

2 CORINTHIANS

1:11 *What "gift" does Paul refer to here?*

The gift Paul refers to here is his deliverance by God from his troubles in Asia as a result of the Corinthian and other Christians' prayers (CP V8-10). Verse 9 undoubtedly refers to God raising up Paul from his near-death stoning experience in Lystra (CP Ac 14:19-20). Paul's troubles in Asia are recorded in Ac 13:44 – 20:3. (See also comments on 2Cor 12:7, Ga 1:2 (A) and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

1:19-20 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn that every promise of God is still valid for today - able to be appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ by all who will believe God for the promises and meet the conditions. The word *Amen* in V20 affirms the truth of what is being said and declares the certainty of the promises being fulfilled. This is a revelation on the integrity of God's word (CP Nu 23:19; Josh 21:45; 23:14; 1 Ki 8:56; Isa 55:10-11; Ro 4:17). There is not one promise of God that is no to a believer, and providing one meets the conditions, there are no limitations on what one may ask for (CP Psa 66:18 with Mt 17:20, 21:21-22; Mk 11:22-26; Lu 17:6; Jn 14:12-14; 15:7-8; 1Jn 5:14-15). 1Jn 5:14-15 here teaches that if we ask anything according to what God's word - the bible - says, He will give it to us. *Will* here means word - God's word is His revealed will. We do not have to ask on the basis, "...if it be thy will Lord", but "...according to thy word Lord". If we know God's word then we know His will, and we will never ask for anything outside His will. This ensures that the answer will always be yes.

This stresses the importance of God's word always abiding in us and we in Him as Jn 15:7-8 teaches. The *fruit we bear* that always glorifies God in Jn 15:7-8 are His promises being fulfilled in our lives. (See also comments on Mt 21:17-22, Mk 16:17-18, Jn 14:12-14, Jn 15:7 and 1Jn 5:14-15 and author's studies *Confessing God's Word* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Signs and Wonders in God's Redemptive Plan** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church* and *Making the Impossible Possible* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

1:21-22 *What is the anointing Paul refers to here?*

Through their union with Jesus believers are anointed with the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus called being "endued with power from on high" (CP Lu 24:49 with Ac 1:4-8 and 2:1-4). The anointing with the Holy Spirit is inextricably bound to Christ's command to preach the gospel. It is the empowering believers receive for service. This is the same anointing Jesus had (CP Lu 4:18-19; Ac 10:38; He 1:9). This anointing also enables believers to discriminate against bad teaching in the church (CP 1Jn 2:20-27). It should be noted here that contrary to what a great

many Christians in the contemporary church believe, John is not teaching here that believers have no need of teachers to instruct them in the word. He is simply saying that they have no need of the "seducers" in V26 who were false teachers (CP V26 with Eph 4:11-16). The teachers Christ gave to the church are needed, and will remain there until His purpose for the church is fulfilled at the end of the church age. *Earnest* in 2Cor 1:22 (KJV), refers to the Holy Spirit as God's pledge to believers that they will participate in all the blessings of the age to come (CP 5:5 with Ro 8:23; Eph 1:9-14 and 1Pe 1:1-5). The Holy Spirit is God's seal upon believers, identifying them as belonging to Him (CP Ro 8:9; 2Cor 3:18; 2Ti 2:19; Rev 2:17). See also comments on 2Cor 5:5, Eph 1:11-14, 1Jn 5:10-14.

2:5-11 *What do we learn from what Paul says here and who is the offending person?*

This teaches us the biblical process for disciplining Christians involved in sin that could destroy the church if allowed to continue, and their subsequent forgiveness and restoration to fellowship. The church must discipline offending members to preserve its integrity and to bring the offenders to repentance (CP Ro 16:17-18; 1Cor 5:1-8, 13; 2Cor7:10; Eph 5:11-12; 2Th 3:6; 1Ti 5:20). The Corinthian church had disciplined the offender in 2Cor 2:5-11, and he had obviously repented, but the church had not yet forgiven him. Paul urged them to do so immediately and reaffirm their love for him. Otherwise, he could be so overwhelmed by sorrow that he might never recover from it and so be lost to Christianity forever. That would give Satan an advantage over the church. Satan could lead the man into apostasy and hell, or the church itself into hardness of heart towards offending members.

Many in the contemporary church believe that the person referred to in 2Cor 2:5-11 is the incestuous man Paul commanded to be excommunicated from fellowship in 1Cor 5:1-8 and 13, and there are well considered reasons for this view, but whether or not that is correct is irrelevant here. It is more important to know the biblical process the church must follow if there is sin in its midst that could destroy it (CP 1Cor 5:1-8, 13). Any church that tolerates sexual immorality in its midst, and sadly, there are many, will find its evil influence will spread throughout the fellowship and eventually corrupt the whole church (CP Josh 6:18; 7:1; Rev 2:12-17, 18-29). See also comments on 1Cor 5:1-5 and 1Cor 5:6-8.

