word by following man. This is why Paul said that he feared that their minds would be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (11:3). If their minds are corrupted, then they will not even look at God's Word, because they are looking at the corrupt version that man has provided. Therefore, they will not be convicted, believe, and let Christ live in them. This is why Paul is willing to speak as a fool if it will cause the Corinthians to listen to him.

11:21 With regard to the flesh, Paul is going to “speak as concerning reproach” (11:21), meaning that he will talk about his sufferings. (In 11:23-29, Paul gives his list of what he has suffered for Christ.) Because the world operates by its own course (Ephesians 2:2) set by Satan as the god of this world (4:4), the world is reproaching Paul (expressing their disapproval of him) for living by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, rather than by the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Note that Paul does not say that he is reproached BECAUSE he is weak. He is reproached AS THOUGH he was weak. The world views Paul having Christ live in him as a weakness, and so they persecute him for it. However, as we will see in 12:10, when Paul is weak in the flesh, Christ is strong in him. What is weakness to the world is strength to God. The world views the Bible as a crutch to lean on for those who need it. In their pride, the world figures they do not need it, but the gospel is really “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

When someone is weak, they are not going to brag about it. No one goes around, bragging about how they cannot lift a 100-pound dumbbell for example. They would only brag if they could lift it. In spiritual terms, the Corinthians' instructors think they are lifting the 100-pound dumbbell because they have convinced themselves that they are serving God in the energies of their flesh. Therefore, they are bold about their flesh. Paul will now be bold in his flesh, too, to show that he is serving Christ. However, Paul is serving Christ through presenting his flesh as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1), while the instructors are pretending to serve Christ by using their flesh. The true measure of Paul's living sacrifice is by his sufferings for Christ, and so his boldness, regarding his flesh, will be in his sufferings, not health and wealth like the instructors' boast. Again, Paul is speaking foolishly because he is boasting about something that is dead, i.e., his flesh (Colossians 3:3).

11:22 Before Paul starts boasting in his fleshly sufferings, he starts off by saying that his flesh is the same as theirs. Physically speaking, both Paul and the ten thousand instructors are Hebrews, Israelites, and of the seed of Abraham. What this does is that it levels the playing field. It shows that, if both are serving Christ, the fleshly result should be the same for both.

This makes sense that the ten thousand instructors would be Jews. When Paul went to Corinth, he preached in the Jewish synagogue. Then, he went next door

and started a church of believers. Crispus and Gaius, who were leaders in the synagogue, were saved and followed Paul next door (Acts 18:1-8). Therefore, it makes sense that the ten thousand instructors would be Jews. Today, those, who try to get you away from sound doctrine, are from Christian churches, because this is the background of many believers, just like the background of many in the Corinthian church was Jewish.

11:23-27 With the playing field being level, Paul says that he is more of a minister of Christ than they are. Again, he reminds them that he is speaking as a fool, because it is foolish to brag about a dead person (“Ye are dead” (Colossians 3:3).). Paul’s only boast should be in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). However, he would rather be received by the Corinthians as a fool (11:16) in order to show how foolish it is to boast in the flesh than to have the Corinthians continue to trust in the flesh and have their minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ by another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel (11:3-4).

What is going on in powerlifting in Canada is probably a good illustration of what Paul is doing here. Anne Andres is a biological male, who held many powerlifting records in Canada, because he identifies as a female. To show how stupid this is, Avi Silverberg, a male powerlifter, showed up at a powerlifting competition on March 25, 2023, identified as a female, and broke the female bench-press record by almost 100 pounds. He did this to show how ridiculous it is for biological males to be able to compete against women in powerlifting.

Similarly speaking, when the 10,000 instructors in Christ boast in the health and wealth gospel, they are like Anne Anders. They say that Christ is blessing them in the flesh for serving God. The reality is that, if they are blessed in the flesh, it is because they are following the course of this world (Ephesians 2:20), which is run by Satan as the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). Remember, from 11:13-15, that they are really false apostles and Satan’s ministers, but they have transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness. They do well in the flesh because they are of the devil, but they are trans-Christians (saying they are Christians when they are really of the devil, just like Anne Andres said he is a female when he is really a male), and so they appear to be godly people when they are not.

To show how ridiculous this is, Paul comes along and shows what the flesh of a believer really looks like, by showing his sufferings. This is similar to Avi Silverberg, who made it obvious to everyone that he is really a man, which is why he can break female records. Paul shows the true marks in the flesh of someone living for Christ, so that the Corinthians know that godly living results in persecution (II Timothy 3:12), not health and wealth.

Look at the health-and-wealth gospel preachers today. They talk about “sowing a seed” of, say, \$100, and God will multiply it into \$1,000. There are many people, just trying to make ends meet, who have tried this in order to get ahead, and all they did was get into more financial trouble. Why? Because this only works for the people at the top of the pyramid scheme. In other words, the health-and-wealth

preachers get wealthy off of the poor people who fall for their scam. Similarly, the 10,000 instructors in Christ (4:15) are trying to get wealthy off of the Corinthians. It works for the preachers because they are at the top of the pyramid scheme. In other words, they are operating by the principles of the god of this world (Satan) in order to get ahead in this world, and they have to pose as ministers of righteousness in order to get away with this (11:15).

So, what is Paul's reasoning for being more of a minister of Christ than these instructors are? Is it because he has more money than they do? No, quite the contrary. Paul had "profited in the Jews' religion above many [his] equals in [his] own nation" (Galatians 1:14), but those things that were gain to him, he counted loss for Christ. He had "suffered the loss of all things" and counted them but dung in order to win Christ and be found in Him (Philippians 3:7-9)! (This is because Paul had operated by the course of this world within the Jewish religion, giving him money. Now, he operates by who he is in Christ, and so he lost his money and his political standing in the Jewish religion.)

The way Paul was more of a minister of Christ than the Corinthians' ten thousand instructors (I Corinthians 4:15) was by labouring more, receiving stripes from being beaten, being thrown in prison more frequently, and being "in deaths oft," all for being a minister of Christ (11:23).

"Labours more abundant": The labours would be journeying from city to city to preach the gospel, making tents to earn some money to finance his journeyings (Acts 18:3), spending time studying God's Word, specifically in light of the mystery doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ had given to him, and preaching at every opportunity he received. Paul gives the detail of the stripes, prisons, and deaths in 11:24-27. He probably does not give the detail of the labouring because that labouring is the work of the ministry that he did, rather than having these other things done to him. Therefore, if he bragged about his labouring, the focus would be more on him, than on Christ. In I Corinthians 15:10, Paul says that he "laboured more abundantly than [all of Israel's apostles]: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Paul wants the focus to be on Christ in him, not on himself, and so he does not mention his specific labours.

"Stripes above measure": The details of the stripes are that the Jews beat him with 39 lashes five times (Deuteronomy 25:1-3 says that, if a judge declares a man to be beaten for his wickedness, he cannot be given more than 40 stripes. The Jews would give 39 lashes, just in case they miscounted. This is legalism at its finest. A righteous man, Paul, is beaten five times, for serving God. Clearly, the Jews broke the law in doing so, as Paul was blameless under the law (Philippians 3:6). However, they justified themselves by making sure they "obeyed" the law in giving him no more than 40 lashes! They did the same thing by tithing on their spices, while omitting "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).). Paul was also beaten with rods three times (11:24-25). Perhaps this is how the Roman government punished people.

We should note that Paul wrote II Corinthians around Acts 20, which means that he could have added more sufferings to this list by the end of his earthly life. For example, Paul says that he suffered shipwreck thrice. We know that he suffered another shipwreck in Acts 27. Perhaps he also suffered some more of the other mentioned perils after he wrote II Corinthians.

“In deaths oft”: This cannot mean that Paul was physically dying all the time, although he had probably died before, based upon what he says in 12:2-4. It could be referring to his dying daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31) so that Christ would live in him. However, Paul is speaking as a fool (11:23), and we see from the other things he mentions that he is talking about actual, physical sufferings. Therefore, “in deaths oft” probably means that he was in life threatening situations many times. For example, Paul started this epistle with such an instance in Ephesus, when they “were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (1:8).

Paul’s being stoned once is recorded in Acts 14. (This means that stones were cast at him to kill him, not that he smoked a sufficient amount of marijuana.) Verse 19 says that “having stoned Paul, [they] drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.” I just mentioned that Paul died and was caught up into the third heaven at one point in his life (12:2-4). His stoning is probably when that took place. While dead, Christ revealed to him in heaven more of the mystery. When Christ was through, Paul “rose up, and came into the city” (Acts 14:20). This stoning also probably accounts for Paul’s poor eyesight (Galatians 4:15, 6:11). Even though God raised him from the dead, it most certainly was a traumatic experience. Modern psychiatrists would put him on several medications, and he would have mental anguish for the rest of his life. But, Christ in him rose above his circumstances to continue the ministry to which God had called him. (Psychiatry would not exist if everyone let Christ live in them.)

“A night and a day...in the deep” (11:25) may have been the scariest thing Paul suffered. You never know what may come upon you in the water and start gnawing on you, especially at night when you cannot see a thing. It was probably a miracle that he even survived such a trial. We should also note that the deep is Satan’s realm, e.g., Matthew 8:32, Mark 4:37-41, and Revelation 13:1. Therefore, this was a type of Paul suffering Satanic attacks for serving Christ.

Paul had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6), and he still had many years of his ministry left at the time that statement was made. Therefore, the people, who were profiting from the world before Paul came along, would have persecuted him for preaching the mystery gospel. This is why he had all kinds of perils, mentioned in verse 26, that are too numerous to detail or even to remember, and so he just lists general categories of what he suffered.

With regard to verse 27, Paul told the Philippians that he had **learned** how to be content, in whatsoever state he was in (Philippians 4:11). (I tried using this argument with my wife that she should learn to be content with living in the state of California, but it did not work. Therefore, I learned to be content with living in

the state of Alabama.) Paul knew how to be abased, to abound, to be full, to be hungry, and to suffer need (Philippians 4:12). Since Philippians was written after II Corinthians, I believe it is safe to assume that the way he learned to be content always is by the things that he suffered. He then said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Paul learned that his sufferings actually help him serve Christ, as we will see in the next chapter.