2:14 *What exactly does Paul mean here that God always causes us to triumph in Christ?*

This is a much debated verse among Christians and many meanings are ascribed to it. One is that Paul draws from the imagery of a Roman army procession where the victor of a battle parades in triumph for all to see. Another is that God displays Christians to the world as a triumph of the redeeming grace of Christ. The view adopted in this study is that God always, and in every place, enables believers to carry on an

effective ministry despite the difficulties they may encounter in the way (CP Jn 16:33; Ro 8:31-39; 1Cor 15:57; Php 4:13; 1Jn 4:4; 5:4-5). The phrase *and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place* in 2Cor 2:14 means that God uses believers to make known the gospel of salvation wherever they go (CP 2Cor 4:5-6; 1Pe 2:9; 2Pe 1:19). Wherever believers are an influence for the gospel God is pleased. (CP Mt 25:20-23; Lu 19:11-19). The gospel however, is a double-edged sword. To those who reject it, it means death – they will be judged by it; to those who accept it, it means life (CP 2Cor 2:15-16 with Mt 21:42-44; Jn 3:16-18, 36; 1Cor 1:18-24; He 4:12-13; 1Pe 2:6-9).

Christians have a big responsibility in proclaiming the gospel; they have to proclaim it as it is, not water it down to a gospel of easy-believism as many in Paul's day did, and many today are still doing, for personal gain (CP 2Cor 2:17 with 1Cor 5:8; 2Cor 1:12; 4:1-2; 1Th 2:4-5; 1Pe 4:11).

3:1-5 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that Paul did not need a letter of commendation to prove himself to the Corinthian church. He founded the church in the first place, and so the Corinthians themselves were his letter of commendation. Their transformed lives in Christ were like an open letter that could be seen and read by all men as a testimony to Paul's faithfulness to the truth of his gospel message to them. They were Paul's letter of commendation from Christ Himself, not written in ink – like the testimonials of Paul's opponents – but on their hearts. Paul took no credit himself for winning the Corinthians to Christ. The ability to do it came from God.

3:6 *What does "the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life" mean?*

This statement has been used by many in the church to teach that Christians should not focus on the literal meaning of scripture (the *letter*), but on its underlying intention (the *Spirit*). But it has nothing to do with that whatever. Paul is contrasting the old and New Covenants here, distinguishing between the ministries under each (CP V7-9). *The ministration of death* in V7 refers to the Old Covenant law of Moses "written and engraven in stones" (CP Ex 34:27-35). This is the "letter that killeth" in 2Cor 3:6 - the letter of the law. No one could satisfy the demands of the law under the Old Covenant and so it condemned them to death (CP Psa 143:1-2; Ro 3:19-20; 7:9-11; Ga 3:10-11). The ministry of the Spirit under the New Covenant is entirely different, because the New Covenant is a covenant of grace, entered into through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, God's son, who has made possible for all who believe on Him that which was impossible under the law (CP Ac 13:38-39; Ro 3:21-26; 7:5-6; 8:1-4; Ga 2:16).

In contrast to the Old Covenant law which made demands but gave no one the power to satisfy them, the ministry of the Spirit under the New Covenant actually causes those who believe on Jesus to walk in the way of God's commandments (CP Ro 6:1-2, 17-

18; 2Cor 3:18; Col 2:8-13; 1Pe 1:3-5; 2Pe 1:3-4). This could never be achieved under the law and that is why God made a New Covenant (CP Jer 31:31-34 and Eze 36:25-27 with He 7:18-25; 8:1-13; 9:11-15; 10:1-10).

Paul's primary purpose in contrasting the old and the New Covenants and distinguishing between the ministries under each is to highlight the glorious character of the New Covenant (CP 2Cor 3:7-10). The reason the New Covenant exceeds the old in glory is because the old was only for a time – it was a *shadow* or *type* of the new (CP V11 and 13 with Ro 10:4; Ga 3:19-25; He 9:8-10; 10:1). The New Covenant is for all time (CP Mt 26:28-29; He 7:14-17). In closing here it needs to be stressed that in contrasting the old and the New Covenants Paul is not demeaning the value of Old Testament scriptures in Christian life and ministry. They still stand for our example (CP Ro 15:4; 1Cor 10:1-11; 2Ti 3:16-17; He 4:1-11). See also comments on Mt 5:17-19; Ro 10:4; 2Cor 3:12-16; Eph 2:15-16(A); Col 2:14; He 7:18-19 and 8:8 and see also author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

3:12-16 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that the literal veil Moses covered his face with illustrates the Spiritual veil which prevents some who read the old testament from understanding its witness to, and fulfilment in, Jesus (CP Ex 34:29-33). In 2Cor 3:13 Paul said Moses put the veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading reflection of God's glory in it, which represented the fading glory of the Old Covenant (CP V13 with Ro 3:21-22; 10:4; He 7:18-25; 9:11-15; 10:1-10). The Jews had so hardened their minds to the teachings of the Old Covenant that they could not see that Jesus was the end of the law; that it was made void and done away with in Him, and the New Covenant begun. However, when they receive Jesus as saviour God removes the veil and gives them understanding of His word. This of course applies to everyone who receives Jesus (CP 2Cor 3:15-16 with Isa 25:6-8 and Eph 4:17-20). When the veil of disobedience and unbelief has been removed believers reflect God's glory. They undergo a continuous and progressive transformation from one degree of glory to another, becoming more like God expressed so perfectly in the life of Christ (CP 2Cor 3:18 with Ro 8:29-30; 12:1-2; 1Cor 6:9-11; 2Cor 4:4-6; Php 2:12-13; 3:12-14; Jas 1:21-25; 1Jn 3:1-3). These scriptures all teach progressive sanctification: the more believers grow in the knowledge of Christ, the more He is revealed in their lives.

It should be noted here that many Christians today are also blind to the fact of the Old Testament being abolished in Christ. They argue that only the ceremonial law was done away with, not the moral law. But that is not correct – the entire law was abolished as Ro 3:21-22, 10:4, He 7:18-25, 9:11-15 and 10:1-10 all clearly teach, as do many other scriptures also (CP 2Cor 3:11; Ga 4:21-31; Eph 2:14-22; Col 2:13-17; He 7:12; 8:6-13). Nine of the Ten

Commandments however were reaffirmed under the New Covenant. Only the commandment to keep the sabbath – the fourth commandment – was excluded because its sole purpose was to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (CP De 5:15). The Old Covenant was for Israel only, whereas the New Covenant is for all people (CP Ex 31:12-18 and Eze 20:9-13 with Hos 2:23; Ro 2:14; 9:22-26, 30-33). Many Christians also refer to Mt 5:17-18 to support their view that the Old Covenant has not been completely abolished, not realising that it was Christ Himself who fulfilled it (CP Mt 5:17-18). See also comments on Mt 5:17-19; Ro 10:4; 2Cor 3:6; Eph 2:15-16(A); Col 2:14; He 7:18-19 and 8:6 and author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

3:17 *How is this liberty Paul refers to here defined?*

Liberty is defined as freedom from captivity, slavery, imprisonment or despotic control by others. For Christians it is the gift of Christ who by His death ransomed them from bondage to Satan, sin, and the condemnation of the Old Covenant law, and death (CP Jn 1:29; 2Cor 5:21; Ga 3:13; Tit 2:11-14; 1Pe 1:18-19; 1Jn 2:2; 3:8 and Rev 5:9-10 with Jn 3:16; 8:31-32; Ro 4:6-8; 6:6-7, 17-18, 22-23; 8:1-4; Col 1:12-14). Liberty also means that Christians are free from the need to do works of righteousness for salvation (CP Ro 3:20-26; 4:1-8; 9:31-32; Ga 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 2Ti 1:8-10; Tit 3:3-5). Christians do works of righteousness because they are saved - not to be saved (CP Mt 5:14-16; Eph 2:10; 2Ti 3:16-17; Tit 2:7-14; 3:14; Jas 2:14-18). Liberty is also the removal of the Spiritual veil of disobedience and unbelief that prevents one from seeing the glory of God in Christ (CP Isa 25:6-7 with 2Cor 3:16, 18). Christians must never use their liberty however as a license to indulge fleshly desires, or do anything that could be a stumbling block for other Christians (CP Ro 14:1-7; 13-23; 1Cor 6:12; 8:9; 10:23; Ga 5:13; 1Pe 2:13-17). Liberty also points to creation's future deliverance from decay and imperfection when God's children are redeemed and glorified (CP Ro 8:21-23).

3:18 *How is the term "open face" defined here?*

The term *open face* is used here allegorically to define the unobstructed view New Testament believers have of Christ and His glory as opposed to the Jews who had blinded their minds to the revelation of Christ in the Old Testament because of their unbelief (CP V13-17). See also comments on 2Cor 3:6, 3:12-16.

4:1-2 *What is conscience?*

Conscience is a human faculty which decides the morality of a person's actions and either approves or condemns them (CP Jn 8:9). Many Christians believe that conscience is the voice of God within them, but scriptures do not teach that. Scriptures teach that the standards for morality are set by God, who holds everyone responsible for their actions because they all have a revelation of His moral law as their standard for right living (CP Ro 1:18-20 with 2:14-15). But it

is Christ, not conscience, who is the final standard by which everyone will be judged (CP Ro 2:16 with 1Cor 4:4). Although a pure conscience is valuable it cannot vindicate anyone before God, which is what Paul teaches in 1Cor 4:4: even though Paul was sure his conscience was clear of all offence before God, it could not save him – only Christ could (CP He 9:14; 10:2-10, 18-22). Conscience cannot be equated with the voice of God because it is possible for conscience to excuse something that God will not excuse, or condemn something which God allows (CP Ro 14:5, 21-22; 1Cor 10:28-32; 1Jn 3:18-21). See also comments on Ro 1:19-21.