Paul was probably weary from all of the travel and lack of sleep he went through. He was in painfulness from the physical ailments he had as a result of all of the persecutions he faced. We should note that God did not heal Paul of these ailments, even though God was doing physical miracles through Paul at the time (Acts 18:11-12), because the sufferings helped him serve Christ better. So, why would Christians today expect God to heal them physically, when God is not doing physical miracles through them today, and their sufferings are probably not directly related to having Christ live in them, as they were for Paul?

Paul's "in watchings often" probably refers to both physical watchings, as religious Jews were out to kill him, and also spiritual watchings, as he watched to keep from living in the flesh ("Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41)). Paul's hunger, thirst, and fastings were not fleshly religious shows as people use them today and as the Pharisees did in Paul's day (Matthew 6:16). Rather, his frequent travels, not going along with the established religion and not receiving much money from churches to cover expenses, probably meant that he spent many nights by himself with no ability to get any food. "In cold and nakedness" would go along with this, but it could also refer to his many imprisonments. In II Timothy 4:13, from prison, Paul asked Timothy to bring him the cloke that he left at Troas with Carpus. He must have been cold in his prison cell. However, he was more interested in Timothy bringing him the written word of God, since Paul had learned to be content in coldness.

Thus, after all of this, Paul would have said with Job, "I have esteemed the words of [God's] mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). I dare say that the only way one can make that same determination is if forced to make the choice between the two, which very few have had to do. However, in the last half of the tribulation period, believing Israel will have to make this choice. They will need to take the mark of the beast in order to have a steady diet of food (Revelation 13:16-17). However, if they take the mark, they will spend eternity in hell (Revelation 14:9-11). Unfortunately, the hard-heartedness of Israel is so great that this is the only way they will be saved (Romans 11:26).

11:28 On top of all of these things, Paul has the daily care of the churches (11:26). That must have taken a lot of his time. Until you have pastored a church, you do not know how much time it takes to prepare messages and provide spiritual help to the members of the congregation. However, Paul had many churches that he had established all over the world. When they had problems, he could not tell them to listen to Pastor So-and-So's message, or pull up Paul's message on that topic on Youtube. Nor could he refer them to books written by others. God had revealed the mystery gospel and doctrine to Paul alone. He was

THE apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). If Paul did not write it down somewhere, the doctrine, that a particular church member needed, did not exist in written form. Therefore, he probably received constant communications from churches in the body of Christ. It probably took him a great deal of time to analyze letters carefully to figure out what to say to them, since mystery doctrine was also new to him. In fact, the epistles of Romans – Philemon, for the most part, are the result of these inquiries. There are other letters that he wrote that we do not have. This process probably wore on him mentally, as he thought through all of the issues that had come up and how best to respond to them. This is in addition to everything else he suffered and should not be taken lightly.

11:29 Today’s culture gets offended by everything. We cannot have any more sitcoms on television because they are bound to say something that offends someone. A sports broadcaster may make a comment that is interpreted as being racist, and he is immediately fired, even if he is well loved and has been in the same job for 30 years. So many people today must watch what they say so that others are not offended.

In such a culture like this, the ones who are offended are the ones who stand for the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God, because we are going against the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2). No doubt Paul was also continually offended by the Jewish religion, pagan Gentile religions, and all others who rejected his gospel and right division. In these cases, the Spirit of Christ groaned within him (Romans 8:23), but he did not fight against the offences he received, because Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Paul is in a spiritual battle, not a material one.

This is a lesson for us to learn today. Although we may be offended by homosexuals, transgenders, killing babies, and a host of other evil things, our job is to share God’s love to others so that they may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth, not to right social wrongs and injustices.

11:30-31 Paul said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). A “God forbid” is something that should never happen under any circumstance. Unfortunately, Paul is in a difficult situation with the Corinthians. Their 10,000 instructors in Christ have them believing in a health-and-wealth gospel. Since Paul has begotten them in the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15), he is hoping that the Corinthians will listen to him, rather than them.

Since Paul will only glory in the cross of Christ and the Corinthians will only look at the flesh, Paul has to glory in the things that the cross of Christ has done to his flesh. II Timothy 3:12 says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The reason for this persecution is so that Paul knows Christ “and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, [by] being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). In other words, suffering is God’s plan for Christ’s love to come through us to a world that follows Satan. Therefore, Paul “will glory of the things which concern [his] infirmities” (11:30). Note that he

does not say that he glories in his sufferings, but he glories in the THINGS WHICH CONCERN his infirmities. In other words, by detailing his sufferings for Christ, he is glorying in the work of Christ in him to make Christ strong and Paul weak in his daily life (12:9-10). Therefore, Paul can still glory in the cross of Christ, even though he is talking about his own flesh, because the glorying is about what Christ is doing to Paul through his sufferings, rather than glorying in the sufferings themselves. In other words, Paul glories in the spiritual things that are a result of his physical sufferings for Christ.

This also shows us that Paul is not superhuman, because “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Ephesians 5:29). Even Christ, who never sinned (I Peter 2:22), prayed regarding the cross, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). If Christ did not want to suffer, we know that Paul did not want to suffer either. Yet, the end result of Paul’s suffering is for Christ to be formed in him. Therefore, he takes “pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake,” knowing that, when he is weak, Christ is strong in him (12:10).

In other words, by foregoing his flesh’s will, Christ’s will is done in him. By looking at the spiritual rather than the physical, Paul actually prefers to suffer for Christ’s sake, as opposed to having a pain-free life that does not bring glory to God. This is how he can say that he lies not (11:31) in this statement, even though it contradicts what everyone’s flesh wants. It shows that, as Christ did, Paul is saying to God the Father, “nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). This shows that it is possible to disregard completely your flesh in order to value the spiritual.

How can he do this? Because Christ is in him, and Christ did the same thing in His flesh. The term “Abba, Father” appears three times in scripture: Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6. The Mark reference is when Christ yielded His will to the Father’s will. Thus, “Abba, Father” means that the Father’s will is so dear to you that it supersedes your own will. Since the body of Christ has the Spirit of His Son in our hearts whereby we also cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:16), it means that the Father’s will can also supersede our own will. This must have happened in Paul’s case for him to say that God knows that he lies not (11:31), i.e., that he truly glories of the things which concern his infirmities.

Thus, the purpose for us to have Christ living in us is not so we attain health and wealth, but so we physically suffer for Christ’s sake so that our will is conformed unto God the Father’s will. This is how we “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [our] flesh for His body’s sake” (Colossians 1:24). Not that Christ’s sufferings were lacking in any way, but so that heavenly places are filled with members of the body of Christ, who all know how to show God’s love in those positions for all eternity because we have allowed Christ to suffer through us by Christ living in us as we subordinated our own will to the Father’s will while on earth.

11:32-33 In 11:23-27, Paul gave a summary of his fleshly sufferings for Christ. 11:32-33 is the only suffering of which Paul gives the Corinthians detail in this chapter. He also puts it at the end of the chapter after he has concluded his argument as if to say, “P.S., I was almost killed in Damascus for the cause of Christ.”

Acts 9:23-25 also mentions the details of this event. In Acts 9:1-2, Saul (Paul) received the authority from the high priest to arrest members of the believing remnant of Israel and bring them to Jerusalem. However, on his way to Damascus, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him from heaven, and Paul saw the error of his way (Acts 9:3-6). After Paul was saved as part of the believing remnant of Israel (Acts 9:17-18), he dwelt with the disciples in Damascus and preached in the Jewish synagogues that Christ is the Son of God (Acts 9:19-20). The Jews understood that Paul had come to arrest the believing remnant, and so they were amazed by his sudden transformation (Acts 9:21). Because he knew the Old Testament so well and the Holy Ghost was strengthening him, he was able to confound the Jews and prove that Jesus was Israel’s Christ (Israel’s Messiah) (Acts 9:22).

Then, “after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him” (Acts 9:23). This is when the disciples let him out of the city by dropping him outside of the city’s walls in a basket, and he got away. The “many days” of Acts 9:23 would have been the three years that Jesus spent with Paul, sharing the mystery gospel and mystery doctrine with him (See Galatians 1:17-18. Also see I Kings 2:38-39, where “many days” equals three years.). If Paul was just teaching Jewish doctrine, this would not have happened to him, as seen by the 10,000 instructors in Christ also being Jews (11:22).

This demonstrates how hated Bible believers are. The Jews in Damascus knew that Paul came to persecute the believing remnant. He confounded them to the point that they could not answer his claim that Jesus was the Christ. Yet, they did nothing at that point. However, after Jesus spent three years giving Paul the mystery gospel and doctrine, they immediately wanted to kill him. What this shows is that religious people will tolerate you, even if you differ in what you believe, but they hate you when you take a stand on God’s Word against their religion.

This has happened time and again in the last 2,000 years. I have also observed this many times with fellow Christians. They immediately feel a common bond with me when they find out that I am a Christian. They are also very accepting of other Christians who attend a church of a different denomination than theirs. However, when they find out that I preach God’s Word online and do not attend a conventional church, the common bond they felt with me is immediately severed. They turn from being my friend to being my enemy. This is because religious people hate God’s Word. This is because they have a form of godliness, but deny the true power of godliness (II Timothy 3:5), which is God’s Word (Hebrews 4:12). Therefore, when you take a stand on God’s Word, they find out you are not playing the Christian game like they are. They then want to separate themselves from you

as quickly as possible, lest their conscience convicts them that the game they are playing is not of God. They would then have to admit that their flesh is vile (Philippians 3:21), and they do not want to do that. Therefore, they figuratively kill the messenger.

Similarly speaking, then, the Jews did nothing when Paul used Jewish scripture to confound them regarding the Messiah. However, when he started teaching salvation by grace through faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4), they saw it as an attack against the form of godliness of their Jewish religion, and they sought to get rid of him immediately by trying to kill him. Just like the Jews appealed to the Roman governor, Pilate, to kill Jesus, the Jews in Damascus appealed unto the governor under the king to try to kill Paul (11:32-33).

This event is important both to Paul and to the Corinthians. It is important to Paul because it was the first persecution he faced for believing the mystery gospel and doctrine. Therefore, it was the defining moment when Paul decided to give up everything "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). This is when Paul drew the metaphorical line in the sand, saying that Christ and His Word to Paul are more important than anything else in the world, which is how he eventually got to the point where he would not be lying by glorying in the things which concern his infirmities (11:30-31).