4:4 *Who is the God of this world?*

World here (KJV), means *age*, which refers to the current evil age with its cares, temptations and desires, both moral and physical. The god of this age is Satan (CP Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul is not referring to Satan in 2Cor 4:4 as a god in the sense he is a deity, but because he is the one who controls unbelievers, and is the one they serve, whether they know it or not (CP Jn 8:44; Ro 6:16; Eph 2:2; 1Jn 3:8). See also comments on Ro 6:16.

4:7 *What is "this treasure in earthen vessels"?*

This treasure in earthen vessels is the gospel of Christ entrusted to believers. Earthen vessels are weak and fragile, and Paul uses them to symbolize human beings. Paul is contrasting weak and fragile humans here with the priceless treasure of the gospel entrusted to them (CP Job 12:17-25; Isa 29:13-14; 44:24-25; Mt 11:25; 1Cor 1:18-29; 2:5-8; 2Cor 12:9-10). By entrusting weak human beings with the gospel, God makes it clear that its power to save is from Him and not men.

4:8-12 *What do we understand from what Paul says here?*

What Paul describes here reflects the vulnerability of those who are totally committed to the work of the word on the one hand, and the power of God that sustains them on the other (CP 6:1-10; 11:23-33). Caught up in affliction and persecution Paul was continually exposed to death, but at the same time found the resurrection life of Christ manifested in his body which enabled him to overcome all the adversities he encountered in his ministry. On the one hand he was daily subject to the forces which lead to death, but on the other he was continually upheld, caused to triumph, and made more than a conqueror (CP Ro 8:35-39; 1Cor 4:9-13; 2Cor 1:8-10; 4:10-12 with 2Cor 2:14; Php 3:7-10; 4:12-13). Paul was willing to suffer hardship, or martyrdom even, so that the Corinthians could know the power of God.

We learn from this that if Christians are to minister life to others, they must be prepared to share the sufferings of Christ and experience the working of death in their lives too. We must be prepared to suffer all that Paul suffered for Jesus (CP Jn 12:24-25; Php 1:29; 1Pe 4:13-14). Despite the afflictions and persecutions Paul suffered in his ministry he still operated in the Spirit of faith because he knew that in

the resurrection he would be raised up with Christ together with all his converts (CP 2Cor 4:13-15 with 1:14; Php 2:16 and 1Th 2:19). None of the adversities that beset Paul could undermine his faith in God. The afflictions and persecutions he suffered in his ministry only strengthened his faith in the future eternal glory he would experience in the resurrection (CP 2Cor 4:16-5:5 with Ro 8:11, 17-18, 28-32). See also comments on 2Cor 6:3-10 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:1 *What does "our earthly house of this tabernacle" refer to?*

This refers to our present body which is compared to a tent in which we dwell (CP 2Pe 1:13-14). *Tabernacle* both here and in 2Cor 5:1 is used figuratively for the body as the frail and temporary abode of the soul. It must be "dissolved" – loosed, destroyed, come to nought – before we can get the other body; "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". This is our resurrection body (CP V2 with Ro 8:11, 18-23; 1Cor 15:35-44, 51-54; Php 3:20-21; 1Jn 3:2).

5:3-4 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

In V2 we saw that believers are depicted as eagerly awaiting the redemption of their earthly bodies so that they can be clothed in their new resurrection bodies. In V3 Paul goes on to say that in being so clothed believers will not be found naked, meaning that when their present earthly body is destroyed they will not just become disembodied Spirits, but will receive a glorified, supernatural, immortal resurrection body that is eternal (CP V2 with Ro 8:23; 1Cor 15:51-54). The phrase "... that mortality may be swallowed up of life" in 2Cor 5:4 shows that it is not release from bodily existence for which Paul longed, but rather for a bodily existence that is heavenly and permanent (CP Php 1:20-24).

All the saints of God – living and dead – will receive their resurrection bodies when Jesus comes again to take them back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Th 4:13-18 with 1Cor 15:51-54). "... them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" in 1Th 4:14 refers to the souls and the Spirits of the dead saints. They will be united with their resurrection bodies at that time while the saints still living will be transfigured; their mortal bodies will become immortal. All the saints will then have resurrection bodies like Jesus has (CP Php 3:20-21; 1Jn 3:2). See also comments on 1Cor 15:51-58; Php 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18 and 1Jn 3:2 and author's study *The Rapture* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

5:5 *What does the word "earnest" (KJV) mean?*

Earnest means guarantee, pledge, deposit. It is used in the New Testament figuratively of the Holy Spirit which God has given to believers in this present life to assure them of their future resurrection and eternal

inheritance in Christ (CP Ro 8:23; 2Cor 1:20-22; Eph 1:9-14; 1Pe1:1-5). "This very thing" in 2Cor 5:5 is the resurrection body referred to in V1-4 (CP V1-4). Believers must never forget though in the light of what we learned in 4:16-18, that part of the process of preparation for the future resurrection and eternal inheritance in Christ, is participation in present suffering (CP 4:16-18 with Ro 8:16-18). This is not to say that every believer will be called upon to suffer what Paul suffered for Christ, but they must be prepared to do so if need be (CP Mt 10:37-39; Mk 8:34-38; Lu 14:33-35; Jn 12:25-26). See also comments on 2Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:11-14; 1Jn 5:10-13.

5:6-9 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

While we live in our earthly bodies we are absent from our heavenly eternal home with Jesus - we cannot see Him as He is (CP 1Jn 3:2). But we do not have to physically see Jesus to know what we believe. We know, because we walk by faith, not by sight (CP 2Cor 4:18 with Jn 20:29 and 1Pe 1:3-9). To be absent from the body and present with the Lord means to die and go to heaven to be with Jesus (CP Php 1:21-24; He 12:23; Jas 2:26; Rev 6:9-11). In view of the fact we leave our mortal bodies when we die and go to be with the Lord, let us do all that makes us accepted of Him, whether we are in the body or out of it (CP 2Cor 5:9). This clearly refutes the teaching by some in the church that the Spirit and the soul go to the grave with the body at death. The Spirit and the soul of the righteous go straight to heaven at death, while the wicked go to hell (CP Lu 16:19-31; Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). This also refutes other teaching that there is an intermediate state after death called *purgatory*, to which the soul and the Spirit of the righteous go to be purged of sins not yet forgiven, while awaiting entry into heaven.

5:10 *See comments on Ro 14:10-12*

5:11-15 *What is Paul saying here?*

What Paul is saying here in effect, is that it is his reverential fear of God that motivates him to win others to Christ. The sincerity of Paul's life and ministry was an open book before God, and Paul hoped it would likewise be in the Corinthians' conscience also. Again, Paul was not trying to commend himself to the Corinthians, but was giving them reasons to be proud of him so they would be able to respond favourably on his behalf to his detractors. Paul's detractors took pride in their outward appearance but were dishonest and insincere in their heart. They made Paul out to be irrational. Paul's response to this was that if it were true, then it was for God's sake, and if it was not true, then it was for the Corinthians' sake. Christ's love compelled Paul to do what he did. Paul was convinced that because Christ died for all men, then in a sense, they all died, and his purpose in dying for them is that their lives should now be no longer lived for themselves, but for Christ, who died and was raised up to life for them (CP Ro 6:1-14; 14:7-9; 1Cor 6:19-20; Ga 2:20; 1Th 5:9-10; 2Ti 2:11-13; 1Pe 4:1-2). See also comments on Ro

6:3-5, 6:6-11, 6:12-14; Ga 2:18-21; 2Ti 2:11-13; 1Pe 2:1-11, 4:1-4.

5:16-17 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that Christians must never judge anyone from a purely human perspective - evaluating them by worldly standards. Our preconversion understanding of Jesus was limited to human reasoning, but it no longer is, and we must not judge anyone on that basis again. We must see them as God sees them. If they are in Christ they have become part of God's new creation. The things that characterized their preconversion lifestyle, and bondage to sin, have been brought under subjection to the new authority of Christ in their life (CP Ro 6:3-11, 17-18; 1Cor 9:24-27; Php 3:4-8). This is not to say that believers are perfect or faultless, but rather that they strive after holiness, doing all that lies within them to live according to God's word. If anyone does sin, God forgives them if they repent and confess it (CP 1Jn 1:8-10; 2:1).

5:18-19 *What is the "ministry of reconciliation"?*

The ministry of reconciliation is the responsibility every Christian has to proclaim the gospel of salvation to sinners in order that they may be reconciled to God (CP Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 1:6-8; 10:42-43). Christ has assigned the ministry of reconciliation to every believer in the New Testament church, and it is incumbent upon every one of us to get as many sinners saved as possible (CP 2Cor 5:19 with Lu 19:11-27). What we do with the word of reconciliation in this life will determine our eternal destination in the next life (see also comments on Mt 3:10, 12:30, 28:19-20(A); Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Ac 11:19-21; Ro 1:13 and author's studies *The Christian Calling – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Chosen by God?** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)** and *Redeeming the Time – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

5:21 (A) *Was Christ actually made to be a sinner for us?*

There are some in the church who teach this, but scriptures teach that He was made to be our sin bearer, or sin offering (CP Mt 27:45-46). Jesus experienced the abandonment and despair of being separated from God here as punishment for the sins He bore for everyone else, not because He was made to be sin Himself (CP Isa 53:5-6, 11; 1Cor 5:7; Ga 3:13; Eph 5:2). Jesus on the cross was the sin bearer for all mankind (CP Jn 1:29; Ro 3:25; 1Jn 2:2; 4:9-10). The sin offerings in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus would become in the New Testament (CP Ex 29:10-14; Lev 16:1-22, 27; Nu 19:1-9 with He 9:6 - 10:9). See also comments on Jn 14:30 and Ro 8:3-4.