This event is important to the Corinthians because they are also at the point where they need to draw the metaphorical line in the sand. Paul did it between him and the religious Jews of the synagogues in Damascus. The Corinthians need to draw the line between them and their 10,000 instructors in Christ (I Corinthians 4:15). If the Corinthians are willing to cross this line from fleshly religion to spiritual truth for today, they can begin their journey of suffering for Christ and also get to the point where they can glory in the things which concern their infirmities, because they will value the spiritual over the physical. Therefore, Paul concludes his list of sufferings with the detail of his life being threatened in Damascus so that the Corinthians also begin to follow the path of persecuted Bible believers, as Paul did in Acts 9:23-25. Will the Corinthians be followers of Paul in this respect (I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1)?

II Corinthians 12 – When We Are Weak, Christ Is Strong In Us

12 The reason Paul mentioned his sufferings is so the Corinthians will stop looking at the flesh and concentrate on the spiritual, so that they can come unto the knowledge of the truth based upon the abundance of visions and revelations of the Lord given to Paul (v. 1). Paul had been to heaven (vs. 2-4). This resulted in him receiving a thorn in the flesh from Satan so that he would not become puffed up in his knowledge (v. 7). The Lord allowed Paul to continue to suffer with this thorn, because Christ's strength is made perfect in our flesh's weakness. Therefore, Paul actually rejoices in being able to suffer for Christ's sake (vs. 9-10)!

Paul will gladly do whatever he can to help the Corinthians come unto the knowledge of the truth, including looking like a fool (v. 11). This, in spite of the fact that, the more he loves them, the less the Corinthians seem to love him (vs. 14-15). Their reluctance to walk in the Spirit has kept Paul from coming to them twice, and he hopes he gets to come to them now (v. 14), but he will only come if they are not walking in the carnality of their flesh (vs. 20-21). Some of the Corinthians think he wants to come to make a financial gain (vs. 17-18), but Paul's true motivation for visiting is to edify them in sound doctrine (v. 19).

12:1 In I Corinthians 6:12, Paul says, "all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." Under grace, our decisions should not be between good and bad, but between good and best. Therefore, while it is good to talk about Paul's fleshly suffering so that the Corinthians do not focus on the flesh, it is better to focus on "visions and revelations of the Lord" (12:1). In other words, it is better to talk about what the Lord is doing through Paul than to talk about man's attack against Paul as a result of Christ living in him. In this way, the focus is on the Lord, not on man. Therefore, Paul is going back to focusing on Christ. Instead of glorying in his flesh, he will glory in "visions and revelations of the Lord."

Note that he does not glory in red-letter Jesus—the miracles and healings—like Churchianity does. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus won the victory over hell and death (Revelation 1:18; I Corinthians 15:54-57). He spoiled the principalities and powers of Satan and his forces in heavenly places, triumphing over them in the cross (Colossians 2:15). The result is that the manifold wisdom of God is now made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places through the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:9-10). This means that we can now use this knowledge to win spiritual battles by Christ living in us by sound doctrine (Ephesians 6:12). This is a far greater miracle than the things Christ did on the earth in Matthew – John. Therefore, it is far more important that Paul comes "to visions and revelations of the Lord" (12:1) than to talk about his sufferings in Christ. In other words, it is better to concentrate on what Christ is doing through Paul, as opposed to looking at how Satan's attacks against Paul are not working.

Churchianity's problem is that they focus on the flesh, and so they do not know if they are even saved. They twist Matthew – John to make it about us today, imposing a legalism to keep people in bondage so that they get their money. The result is that they cannot "come to visions and revelations of the Lord" (12:1) so that Christ lives in them, because they are too busy focusing on their own flesh, trying to make their salvation secure. This never works because no good thing dwells in our flesh (Romans 7:18). They do not even know that they are crucified with Christ and they should live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, they do not read and believe Paul's epistles. Even if they do read them, they cannot understand them, because they are still operating by the law of sin and death, rather than by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2).

12:2-5 Paul talks about this man in the third person, but 12:7 tells us that this man is Paul himself. Why does he say, "I knew a man in Christ" (12:2)? He wants

the focus to be on Christ, not himself. Also, Colossians 3:3 says that we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. So, Paul may be counting this as Christ in him and not Paul himself. Or, this could be a vision of the future, where Paul sees his future self going into heaven upon his death. Twice, he says that he does not know whether he was in the body or not. So, he is probably seeing his future self in heaven, and he does not know if it is before or after the rapture. This makes sense in light of verse 5, where he says he will glory of this person (Paul's glorified self), but not of himself (Paul's fleshly self). In other words, no good thing dwells in his flesh (Romans 7:18), and so he will only glory in the cross of Christ while he is on earth (Galatians 6:14). But, he can glory in his future self because the sin nature is not there. In heaven, he is living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), and so glorying in his future self is actually glorying in Christ alone because he only lives by the faith of the Son of God in heaven (Galatians 2:20).

This may be like John in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 5:4, John "wept much." In the next verse, "one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not." John may be one of the 24 elders, especially since he calls himself "the elder" in II John 1 and III John 1. Therefore, in his flesh, John weeps because no one can open the book, but, in his spirit, John reassures himself that Christ can open the book. As the glorified elder in heaven, John does not have his sin nature, and so he is living by every word of God, but John in the flesh still has his sin and has imperfect understanding. John does not seem to identify himself as an elder in Revelation 5. He is so different in his glorified flesh compared with his sinful flesh. Similarly, Paul, in his flesh, may not even recognize himself in his glorified position in heaven, because it is really Christ he is seeing in Paul, not Paul himself. (Also, note that Paul says twice that he "KNEW a man" (12:2-3). He does not know him any more because he does not see his glorified flesh in heaven any more.)

II Corinthians 4:7 says that, right now, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Romans 8:18 talks about "the glory which shall be revealed in us." So, at the time that Paul writes II Corinthians, he has an earthen vessel, but when he was caught up into the third heaven, he saw the glory of Christ revealed in his future self. Therefore, glorying in his future self is glorying in Christ, which is why he will glory in "such a one," but he will only glory in his infirmities in his flesh (12:5), because that is the only evidence Paul sees of Christ in his sinful flesh.

This event, from 14 years ago, probably refers to Paul being stoned in Acts 14:19. The people stoned him, drew him out of the city, and left his body there, "supposing he had been dead." "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city" (Acts 14:20). This makes me think that Paul died, was caught up into the third heaven to hear more mystery doctrine, and then his soul returned back into his body. (When we die, it seems that God gets our body to be transformed into Christ's glorious body at the rapture (Philippians 3:21), but yet our body is still on the earth. For example, the devil disputed with Michael, the archangel, over the body of Moses (Jude 9). Why would there be a dispute over Moses' body if it just decays? This would explain why Paul does not know if he was in the body or out of the body when he went to heaven, even

though his physical body obviously was still on earth. Also, “to be absent from the body, [is] to be present with the Lord” (5:8). Now, Paul’s sinful flesh could not enter into heaven, so he could have been present in his glorified body in heaven or maybe not. This is all very confusing and probably not worth talking about further, since we cannot come to any certain conclusions. Suffice it to say, if Paul did not know if he was in the body or not, we certainly do not know this either!) When Jesus first called Paul in Acts 9, He said that He had given him things to see and would appear to him later to reveal more things to him (Acts 26:16). This resurrection into heaven 14 years ago would be one of those later revelations of further mystery doctrine.

By comparing verses 2 and 4, we learn that paradise is in the third heaven. The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere, the second heaven is the rest of the planets, galaxies, etc., and the third heaven is paradise where God dwells. It is probably in a different dimension to keep man from ever reaching or discovering it by himself.

“Unspeakable words” (12:4) may refer to grace words or words for the mystery dispensation, since “it is not LAWFUL for a man to utter” these. (Grace words are not lawful.) But, they would not be unspeakable. Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit of Christ “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” However, rather than this simply being grace words, this is probably internal communication in the Godhead between the Father and the Son, since they are one (John 10:30). (Maybe cats purr to give us an idea of what this is like.) My thinking, then, is that the unspeakable words that Paul heard were of communication among the members of the Godhead. It is high-level stuff in heaven that man, in his flesh, cannot utter, because he is not qualified for such communication. (Note that Paul does not say that these words cannot be uttered. Rather, he says that “it is not lawful for A MAN to utter” them (12:4), which means that the Godhead could utter these words.)

This reminds me of Psalm 139:4-6. David says the Lord knows every word in his tongue. The Lord, then, has beset him behind and before and laid His hand on him. In other words, the Lord knows David so intimately that He has protected him spiritually and has empowered him to serve the Lord. David then says, regarding this, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” I believe it is this high knowledge of the Godhead’s communication with each other that would be unlawful for Paul to utter, because he is a man.

We should also note what Paul talks about regarding his time in paradise. Churchianity likes to talk about the streets of gold, gates of pearl, and walls of jasper that will be in New Jerusalem, assuming that these things will also be in heaven (Revelation 21). They also like to talk about seeing loved ones in heaven. However, the only thing Paul talks about are “visions and revelations of the Lord” (12:1), which are probably the “unspeakable words” which he heard (12:4). This is because, in heavenly places, we will live by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). This is how God’s love comes through us and brings God glory. Obviously, heaven is an aesthetically pleasing place, but the high words of God being lived out in our lives is FAR more important than physical beauty

that Paul does not even mention a single physical characteristic of what he saw in heaven.

Because man looks on the outward appearance, he devalues the Word of God. However, God has exalted His Word above all His name (Psalm 138:2). God says that the things hid in Christ are “all the TREASURES of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 3:3). This is because, in heaven, we will live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). These words, then, are the most valuable things in the world. Paul realized this such that, even though he profited in the Jews’ religion above many his equals (Galatians 1:14), he counted the things of this world as dung so that he might receive “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:7-10). Yet, here is Churchianity, singing stupid “worship” lyrics like, “I don’t understand doctrine. I just want to feel Jesus.” Paul was willing to die just for more knowledge of Christ living in him, and Churchianity will not even open their Bibles. Absolutely ridiculous!

12:6 Paul’s flesh desires to glory about how good his flesh will look in heavenly places, because his flesh wants to get the upper hand. However, this would be glorying in himself, rather than in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, he will now forbear.