(B) *How is the righteousness of God in Christ defined?*

The righteousness of God in Christ is defined as the gracious gift of God to man whereby all who receive Jesus Christ as saviour are brought into a right relationship with God. This righteousness is unattainable by any merit of man's own, or on any other condition than that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Jn 1:12; Ro 3:24-26; 4:4-8; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 5:17-19; Ga 3:26; 1Jn 4:9-10). The word *propitiation* in Ro 3:25 and 1Jn 4:10 means that Jesus took on Himself the punishment for our sins and satisfied God's righteous judgment against sin (CP Isa 52:13 - 53:12; Ga 3:13-14, 26-29; 1Pe 2:21-24). The supreme expression of God's love for sinners is the death of Christ on their behalf. Their salvation results from the fact that their sins are paid for and God's justice has been satisfied at the cross of Christ. As repentant sinners they have peace with God – His wrath, which will fall upon unrepentant sinners, no longer threatens them. They are accepted in Christ and can stand in the presence of God free from guilt and condemnation, and righteous in a righteousness which God accepts, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what being made the righteousness of God in Christ means (CP Ro 4:1-3, 20-25; 5:1-2, 6-11; 8:1-4; Tit 3:3-7).

It was the death of Christ as full payment for the sins of all humanity that made it possible for God to justify sinners and vindicate His righteousness (CP Mt 1:21; 26:27-28; Lu 1:68-75; Jn 1:29; Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:23-25; 5:12-19; Ga 3:22; He 9:15; 1Jn 2:2). By giving His life as a perfect sacrifice Christ opened up the way for repentant sinners into the very presence of God Himself to receive from the throne of grace all of God's blessings for those in Christ (CP Eph 1:3; He 4:16; 10:19-22; 1Pe 1:3-9). See also comments on Ro 3:24-26 (A); 4:1-5, 5:1 and 5:9-10.

6:1-2 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

What Paul says here does not only apply to the Corinthian Christians of that era. It is a warning to every Christian in every age that Christians can forfeit their salvation if they abandon the faith and life of the gospel of grace whereby they were initially saved (CP He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). What Paul says in 2Cor 6:1-2 follows upon his entreaty to the Corinthian Christians in 5:20 to be reconciled to God (CP 2Cor 5:20). This does not mean that the Corinthian Christians had not yet responded to the gospel. They had accepted it, which he himself had taken to them. However, they had allowed themselves to wander out of the way, and Paul was trying to restore them to fellowship with God. Both he and Peter knew, as scriptures clearly demonstrate, that Christians can receive the grace of God and experience salvation but lose it afterwards through spiritual carelessness or deliberate sin (CP Ga 5:4; He 3:12; 4:1; 12:14-15). Scriptures clearly teach that salvation can be lost - it is not an unforfeitable possession in this life. It only becomes an unforfeitable possession at the end of this life for those sowing to the Spirit (CP Dan 12:10; 2Ti 3:13; Rev 22:11-12). See also comments on 1Cor 10:1-5; He 3:7-11, 4:11-12, 6:4-6, 10:26-31 and 2Pe 2:20-22 and author's study *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in

his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:3-10 *What is the lesson here for believers today?*

The lesson here for believers today is that everyone who will faithfully preach the word of God and not compromise its truth, can expect to be both loved and hated, accepted and rejected, and to encounter both joy and hardship in their ministry (CP Mt 5:10-12; 2Th 1:4-5; 2Ti 3:12; Jas 1:2-4; 1Pe 4:12-19). Paul suffered much for the truth of God's word, but he would not compromise it in any way. He relied totally upon God to sustain him (CP 2Cor 4:7-18). See also comments on 2Cor 4:8-12 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:11-13 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

Notwithstanding how badly they treated him, Paul still had ample room in his heart for love toward the Corinthians, but they had no room in their hearts for love toward him (CP 7:2-3). The constraints existing in the Corinthians' relationship with Paul were the result of the Corinthians narrowing their hearts toward him. They allowed the false teachers' criticisms of Paul to restrict their affection toward him. Paul saw the Corinthians as his children and he told them to open their hearts toward him, as his was open to them. He wanted his affection for them to be mutual (CP 2Cor 6:13).