The reason Paul brings up his going into heaven is so he can reveal, in 12:7-10, what happened to his flesh as a result of what he saw and heard in heaven, i.e., he suffered. Paul’s point is not to glorify himself, but it is to show that, the more sound doctrine you have in the inner man, the more you can expect to suffer in the flesh. This shows that suffering for Christ is actually God’s plan for the Corinthians, as opposed to the health-and-wealth gospel that the 10,000 instructors in Christ propagate.

Now that Paul has not gloried in his flesh yet has established that he went to heaven, he will skip immediately to the lesson he wants to teach, lest the Corinthians start worshiping Paul. Our flesh is so bad that it will look for any angle it can find to substantiate that somebody is better than ourselves so that it can sin in worshiping someone other than God. There were people that were trying to get the Colossians to worship angels so that they would not hold Christ as their head (Colossians 2:18-19). The Galatians also seemed to hold people higher than others, as Paul had to say that they should not believe any other gospel than what he preached to them, even if “an angel from heaven” (Galatians 1:8) revealed that other gospel to them. Romans 1:25 says that unbelieving man worships and serves “the creature more than the Creator.” Also, in Lystra, Paul and Barnabas were worshipped as gods, and so they had to take the extreme measure of stripping down to nothing just to show that they were ordinary men. Even then, they “scarce restrained...the people” from doing “sacrifice unto them” (Acts 14:11-18). Then, the people did a 180 and were persuaded to stone Paul (Acts 14:19-20). This shows how irrational your emotions are, both positive and negative emotions. All of these examples show that there is a very real danger that, by mentioning his trip to heaven, the Corinthians would exalt Paul to be superhuman. Therefore, Paul nips

this in the bud by not talking about this any more. (We can also see how Churchianity elevates their leaders to be holier than laymen, when Paul tells us that ALL of the body of Christ are “holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12) because all of us have our lives “hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Yet, Churchianity will call their leaders, “Reverend,” “Apostle,” “Bishop,” “Pastor,” and other titles to make them seem holier than the “regular” Christians who attend church.

12:7 This trip into heaven also placed Paul in danger of being “exalted above measure” by becoming “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18). The “measure,” about which he is talking, is his “measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). We are only to think of ourselves according to the sound doctrine built up in our inner man. It would easy for Paul to allow his flesh to exalt himself above this measure of sound doctrine within him, i.e., to think that his flesh is better than other people’s flesh since he went to heaven. This is why “a thorn in the flesh” was given to Paul.

Paul does not tell us what this “thorn” was. His most likely thorn is poor eyesight, as seen by the large print in which Paul had to write his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 6:11) and by the statement that the Galatians wanted to help Paul by plucking their own eyes out and giving them to Paul (Galatians 4:15).

With regard to “the messenger of Satan to buffet” Paul, while devils cannot possess any believer because we have the Holy Ghost within us, God can allow Satan to do things to us physically. We see this with Job (Job 1-2), and we see this with Paul. However, at the time of Paul’s stoning, in Acts 14:19-20, Paul had not even penned his first epistle. By the time we get to the end of Acts, physical miracles cease. Therefore, it is probable that Satan’s influence in the physical realm also ceased at the time God’s Word was completed with Paul’s final epistle being penned.

Satan usually mimics God; therefore, even if Satan can intervene in the physical realm today, he is not likely to do so. I Timothy 4:1-3 shows Satan attacking the saints with “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,” rather than by attacking physically. God’s will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4), and so Satan’s will is for no one to be saved nor come unto the knowledge of the truth. This is best accomplished with direct attacks against the Holy Ghost teaching us God’s Word (I Corinthians 2:9-16), rather than by attacking in the physical realm.

Now, you may ask, “If a physical attack results in Christ being strong through Paul (12:9-10), why would Satan attack Paul?” Why wouldn’t Satan actually give Paul health and wealth to try to get him to glory in the flesh? The answer is that most people will look at things from the physical, rather than the spiritual. It takes an incredible amount of spiritual maturity to take the approach of Paul of glorying in his infirmities so that Christ’s power may rest upon him. Therefore, Satan’s physical attacks work in most cases.

Also, Satan is an unbeliever and is cocky enough to think that he has the power to stop what God is doing. For example, Satan will bring in the Antichrist, thinking that he will defeat God's plan, even though God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and so God is guaranteed to defeat Satan in the end, because He has said so. Therefore, even though Satan knows that God says that Satan's attack will result in Christ being stronger in Paul, Satan still buffets Paul when he gets his chance, just as he did with Job. Satan looks at it as the method to get Paul to get depressed, to feel like God has forsaken him, and to go back to his religious ways to try to do well in the flesh. However, Paul sees it as Satan's messenger helping his walk with Christ by keeping Paul humble.

Paul says, in I Corinthians 8:1, that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." This is why "the abundance of the revelations" could result in Paul being exalted above measure. God's work in us is a two-step process. The first step is for us to read and believe God's Word so that we come unto the knowledge of the truth so that we use the mind of Christ for Christ to live in us. The second step is for us to suffer for the doctrine so that God's love comes through us to others (Romans 5:2-5). If we just stop with the knowledge, our flesh is puffed up. If we apply the knowledge and suffer for the doctrine, God's love comes through us and God is glorified.

12:8 "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephesians 5:29). Even Jesus prayed, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove [the cross] from me" (Luke 22:42). If Jesus prayed this, you can certainly understand Paul asking the Lord three times for Him to remove his thorn in the flesh. This was also during the time that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" (Acts 19:11-12). If God was healing at the time, why didn't the Lord heal Paul?

12:9 The Lord answered by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Note that the Lord directly spoke to Paul. The Lord does not directly speak to people today, and the Lord does not do physical miracles today. Therefore, we should not be following Paul's example here.

However, even if God is doing miracles, note the Lord's answer. He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Grace is God's unmerited favor. I would not exactly describe poor eyesight as unmerited favor from God. However, from a spiritual perspective it is. Why? Because we are to look at spiritual things, because they are eternal, while physical things are temporary (4:18). I could have perfect health and live a long life, but what good would that do if I never believed the gospel.

Look at Hezekiah. He did a lot of good in Judah (II Kings 18:3-6). Because of this, when Hezekiah had a sickness unto death, Hezekiah prayed unto God and God granted him another 15 years (II Kings 20:1-6). Apparently, this caused him to become prideful because he showed Babylon his riches and did not care that Judah would be punished for this after his death (II Kings 20:12-19). He also fathered Manasseh, who was the most evil king in Judah's history (II Chronicles 33:1-9). Churchianity believes that God may give them physical healing if they

pray to God. As far as I know, Hezekiah is the only example in the Bible of this happening, yet it turned out to be a very bad thing. Therefore, if God healed Paul of his thorn in the flesh, it may also have been a turning point for the worse for Paul.

We can see, then, from the eternal, spiritual perspective, why Jesus calls Paul's thorn in the flesh, "My grace." Actually, the grace is seen in that Paul concentrates more on the spiritual as a result, which means that Christ's strength, which is the word of Christ dwelling in Paul, will strengthen Paul with might by God's Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16). Christ's strength is spiritual strength. Paul's weakness is his trusting in the flesh. But, when Paul cannot trust in his flesh, then Christ's strength overcomes Paul's weakness.

Having learned this lesson, Paul says the power of Christ is so important to him that he actually welcomes infirmities now. This goes along with Philippians 3:8, where he says that he counts all things of the flesh as loss and dung when compared with "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He also says, in Philippians 4:11, that he has "learned" to be content in whatsoever state he is in. He probably learned that lesson here.

Again, Paul still nourishes and cherishes his flesh (Ephesians 5:29), but he now views things from the spiritual perspective. He has died to his flesh daily (I Corinthians 15:31) and has brought it into subjection to his spirit (I Corinthians 9:27) to the point that he can honestly say that he GLORIES in his infirmities (11:30-31). It is not that he likes to suffer, but he knows that infirmities result in Christ's power on him.

Also, note that the power of Christ RESTS upon Paul. The flesh strives, because it lusts against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). But, Paul can rest when Christ lives in him as he lives by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). You are always labouring when you live by the flesh. But, there is rest when Christ lives in you, because you are simply walking in the good works of God (Ephesians 2:10), rather than striving in the flesh to try to obey the law. In grace, Christ does the work, not you, which is why there is rest. Therefore, Paul says that, when Christ is strong in him, the power of Christ rests upon him.

12:10 Paul now expands from infirmities to other things. "Infirmities" probably refer to physical sicknesses, such as his bad eyesight. "Reproaches" probably refer to false accusations against Paul, which he was suffering from the Corinthians' 10,000 instructors in Christ. "Necessities" probably refer to things necessary for life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. If he is "in necessities," then it means that he is lacking these things. Paul said, in 11:27, that he has been "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." This covers the lack of having food, clothing, and shelter. "Persecutions" probably refer to physical attacks against Paul for preaching the mystery gospel and doctrine. "Distresses" are probably the same as persecutions but going beyond that, such as going to prison, plots to kill him, and riots that endanger his life.

Note that he only takes pleasure in these things when he suffers them “for Christ’s sake.” For example, when I got COVID, I was weak in the flesh, but I did not get COVID because of who I am in Christ. I got it because it was a virus that was going around. Now, Christ’s strength could still be made perfect in my flesh’s weakness and there would be rejoicing in that.

However, Paul seems to be focusing specifically on things he suffered as a direct result of Christ living in him. Probably the reason for this is because suffering for the doctrine begins the process of Romans 5:2-5, which results in God’s love being “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” Granted, people can see God’s love come through you to others when you go through regular suffering, but there is something special about suffering for the doctrine. The reason is that it is unwarranted suffering, which shows those, seeking for the truth, that the truth of God is working through you, if people are trying to stop it.

Also, note that the last part of this verse says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” “I” is placed first when referring to weakness, but “am” is placed first when referring to strength. This shows that the focus of weakness is me, while the focus of strength is Christ. Another way of saying this is, “When I am weak, then Christ is strong in me.” This is supported by 12:9, where Paul mentions that “the power of Christ” is upon him and also by Galatians 2:20, which says “Christ liveth in me.” This point concludes this section, showing that suffering for Christ’s sake is God’s plan for the body of Christ. If the Corinthians learn this lesson, they will stop listening to their 10,000 instructors in Christ and their health-and-wealth gospel and listen to Paul instead, who begot them in the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15-16).