6:14 *What does it mean precisely to be "unequally yoked"?*

To be *unequally yoked together* means to associate discordantly, to be mismatched, to have fellowship with one who is not an equal. This injunction by Paul to believers has its origins in the Old Testament where God prohibits the crossbreeding of cattle with other species of animals, sowing different seeds mingled together, wearing garments made of both wool and linen, and plowing with an ox and an ass together (CP Lev 19:19 with De 22:9-11). In New Testament terms it covers the whole spectrum of believers' relationships with unbelievers. It means that believers are not to be involved in any relationship with unbelievers that could compromise their Christian witness. This applies to dating, marriage, business partnerships, memberships of lodges, and even close friendships etc. (CP 2Cor 6:15 with Ex 23:32-33; De 7:1-6; 1Cor 7:39). Because there is such a decided difference between believers and unbelievers there is a basic incompatibility which must be recognized and which has implications for life for the believer in an environment of unbelief (CP 2Cor 6:16 - 7:1 with 1Cor 10:14-22). None of this is teaching that believers have to disassociate themselves completely from unbelievers. That would defeat God's purpose for believers to be his witness in the world. Believers must stay in the world to be its light (CP Mt 5:14-16 with Jn 17:15-20; Ac 1:8; 1Cor 5:9-11). Nor is it teaching that believers are to separate themselves

from, or divorce unbelieving spouses. (See also comments on Mt 5:31-32; 1Cor 7:14-16 and 7:39).

7:4-9 *What do we understand from what Paul says here?*

We understand from this that Paul was overjoyed when Titus told him of the Corinthian's love for him and of their obedience to his letter commanding them to discipline an offending member of the church (CP V11-12). At first Paul was sorry he wrote the letter, but later was glad because it turned the Corinthians again to God, and they sorrowed and repented of their ways (CP V8-9). This vindicated Paul's boasting about them to Titus. He was always confident they would justify his pride in them (CP V13-16). Many in the church believe that the offender in V12 is the incestuous man Paul commanded the Corinthians to excommunicate in 1Cor 5 and restore to fellowship in 2Cor 2 (CP 1Cor 5:1-8, 13; 2Cor 2:5-11). Whether or not this is the same man is not relevant here. It is more important to know that the Corinthians turned again to God and repented of their ways.

7:10 *What is the difference between Godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world?*

Godly sorrow means genuine sorrow for sin which leads to a change of heart, causing one to turn from sin to God. This produces repentance that leads to salvation which is not to be regretted or repented of (CP V11 with 2 Sam 12:13; Psa 51; Mk 14:53-54, 66-72; Lu 18:9-13). We see in these scriptures the outworking of Godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation not to be regretted or repented of. Now let us look at the sorrow of the world (CP Mt 27:3-5). V3 here (KJV) tells us that Judas *repented* of what he had done. But it was not true repentance - he was seized with remorse. *Repented* here is from the Greek word **metamelomai**, which means little or nothing more than a selfish dread of the consequences of sin rather than a deep regret at the cause of sin, which is what true repentance is. The radical nature of true repentance as a complete turning from sin to God is emphasized in the parable of the prodigal son (CP Lu 15:11-24). The father's compassion toward his repentant son here portrays God's infinite love and forgiveness towards everyone who turns to Him and repents. This not only applies to sinners, but to Christians too (CP 2Cor 7:9; 12:21; Jas 5:19-20; 1Jn 1:5 - 2:2; Rev 2:1, 5; 12, 16; 18, 22; 3:1-3; 14, 19).

8:1-7 *What is the grace Paul exhorts the Corinthian Christians to abound in here?*

Paul is exhorting the Corinthian church here to abound in the grace of giving like the Macedonian churches. They were to view their giving as a privilege, not an obligation. They were not commanded to give - it was a free will choice (CP V8 with 9:5). This is for our admonition also. There must be a readiness and an eagerness in our giving. We do not have to run ourselves into debt or reduce ourselves to poverty level in order to give. The issue is our willingness to give, not the amount (CP 9:7 with Mk 12:41-44). We give out of what we have, not out of what we do not have. This is acceptable to God

and believers must not feel bad if they do not have anything to give (CP 2Cor 8:12-15). V13-14 here teaches that Christians who are better off at the time should meet the needs of those who are worse off. In this way, V15 teaches, none will lack, and there will be equality for all, like the Israelites with the manna in the wilderness in the Old Testament (CP Ex 16:18). See also comments on Mt 23:23; 2Cor 9:1-5, 9:6; Ga 6:7-8; He 7:1-10, and author's study *To Tithe or Not to Tithe?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

8:9 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

Paul was not referring to material wealth here when he said that Jesus was rich but became poor in order that we through his poverty might become rich. Paul was referring to the fact that when he took on human form, Jesus, who was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity and the Creator of all things, renounced all his divine prerogatives to live as a human and die on a cross like a common criminal (CP Php 2:5-8 with Psa 22:6 and Isa 53:1-12). *That ye through His poverty might become rich* refers to all the riches of Christ's glory: salvation, forgiveness, healing, and all the other blessings of God that he has purchased for us with His blood (CP 1Cor 1:4-8; 3:21-22; 2Cor 5:5; Eph 1:3-14; 1Pe 1:3-5).

9:1-5 *How are we to understand the phrase in V5, "of a matter of bounty and not of covetousness" (KJV)?*

We understand from this that Paul wants the offerings which the Corinthians set aside for the church in Jerusalem to be seen as a willing gift and not as money that had been extorted from them. *Bounty* means gift. *Covetousness* here means extortion. Implicit also in the meaning of *bounty* is liberality, generosity (CP V6-7). This reflects back to the gift not only being willingly given but also as being generous (See also comments on 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:6).