12:11 In 11:5, Paul said “I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.” Again, now, Paul says, “In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles,” except this time he adds, “though I be nothing.” So, Paul is nothing, and he is not behind the chiefest apostles. Does this mean that the apostles are also nothing? Yes! This is the secret to Christ living in you. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Christ is your life (Colossians 3:4). When you make yourself nothing by not listening to the flesh, Christ can be strong through you (12:10). Therefore, to become great in Christ, you have to become nothing. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33). Translation: “When I am weak, then” Christ is strong through me (12:10). Since Christ has abundant, eternal life (John 10:10), you gain His life spiritually when you lose your life in the flesh.

In I Corinthians 15:10, we learn that the way Paul was not behind the chiefest apostles was that the grace of God within Paul laboured more abundantly in him than in all of the 12 apostles of Israel’s program. God gave Paul a greater ministry. Paul had a reconciliation ministry, reconciling people to God (5:18-20), while the 12 apostles were teaching people to observe the Mosaic law (Matthew 23:19-20; 23:2-3) so that they may learn their sin so that they may believe the gospel and be saved (Galatians 3:24-25). In other words, Paul was giving the gospel directly,

while the 12 apostles gave the Mosaic law as an intermediary step due to Israel being under the old covenant. This is how Paul, the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15), could be behind the very chiefest apostles in nothing, though he is nothing. Paul had to be crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20), let the word of Christ dwell in him richly (Colossians 3:16), and live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20) to get people saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For doing this, the Corinthians should have commended Paul, because it was how they were saved (I Corinthians 4:15), and how Paul tried to get them out of their carnality with at least two letters prior to this one. They should have commended Paul for fighting the good fight of faith (I Timothy 6:12) to help them spiritually. Instead, they were following their 10,000 instructors in Christ. Therefore, Paul has to “become a fool in glorying” (12:11). Although he glories in his sufferings, he is still glorying in the flesh, which is foolish, because he should only glory in the cross of Christ. However, the Corinthians will only look at the flesh. Therefore, Paul has to glory in the only thing in the flesh that shows Christ, i.e., suffering, so that the Corinthians may start desiring to have Christ live in them instead of living by the flesh.

12:12 One thing, that separated apostles from other believers, were signs. Matthew 10:1-2 says, “When [Jesus] had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these.” Note how they were called apostles only after they were given the power to perform signs and wonders. The signs were given to confirm the gospel that they preached to Israel (Mark 16:20), because “Jews require a sign” (I Corinthians 1:22). Paul was sent to Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16; Acts 9:15). Therefore, he did signs. Acts 19:12 mentions that Paul healed the sick and cast out evil spirits. Paul was with the Corinthians in Acts 18, which means that they also saw these signs through Paul.

This should be more evidence that Christ is with Paul. Note that Paul went into detail on his sufferings (11:23-28), while he barely mentioned the miracles God did through him (12:12). I see two reasons for this. First, he knows that the miracles will cease when God’s Word is complete (I Corinthians 13:8-12), and so he does not want the Corinthians looking for miracles. Second, he does not want them to become Charismatics, as we see in today’s church environment. Then, they would be looking for supernatural things in the flesh to see Christ, which would result in them not reading and believing God’s Word.

I Corinthians 1:12 shows that the Corinthians had four groups, each following a different person: 1) Paul (right dividers), 2) Apollos (Old Testament followers), 3) Cephas (Pentecostals), and 4) Christ (red-letter Christians). If Paul focused on his signs, there is a great danger the Corinthians would let the Pentecostals take over and focus on miracles and good emotions as we see among Charismatics today. However, suffering for godly living (II Timothy 3:12) will happen as long as Satan is the god of this world. Therefore, Paul focuses on his sufferings, rather than his signs, to get them to follow him.

Note also that Paul mentions that the signs of an apostle were wrought “in all patience” (12:12). This is the first thing Paul mentions in the list in this verse. This shows that Paul did not just show up and do a bunch of miracles. Rather, Paul was very responsible with the gift of an apostle, such that he made sure the signs he did helped people spiritually, pointing them to Christ, rather than getting them to look for physical miracles. I do not know of anyone, following signs and wonders today, who exhibits patience. The reason is because the miracles are fake, and so they have to work at making them look real and spend a lot of time seeking God for healings. By contrast, Paul could heal someone instantly, even if he just had a handkerchief or apron from a sick person (Acts 19:12). Therefore, Paul had more than enough miracles that Christ could do through him, and so he had to be responsible about it to keep people from worshipping Paul and from seeking physical miracles from God, rather than spiritual well being. In other words, even when God was doing physical miracles, Paul would use patience in exhibiting them, as he focused on the spiritual over the physical. By contrast, today’s Charismatics put all the focus on the physical, hoping that they can fool people into thinking they can do miracles so they can get money and power from them.

12:13 From this verse, it sounds like the Corinthians were complaining that Paul was treating other churches better than them. I guess the complaint was that Paul had said he would come to them but has not done so yet. However, he has now written two epistles to them that are part of the Word of God for a total of 29 chapters, far more than any other church. He had also written at least one other letter to them that is not in the Bible (see I Corinthians 5:9). Paul may have written other letters to the Corinthians as well, even though he did not visit them like he wanted to. Therefore, Paul is definitely not ignoring the Corinthians, nor does he see them as inferior to other churches. (If anything, other churches could make this complaint against Paul with regard to the time that he spent writing to the Corinthians!)

In addition, Paul has already explained that the reason he did not come to them was because he only wanted to come in rejoicing. If he came at that time, he would come in heaviness due to their carnality (2:1-4). Therefore, it is really because Paul loves them that he writes this letter, but the Corinthians are saying that it is because he does NOT love them as much as the other churches as to why he wrote yet another letter to them. This shows that the Corinthians are looking at the flesh, rather than the spirit. In other words, the Corinthians are more concerned with the perception of Paul’s love compared with other churches, as opposed to the actual showing of love to them. It sounds like they want to say, “Paul loves us more than the Romans, Galatians, etc. because he came to see us.” They do not want epistles with doctrine that will cause them to walk in the Spirit instead of walking in the flesh. This is tough love, not surface love. This is why Paul says, “the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (12:15).

Now, Paul does concede that the only way in which Paul treated the Corinthians as inferior to other churches is that he was not burdensome to them. He actually says “forgive me this wrong” (12:13). I think everyone looks at this as a sarcastic

statement. However, I do not believe Paul ever made sarcastic statements, because sarcasm is only used when it is obvious that someone is being sarcastic. Since the Lord's ways and thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9), we are not smart enough to recognize sarcastic statements from the Lord. This is especially true of the carnal Corinthians. Therefore, Paul does not use them.

So, why does Paul say that he wronged the Corinthians by not taking money from them? Because giving materially to the Lord helps the Corinthians spiritually (8:12-14). However, Paul knows that, if he asked the Corinthians to support him, they would have used that as an excuse not to follow the sound doctrine he is giving them, claiming that Paul was in it for the money. Therefore, Paul had other churches support him, instead of the Corinthians (11:7-10). This means that, when it came to giving, Paul was in a catch-22 situation with the Corinthians. If Paul took money from them, it would help them spiritually, because it means they value the spiritual over the material. If he did not take money from them, it would also help them spiritually because then they were more likely to listen to Paul's doctrine. Listening to and following the doctrine was the more immediate need for the carnal Corinthians; therefore, Paul did not take money from them. Paul believed the Corinthians had a greater spiritual gain by Paul having other churches support him. But, you can say that Paul hurt them spiritually by not giving them the opportunity to support him financially, which is why Paul asks for forgiveness of this wrong, not sarcastically but sincerely.

12:14 Paul is again ready to come to them. It looks like he will actually come this time, as he believes this letter will finally result in the Corinthians walking by faith and not by sight (5:7). Nevertheless, he will still not be burdensome to them, meaning that he will not take money from them. If the Corinthians are spiritually mature enough to walk by faith and Paul can now come rejoicing (2:3), my guess is that the reason Paul will still not take money from the Corinthians is because of the carnal, pagan society they live in.

This should be a lesson for us today that pastors should not require their congregations to support them financially. Not that pastors do not have the right to do so, but because receiving full, financial support from their congregations, in general, is not expedient as ambassadors for Christ in getting people saved and coming unto the knowledge of the truth. Remember, while "all things are lawful for me,...all things are not expedient" (I Corinthians 10:23). Living in grace means making the most expedient decisions, not trying to exercise our rights. Therefore, Paul still will not take money from the Corinthians when he comes to them, even though they should be more spiritually mature by that time.

Paul also shows that, while the Corinthians probably will be more spiritually mature when Paul comes to them, they are still not at Paul's level. Paul has begotten them in the gospel, making him their spiritual father (I Corinthians 4:15). When I was a child, my mom did not expect me to buy her Christmas presents because I did not have money. Now that I am an adult, I can buy her presents. Similarly speaking, Paul is their father, and so he will continue not to accept money from the Corinthians because they are not yet spiritually mature enough to

contribute financially to Paul. (Their carnality shows that they are behaving more like children, rather than adults.) Besides, he prefers that they give to the poor saints at Jerusalem, rather than to him (8:10-15). (How many preachers today would say, “Yes, I am helping you out with messages and spiritual advice, but please give to the saints at such-and-such city as opposed to giving me money?”)

Finally, when Paul says, “I seek not yours, but you” in this verse, I believe the context supports that he is saying that I seek not your money but your spiritual growth in Christ instead. He is saying, “I want you to follow me as I follow Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1). He is not saying, “I am only spending this time with you so that you will give me money.”

12:15 “I will very gladly spend” probably refers to Paul spending financially to come to the Corinthians, even though the Corinthians are rich (I Corinthians 4:8). “I will...be spent for you” probably shows that Paul is willing to give of his time to write letters, to come to them, and to provide the doctrine they need to help them mature in Christ. The two most valuable physical resources that we have are time and money. Usually, we only have one and not the other. When we do have both, we usually selfishly use them to go on a vacation to do what we want to do. Paul, on the other hand, is willing to take donations from other churches (11:8) and make tents to earn some income (Acts 18:3). He then uses that money to pay his expenses to help out the Corinthians. If anyone could have afforded to provide Paul with an all-expenses paid trip, it would have been the Corinthians. And, it would have been right to pay his expenses, because the law says, “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,” which is said for the sake of giving materially to support those who provide you spiritual support (I Corinthians 9:9-10). Therefore, there was Biblical support and financial ability for the Corinthians to fund Paul’s journey to them. Yet, Paul says he will continue to boast in not being burdensome to the Corinthians (11:9-10). Paul did not have time or money, yet he continues to give to the Corinthians.

This shows what grace living is all about. Living in grace is not a license to sin (Romans 6:1-2), but it is the opportunity to let Christ live in you by living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20-21). Yet, Churchianity has no clue about this because they have fallen from grace by putting themselves under the law (Galatians 5:1-4). They then transgress the law and do not live for God (Galatians 2:18). This is why Churchianity will insist on paying pastors, rather than living in grace, as Paul did, willing to pay all his expenses to minister to a rich church. That is grace living! Yet, we do not see Churchianity’s “grace” preachers living like Paul.

Because the Corinthians are looking at things from a fleshly point of view, they see Christ’s love coming through Paul to them as not being love at all. This is because no good thing dwells in your flesh (Romans 7:18), and so the flesh operates by the principle that you do not get something for nothing. Therefore, when Paul spends his time and money to help out the Corinthians, they are skeptical of him, thinking he has an ulterior motive, setting them up for some big scam. After all, this is how most poor people treat the rich. However, they should know Paul’s background of him begetting them in the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15), and so they

should look at things from the spiritual perspective. If they do this, they will see that Paul has no ulterior motive. Rather, this is Christ in him. They should know that, if Paul were looking for money, he would have continued in the Jews' religion, where he profited above many his equals (Galatians 1:14), instead of suffering the loss of all things for Christ (Philippians 3:8).

However, because the Corinthians are judging Paul by the flesh, the more abundantly he loves them, the less they love him (12:15). Instead, they should let the love of Christ constrain them to know no man after the flesh (5:14-16). Then, they would return Paul's abundant love for them.

12:16 It is funny that Paul says that he was crafty and caught the Corinthians with guile, because craftiness and having guile are typical characteristics of Satan, not of Christ. In fact, Paul just told them that he was afraid that their minds would be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (11:3). So, Paul says craftiness and guile were used by Satan to corrupt Eve, but Paul says he has used craftiness and guile to show Christ's love to them!

Paul's craftiness and guile probably refer to how he just won a flesh contest with the 10,000 instructors in Christ by detailing his suffering to combat the health-and-wealth gospel of those instructors. Paul concentrated on the flesh in order to get the Corinthians to concentrate on the spiritual. In other words, Paul tricked the Corinthians into looking at the spiritual by appealing to the flesh. This means that Paul actually used craftiness and guile in a godly way, which is rarely how these things are used. This is sort of like how Jesus had righteous anger in making "a scourge of small cords" to drive out the moneychangers (John 2:15). Most people would not think of someone going into a temple and whipping those in there as a display of righteousness, but that is exactly what it was. Similarly, craftiness and guile are rarely godly characteristics, but they are in this case with Paul, because they serve a spiritual end, rather than a fleshly one.

12:17-18 Paul is trying to show the Corinthians that he is showing them Christ's love in doing things free of charge; he is not trying to get a large, monetary gain from them. Paul sent Titus and Luke before him to collect an offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem (8:16-18). Paul, Titus, and Luke are not the United Way. They are not taking a large, administrative cut for a donation to the poor saints at Jerusalem. In fact, they are not taking any cut. Paul's point is that, if Paul were in it for the money, he would be charging them for his service. Not only does he spend time with the Corinthians free of charge, but he also does not even take a cut of the money that he does receive for the poor saints at Jerusalem. This shows that he has no ulterior motive. He is simply operating in grace to show Christ's love to the Corinthians (Romans 5:2-5) so they may grow in the knowledge of the truth and have Christ live in them in return.

12:19 Paul confirms what we just said in the last two verses. Paul, Titus, Luke, and Timothy do not care about the Corinthians' money. They care only about them being edified in sound doctrine so that Christ lives in them. I love how Paul uses

the phrase “dearly beloved.” They are beloved because Christ is beloved by the Father (Matthew 3:17), and they are in Christ (I Corinthians 12:27). Therefore, they are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6), which makes them “dearly beloved” (12:19). And, because they are dearly beloved and Paul is in Christ, then he “will very gladly spend and be spent for [them]” (12:15). This is not about the money. It is about “godly edifying which is in faith” (I Timothy 1:4), because faith will last forever (I Corinthians 13:13), while money will not (4:18).

12:20 When Paul first came to the Corinthians, they were carnal (I Corinthians 3:3). He could not tell if they were saved or not, and so he came “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” before finding out that they were saved (I Corinthians 2:2-4). Now, Paul wants to visit the Corinthians to see how they have applied what he sent them in I Corinthians. However, he does not want to come when they are not letting Christ live in them. He determined that he “would not come again to [them] in heaviness” (2:1). Paul has enough going on to drag him down already (just look at his list of his sufferings in 11:23-28), and so he does not want to come to the Corinthians and be made sorry over not seeing Christ living in them (2:2).

“Debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults” (12:20) are things usually associated with a legalistic church. “Debates” occur over theological issues. The Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart as evil (Hebrews 4:12), which our flesh does not like. Therefore, people will debate over things that really do not matter, such as if the earth is flat, if there is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, and what will life be like in the millennial reign. Or, they will debate over finding the Word of God by using different versions and changing words by going to the original Greek and Hebrew. These are things that puff up the flesh by creating a form of godliness, while not having to address sin issues.

“Envyings” are where there are legalistic contests. Paul just warned them not to measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves amongst themselves (10:12). The result is that everyone puts on the best shew in the flesh that they can (Galatians 6:12). So, person A envies person B, because person A knows that he has sin, but thinks that person B is more godly because of the fair shew in the flesh that person B does. At the same time, person B envies person A, because person B knows that he has sin, but thinks that person A is godlier. Therefore, in legalism, everyone envies the other because they think the other is better than themselves, because they know the secret sins of themselves but not of the other person.

The “envyings” create “wraths” and “strifes.” To try to exalt themselves above others, they have “backbitings” and “whisperings.” The idea is that, if you put other people down, they will not see your own sins. This creates “swellings” or pride, where people think they are better than others. This can create divisions, which lead to “tumults.” This puts the Corinthians back to square one where people are divided into cliques, following man, rather than Christ through Paul, as we saw was the reason for Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 1:12).

Basically, in spite of having written 16 chapters to the Corinthians, he now has to write 13 more chapters in hopes that they will finally let Christ live in them. They had been following human evil, and now the danger is that they are following human good, as seen in so many churches today.

Following human good creates a culture of arrogance, which is seen with all 8 elements listed by Paul in 12:20. Romans 1 deals with human evil, and Romans 2 deals with human good. Similarly, I Corinthians deals with human evil, and II Corinthians deals with human good. Letting Christ live in you when you are involved in human good is a lot harder than when you are in human evil, because there is a pride in legalism. This is probably why Paul writes this epistle, rather than coming to them in person.

12:21 Paul addresses legalism or human good in 12:20. Now, it appears he addresses human evil in 12:21. When you look at Churchianity today, there are a lot of people who do not want to attend churches and stop their sinful living because they see those church people as a bunch of hypocrites. Churchianity judges them for being homosexuals or having pre-marital sex, for example, and they see those in Churchianity as not being any better at avoiding sin than they are. Since they do not see Christ living in anyone, they do not know what God's love is all about, and so they continue in their unbelief and sin.

The Corinthians have people who have turned from their evil, but now they see people in the church mired in legalism. There is the danger, then, that they may go back into their sin. For example, in I Corinthians 5:5, Paul told the Corinthians to kick out the man who was having sex with his father's wife (I Corinthians 5:1). He repented of that sin and has wanted to come back to the church, but the Corinthians appear self-righteous and are not willing to accept him back in (2:6-8). Why would he want to be part of a self-righteous church? Therefore, he may go back into the fornication that he had been committing. Christ's love is not seen in the Corinthian church, and so there is no incentive to be a part of it.

I, as well as many others today, can relate to this. I was part of a church that had various cliques. I was not in any of them because I was not related to them nor did I have the money or connections that any of them wanted. So, why be a part of a church like that? Part of the reason for kicking out the guy having sex with his father's wife was so he would miss the fellowship of Christ among believers and give up his sin so he could fellowship with the body of Christ. However, when the Corinthians got together for a meal, people, who were not part of the cliques, would leave the meal hungry, while others were gorging themselves in drunkenness (I Corinthians 11:21). There is no incentive to give up the flesh and walk in the Spirit if a person cannot see the fruit of the Spirit being demonstrated in others (Galatians 5:22-23).

Therefore, the danger is that the Corinthians may come full circle. They were doing human evil. They turned from those things, as a result of the epistle of I Corinthians. However, they then overcorrected and got involved in human good, instead of walking in the Spirit. Therefore, they have "debates, envyings, wraths,

strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults” (12:20). These things may cause some of them to figure that Christians are worse than unbelievers, and so they may go back to the human evil of “uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness” that they were previously doing (12:21).

This reminds me of a parable Jesus told in Matthew 12:43-45. He said that, when an unclean spirit leaves a man, if he comes back and finds the man “empty, swept, and garnished,” he will go and find “seven other spirits more wicked than himself,” and all eight will enter the man, making things worse than at the first. Applied to the Corinthians, if they abandon human evil but do not let Christ live in them, because they have gone to legalism, the danger is that they will return to human evil but will now have a pride about them. This makes their latter state worse than the first. Therefore, Paul writes this letter to get them to replace human evil with Christ living in them as they live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Then, there will be no room for human evil or good in their lives—just Christ’s life in them (Colossians 3:3-4).

II Corinthians 13 – God’s Power Seen When Judging by the Spirit

13 Paul has been wanting to visit the Corinthians, but he only wants to come if he can rejoice over Christ living in them, instead of having to correct them. Since they are living in the flesh, he writes this letter instead (vs. 1-2,10). They do not even see the power of God working through Paul, because they are looking at the flesh (vs. 3-4). They need to examine themselves so they see their error of judgment (v. 5). Paul does not mind suffering for Christ’s sake so the Corinthians see that they are judging incorrectly (v. 9). He concludes this letter by encouraging them to use the mind of Christ so that they live in peace (v. 11). All three members of the Godhead dwell within them to this end (v. 14).

13:1-2 “This is the third time I am coming to you” probably means that this is the third letter he is writing to them. It cannot be three visits, because Paul says in verse 2 that he has only been with them in person once. The first letter would have been before I Corinthians, since he says in I Corinthians 5:9 that, “I WROTE unto you in an epistle,” which means that he must have written to them before he wrote I Corinthians. The second and third epistles, then, would be I and II Corinthians.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 19:15 in saying that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” He uses this quote to say that the words that Paul has written to the Corinthians are established as fact, because he has now written three epistles to them. This may not seem right, because it is one witness, Paul, writing these letters. Jesus said, “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true” (John 5:31). However, He says, that His Father and the works that His Father sent Him to do, also bear witness of Him, as well as the Scriptures themselves (John 5:36-39). Similarly, we know that two of Paul’s three letters to the Corinthians are in God’s Word. This means that Paul has the witnesses of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and the prophets, who have confirmed that his epistles “are the commandments of the Lord” (I Corinthians

14:37). Therefore, Paul can say that His epistles are established as fact because God Himself, through His prophets, witness his words to be true.

Paul had previously said that, the reason he wrote this letter, instead of coming in person, is because he only wanted to come in person if he could rejoice with them by seeing Christ live in them. Instead, he knew he would “have sorrow from them” and would make them sorry with the bad news of having to reprove them for the lack of practical application of sound doctrine (2:2-3). Therefore, he decided to write to them instead of coming in person to deliver this bad news.

Now, in 13:2, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they had better heed his words in this epistle, because he will not be writing another letter. He has already planned to visit them three times (12:14). He will visit them soon. If they are not letting Christ live in them, he “will not spare” (13:2). He will “use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given [him] to edification” (13:10). Those, who have sinned, and all others who go into sin, will receive sharpness, to get them to follow God’s words to them, rather than their own carnality.

13:3 “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me” reminds me of what unbelieving Israel told Jesus. Jesus had fulfilled many prophecies already and had done many miracles, yet they said to Him, “Master, we would see a sign from Thee” (Matthew 12:38). They had already received many signs from Him, and yet they asked for another one. In other words, unbelieving hearts are never satisfied, regardless of the proofs you give them. Jesus said that the only sign that would be given to “an evil and adulterous generation” would be the sign of resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40).

While the Corinthians were saved, they were walking by the flesh, and so they still sought a proof of Christ speaking in Paul (13:3). Paul said that “truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (12:12), just like the signs of the Messiah were wrought among the Jews by Jesus. Yet, when walking by the flesh, these signs are not seen. What is different about the Corinthians, as compared with apostate Israel, is that they were begotten in Christ Jesus through the mystery gospel that Paul preached unto them (I Corinthians 4:15). Therefore, the proof of Christ speaking in Paul can be found within the Corinthians themselves. After all, they have Christ living in them (Galatians 2:20), and they have the Spirit of Christ crying “Abba, Father” within them (Galatians 4:6). Therefore, when they let Christ’s words through Paul dwell in them (Colossians 3:16), they are “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). Therefore, the proof of Christ speaking in Paul is the abundant, eternal life of Christ (John 10:10) working in the Corinthians as they live by the sound doctrine that Paul gives them. This is how Christ speaking in them “is mighty in you” (13:3).

13:4 Christ said, in 12:9, that His “strength is made perfect in weakness.” The idea is that, when we set aside our will and concentrate on what God wants us to do, the power of Christ comes through us and God’s will is accomplished in our lives. God destroys worldly wisdom with the foolishness of the preaching of the

cross (I Corinthians 1:18-20). The preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Yes, it is salvation from hell, but it is also salvation from sin and death so that we can live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2).

The same was true for Christ Jesus. While He never sinned, He still had to overcome the desire to nourish and cherish His Own flesh (Ephesians 5:29). He had to get to the point where He said to the Father, “Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). This was the weakness of Christ, that He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, yet opened not his mouth (Isaiah 53:7). This was also the weakness of man. The strength of man was to try to get rid of the Messiah by crucifying Him by wicked hands (Acts 2:23). The crucifixion of Christ was “the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). You can see why man’s strength is bad.

The weakness of Christ in the flesh versus the strength of man enabled God to overcome hell and death (Revelation 1:18), because “the weakness of God is stronger than men” (I Corinthians 1:25). This is the work that God “wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His Own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Ephesians 1:19-21). Through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, He bound Satan, i.e., the strong man of Matthew 12:29. Christ triumphed over Satan’s forces in the cross (Colossians 2:15).

Therefore, when Christ rose from the dead, “He liveth by the power of God” (13:4). The verse does not say that “He lived,” but “He liveth.” Christ has the power of eternal life working through Him, as a result of conquering hell and death through His death, burial, and resurrection. But, this only worked by Him becoming weak, being obedient to His Father, even to “the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). God’s strength was made perfect in Christ’s weakness (12:9).

When we trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sin, we are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ (Romans 5:12 - 6:6). In Christ, we are made alive (I Corinthians 15:22), because we receive God’s abundant, eternal life that is in Christ (John 10:10). Christ lives in us when we recognize that we are crucified with Christ and do just what Christ did, i.e., subordinate our will to the will of the Father. We do this by living by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), rather than by the lusts of our flesh (Galatians 5:16). We live by faith when we live by the Word of God to us today (Romans 10:17), which is found in Paul’s epistles (I Corinthians 14:37)—Romans through Philemon. This is how “we also are weak in Him” so that we “live with Him by the power of God toward [us]” (13:4). This is how we cry “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), just like Christ did (Mark 14:36) when He submitted His will (avoiding the cross) to His Father’s will (conquering hell and death through the cross).

13:5-6 Paul has already called the Corinthians “saints” (I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:1). Therefore, we know that the Corinthians are “in the faith” in terms of being in Christ and saved from hell. The context of this verse suggests that they need to “examine” and “prove” themselves to see if they are “in the faith”

in terms of making decisions that would be in line with walking “by faith, not by sight” (5:7). In other words, Paul is telling the Corinthians to look at the doctrine they are following to see if it is in line with Paul’s epistles or with the 10,000 instructors in Christ.

With regard to 13:6, I think Paul is telling the Corinthians that they know that Paul, and those with him, are not reprobates, because Paul begat them in the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15). So, they should compare the doctrine of the 10,000 instructors in Christ that they are following with Paul’s doctrine. If that doctrine is contrary to Paul’s doctrine, then this examination will show that they are not in the faith, because they know that Paul’s doctrine is in the faith, because they know he is not a reprobate. Therefore, they should not follow the doctrine of the 10,000 instructors.

They can do this examination if Jesus Christ is in them for “he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man” (I Corinthians 2:15). We know that Jesus Christ is in the Corinthians because they have trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin. The phrase “except ye be reprobates” means that they cannot do this self-examination if they have never believed the gospel. Of course, Paul knows they are not reprobates, because he has called them “saints.” So, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they do not have to go to man as the authority to determine if they are living by the faith of the Son of God. They do not need the stamp of approval from the 10,000 instructors nor from Paul. They can look at the doctrine of both Paul and the 10,000 instructors and determine which is the correct doctrine for them to follow, because they have Christ within them crying “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

Similarly for us today, we do not need a pastor, a Christian denomination, or a “man of God” to tell us the doctrine to follow. We can just read God’s Word rightly divided and have the Holy Ghost teach us the things of God as we study (I Corinthians 2:9-16). We need to listen to what God says to us in His Word through His interpretation of God’s Word to us, instead of following what man says. In a sense, Paul is telling the Corinthians, “I have written you two epistles that are the commandments of the Lord. The 10,000 instructors in Christ have brought you into bondage, devoured you, taken of you, exalted themselves, and smitten you on the face (11:20). Why don’t you compare the doctrine you are following to the Word of God to you in my epistles and see if you are following God’s doctrine to you today? Since you have Christ within you, your minds are not reprobate. You can figure this out yourself.”

13:7 Paul presents three possibilities here: 1) Doing evil, 2) Doing things to be approved in the eyes of men, and 3) Doing the things that are honest, i.e., having Christ live in them by the sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles.

When Adam ate of the tree, he received the knowledge of good and evil in his conscience (Genesis 2:17, 3:6). Since no one is good in the flesh (Romans 3:12) and in your flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18), you can only do evil in the flesh. However, your flesh is deceitful, making you think you are doing good

(Jeremiah 17:9), when you only have a form of godliness (II Timothy 3:5), which is usually religion. When you walk in the Spirit, Christ does God's good works through you (Ephesians 2:10).

Therefore, when Paul prays for the Corinthians to "do no evil," he wants them not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh in doing wicked deeds. When he says, "Not that we should appear approved," he wants them not to follow religion or what the world calls "good deeds", because nothing is good in the flesh. Rather, they "should do that which is honest," meaning that they should operate by the truth of God's Word to them found in Paul's epistles.

However, religion follows things to make them appear approved. Most people do not understand that the flesh cannot do anything good. All of us have "the KNOWLEDGE of good" from Adam (Genesis 2:17), "but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). However, man, in his pride, refuses to acknowledge this. So, man thinks the non-churchgoers are following the lusts of the flesh, while the churchgoers are serving God. The truth is that the churchgoers are really just following the lusts of the flesh in trying to appear good to others. By neglecting the body, they appear to be doing good, but they are really satisfying the flesh (Colossians 2:23). But, most people do not know this because they compare themselves among themselves, rather than by the Word of God (10:12). Since all of them are following the flesh, they get into a flesh contest to do "good" without ever realizing that, apart from Christ in them, no one can ever do anything good. So, they all try to one-up each other, when they are all miserable failures, thanks to their rotten flesh.

For example, look at the Mormons. They appear to be godly people, based upon their deeds. However, they are not saved, because they have not trusted in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). This means that they also cannot operate in Christ. They have no concept of true godliness, because they isolate themselves so that they only see "good" in fellow Mormons. Meanwhile, the world looks at them as good people, because they also have no concept of true godliness, since they also have not believed the gospel. However, those, who have believed the gospel, can readily see that they only have a form of godliness, because they compare the Mormons with the sound doctrine in Paul's epistles, rather than with others. People tend to judge things by the flesh, thinking that their brand of religion is godliness. When you follow God's Word rightly divided, you are going against their brand of religion, regardless of what religion it is, and they label you as heretics or unbelievers. If they look at things truthfully, they would see you as being a Bible believer, which means they would have to reject their brand of religion as of the flesh. Because of the pride of man, they will not do this. Therefore, Paul appears to "be as reprobates" (13:7), to the Corinthians even though "we are not reprobates" (13:6).

If the Corinthians continue to look at things according to the flesh, Paul will appear as a reprobate to them even though he is following Christ. Then, the Corinthians will be reprobate concerning the faith (13:5). Paul's prayer for the Corinthians is for them to stop looking at things according to the flesh and to look

at the Spirit instead (5:14-16). Walk by faith, not by sight (5:7). Then, both Paul and the Corinthians will be walking by the Spirit, and the Corinthians will see that their 10,000 instructors in Christ are really ministers of Satan (11:13-15).

Did you get all of that? In summary, man, regardless of what he does, thinks he is good. God knows that man is bad, regardless of what he does, but that God is good regardless of what He does. God gives this knowledge to man. He also puts Christ within believers so that, if they operate by the doctrine in Paul's epistles, God's good lives through man as Christ lives in man. But, man's pride leads him to follow religion, thinking that he is doing good in himself. Man just needs to get out of his stupid pride, reject his religion, believe God and His Word, and then walk in the good works of God by using the mind of Christ to apply God's Word to him today found in Paul's epistles.

13:8 This is one of my favorite verses. The truth is the truth, and you can do nothing to change it. Churchianity will deny the truth all the time in favor of their form of godliness, but this does not change the truth. Religious people, who deny the truth, will always try to cancel out a verse with another verse. For example, you can give them Romans 3:28, which says that you are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." They may then give you James 2:17, which says, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." In so doing, they try to cancel out Romans 3:28 with James 2:17. However, all of God's Word is true, not just the verses you like (John 17:17). Therefore, justification by faith without works is a true statement, as is James 2:17. There is absolutely nothing a person can do to cancel out either verse. They are both true.

When you try to get Churchianity to explain how Romans 3:28 is not saying that justification comes by faith alone, they either have to use a verse in a different context, like James 2:17, or they have to change the verse around. When you make them face the verse and explain it as it is, they usually attack your beliefs as being heresy because your beliefs are not established upon hundreds of years of church history. Why? Because you have presented them with truth from the Word of God that they do not like because it goes against their religion. Since they "can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (13:8), they attack you.

In the context of this verse, Paul is saying that the Corinthians need to stop playing the religion game with their 10,000 instructors, they need to get sound doctrine in the inner man, and they need to let Christ live in them. They may look good to others with their form of godliness, but the Lord Jesus Christ will judge them at His judgment seat based upon truth. Since they cannot change the truth with their form of godliness, their works will be burned up and they will suffer loss of reward at the judgment seat if they do not let Christ live in them by the truth of God's Word rightly divided (I Corinthians 3:12-15). The lesson is that, regardless of how long you play the religious game and how hard you try, you will never please God, because God operates in truth, not in pride and religious lies. Since you cannot change the truth, you cannot please God by operating in religion. This is why God told Israel: "I hate, I despise your feast days....Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them....Take thou away from

Me the noise of thy songs....But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21-24). In other words, stop following religion and start following God’s Word.

13:9 Paul is glad when he is weak, because, when he is weak, he lives with Christ by the power of God toward the Corinthians (13:4). I do not think “ye are strong” is referring to the Corinthians being in the flesh, because Paul would not be glad of that. Rather, it probably means that he is glad that the Corinthians have the power of Christ in them so that they have the ability to live by sound doctrine.

We see Paul writing to the Corinthians, not to their 10,000 instructors. We see Paul writing to the Galatians, not those preaching another gospel. In fact, he says, about those preaching a false gospel that you should just let them be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). So, why does Paul try to help the Corinthians and the Galatians but not those bothering them? Because the Corinthians and the Galatians are saved, while those bothering them are not saved.

When Paul is weak, Christ is strong in him (12:9-10). Christ’s strength can then be toward the Corinthians. Since the Corinthians have the strength of Christ in them, due to their salvation, Paul is glad Christ can live in him so that the Corinthians can get sound doctrine in the inner man so that Christ’s strength can live through them as well. When they do this, they will be going toward perfection. Ephesians 4:11-15 says that, when we get sound doctrine in the inner man, we come “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Perfection for today is operating by the sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles.

In summary, Paul is saying in this verse that he is glad when he can be weak in the flesh so that the power of God comes through him. This is beneficial to the Corinthians because they have the power of God in them due to salvation. However, they are not perfect, because they are not letting Christ live in them, and so Paul is glad that he can impart unto them sound doctrine so they can operate by that, rather than by religion. This results in their perfection, i.e., Christ living in them.

I can say the same as Paul. When someone has trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sin, I am glad to spend time going over God’s Word with him. However, when someone has not believed the gospel and just wants to argue with me, I am not interested. Therefore, I can say with Paul I am glad when I am weak (listening to Christ, not to my flesh) and someone else is strong (has Christ in him) so that Christ can come through me to him and he can move on to perfection.

13:10 The Lord made Paul “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). He was “made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you” (Colossians 1:25). This means that through the doctrine and Christ in him, Paul had “the power” from “the Lord” to edify the Corinthians (13:10). If Paul came to the Corinthians in person and delivered the bad news of them walking in the flesh by following the 10,000 instructors in Christ, he would have to “use

sharpness” with them (13:10). If he did that, they may have been offended by his tone, and then they may not have listened to him. If that were the case, he would have used his power in the mystery for their destruction. This is why Paul wrote them a letter, rather than coming to them in person. He only wants to come in person if he can rejoice with them over Christ living in them, rather than having sorrow (2:2-3).

13:11 “Be perfect” means that they should be following sound doctrine in their life, as we mentioned in 13:9. It does not mean to be sinless, but it means to have a single-focused mind on the things of the Lord. James 1:8 says, “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” This is not to say that the Corinthians will not follow the flesh. However, when they do, they will recognize their fault and seek to correct it with sound doctrine.

Paul started this epistle by saying that God is “the God of all comfort.” He comforts us in our tribulation (1:3-5) by getting us to focus on the eternal, spiritual things, rather than the temporal, physical things (4:18). Paul now ends his epistle by saying, “Be of good comfort” (13:11). The wonderful thing about God’s comfort is that it is real. The world gives false comfort. When something bad happens, they say, “Don’t worry. Everything will be alright.” Or, “It’s for the best.” Or, “Things will be okay in the end.” But, no one knows that. They just give you false hope, because that is all they have to give. However, when God says that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28) and we know “God...cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), then we have true comfort from God that lasts. This is because God declares “the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10), and God declares that we are “blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). Paul knows that the Corinthians need God’s comfort, if they start living by sound doctrine, because they will suffer persecution for godly living (II Timothy 3:12). Therefore, he both begins and ends this epistle with God’s comfort.

“Be of one mind” means that they should use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). If they get into the flesh, there is confusion, while “God is not the author of confusion” (I Corinthians 14:33). Paul started his first epistle by stating that there were four divisions in the church, those of: 1) Paul, 2) Apollos, 3) Cephas, and 4) Christ (I Corinthians 1:11). This shows that they were in the flesh. If they follow sound doctrine found in Paul’s epistles, they will all use the mind of Christ. They are in “one body,” “one Spirit,” “one hope,” “one Lord,” “one faith,” “one baptism,” and “one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Therefore, they should also “be of one mind” (13:11).

Of course, if they are of one mind, they will also “live in peace” (13:11). When we are “justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Then, when we make our requests known unto God, “the peace of God” keeps our “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). Then, when we think on the things that are “true,” “honest,” “just,” “pure,” “lovely,” and “of good report,” “the God of peace shall be with” us (Philippians 4:8-9). If the Corinthians do this, they will “live in peace” (13:11).

13:12 The term “holy kiss” is only found in Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12, and I Thessalonians 5:26. Kissing relatives on the cheek is common today in many cultures, and so it was probably common in Paul’s day also, which is why he states this. For the most part, the American culture does not do this today.

Most Christians probably think that the word “holy” is added to “kiss” in order to differentiate it from a “romantic kiss.” However, the context tells you that there is nothing romantic going on, and so Paul does not need to add this qualification to differentiate it from a romantic kiss. We are all part of “the body of Christ” (I Corinthians 12:27), and so greeting “one another with” a kiss would automatically be a greeting as members of the body of Christ. I think Churchianity takes this view of “romantic” vs. “holy” so that you do not see yourself as holy today so that they can control you with their legalism.

The real reason the word “holy” is used is because we are “holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12), based upon who we are in Christ. We have now been “justified by His blood” (Romans 5:9), and “we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11). Therefore, we are also now holy, which is why we can greet each other with “an holy kiss.” Israel does not receive the atonement until Jesus’ second coming (Acts 3:19-20; I Peter 1:7-9). This means that they are not holy yet, and so the Hebrew epistles never mention the phrase “holy kiss.”

The emphasis is on “holy,” not on “kiss.” Therefore, if your culture does a handshake, a hug, or simply a nod, it is fine to go with that instead of a kiss. The point is that we should greet each other because we are all part of the body of Christ. That greeting is holy because we are holy by being in Christ.

13:14 This is a good verse to show people that there are three members of the Godhead. “God is love” (I John 4:8), and so love is associated with the Father. (“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).) We are saved by grace when we believe the gospel (Ephesians 2:8). It is by the faith of Christ that we have access into the grace of God (Romans 5:2), and so it makes sense that grace would be associated with “our Lord Jesus Christ,” because it is His death that pays for our sins and it is His faith that enables us to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). (“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is seen in that “He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (8:9).) Both of these things are not earned by us, and so they only come to us by grace. “The communion of the Holy Ghost” is true because it is the Holy Ghost who teaches us the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-16). This means that it is by the Holy Ghost that we are united in God’s Word. It is also the Holy Ghost Who baptizes us into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Therefore, He is the member of the Godhead Who makes it possible for us to have communion.

Funny how Churchianity says that we have communion over a sip of grace juice and a bite of a cracker. They make communion a physical thing. In reality,

communion is spiritual. It does not matter if we have an unconfessed sin on our lives. We still have “the communion of the Holy Ghost” because Christ has forgiven us of all of our sins, both confessed and unconfessed. Positionally, communion comes from the Holy Ghost baptizing us into Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Practically, communion comes from living by the Word of God, which the Holy Ghost teaches us. Therefore, Paul mentions “the communion of the Holy Ghost” being with them all (13:14).