9:6 *What Spiritual law is Paul expounding here?*

This is the law of sowing and reaping applied to Christian giving. Christians can give generously or sparingly; God will reward them accordingly (CP V7-12 with De 15:10-11; Psa 112:9; Pr 11:24-26; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27; Ecc 11:1-6; Lu 6:38). We learn from these scriptures that believers who give what they can to help those in need will find that the grace of God furnishes a sufficiency for their own needs and even more, in order that they may abound in good works for others. We must always be willing to be generous and helpful and not withhold from anyone, for nobody knows when they may need help themselves. God's law of sowing and reaping dictates that blessings will always be returned for generosity. Giving and receiving go together, although we should never give in order to receive. Receiving is not an enticement to give, but the law of sowing and reaping is a principle of life already established by God, and we have no say in the matter. It is an assurance that sets us free to give (CP Gen 8:22). See also comments on Mt 23:23, 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:1-5; Ga 6:7-8; He 7:1-10, and author's

studies *Sowing and Reaping* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *To Tithe or Not to Tithe?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

9:15 *What is the unspeakable gift to which Paul refers here?*

The Greek word for *gift* here, *dorea*, denotes a Spiritual or supernatural gift. The unspeakable gift of God to which Paul refers here is His Son – Jesus Christ (CP Jn 4:10; Ro 5:15-17; Ga 1:3-4; He 6:4-6). In 2Cor 9:15 Paul compares the Corinthians' gift to the Jerusalem church with what God did in giving Jesus to the world (CP Jn 1:29; 3:16; Ro 3:21-26; 1Jn 2:2).

10:3-5 *(A) What exactly are the weapons of our warfare?*

The Christian's weapons of war are the *Holy Spirit* (CP Ac 1:8 with 1Cor 2:1-5); *truth* (CP Eph 6:14 with Ro 13:12); *righteousness* (CP Eph 6:14 with 2Cor 6:7); *the proclamation of the gospel* (CP Eph 6:15 with Ro 1:16); *faith* (CP Eph 6:16 with 1Jn 5:4); *salvation* (CP Eph 6:17 with 1Th 5:8 - in the context of 1Th 5:8 "hope" is that of the Lord's return, which encourages believers to resist the Spirit of the age in which they live (CP V6-11)); *the word of God* (CP Eph 6:17; He 4:12); *prayer* (CP Eph 6:18 with Jas 5:16); *love of the brethren* (CP Jn 13:34-35 with 1Jn 3:16-24). These weapons are both defensive and offensive, so as well as being able to withstand the attacks of the enemy, Christians can take the offensive to the enemy (CP Mt 10:7-8; 16:18-19; 18:18-19; Mk 16:15-18; Lu 10:1, 9, 17-19). Sadly, many churches today have resorted to carnal weapons to meet the challenge of the world. They focus on slick gospel presentations in airconditioned comfort, entertainment, humanistic wisdom, psychology etc., but none of these can ever substitute for Holy Spirit power (CP Jn 14:12-14); uncompromising commitment to God's word (CP 1Pe 1:23-25); the fervent proclamation of the gospel (CP Ro 10:14-17); and prevailing prayer etc. (CP 1Pe 4:7). See also comments on Eph 6:11-12.

(B) What are strongholds, imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God?

Stongholds is used here metaphorically of those things in which one trusts that opposes God's will. *Imaginations* are thoughts or reasonings hostile to the Christian faith. *High thing* is a haughty mental elevation which lifts itself above the experiential knowledge believers have of God – an ideological fort that is a barricade against the truth of God's word. It is not only unbelievers who hold onto strongholds, imaginations and high things though, it is believers also. Many try to rationalise the scripture and so render themselves unable to partake of God's blessings in this life. *Bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ* emphasizes the need for believers to ensure that their thoughts are always aligned with Christ and His teachings (CP Jer 17:5-6 with Jer 17:7-8 and Psa 1:1-3). Jeremiah here

contrasts the believer who experiences barrenness with the one who receives blessing. The one who receives the blessing is the one who relies implicitly on God's word to be fulfilled in that life. There are no thoughts, ideas, reasonings or philosophies that can usurp God's authority where they are concerned. There is also no sin (CP Ro 6:16-18; 8:13).

Christian warfare involves Christians warring against their own sinful nature as well as the forces of darkness (CP Mk 7:20-23; 2Cor 13:5-7 with Eph 6:11-13). Believers must be aware that the mind is a battleground. Some thoughts originate with us, while others come directly from the enemy. But we can never blame the devil for what we do. If we are resolute in our intent to adhere strictly to God's word no force at all can lead us astray (CP Job 31:1-40 with 1Jn 5:18). See also comments on Eph 6:11-12.

10:12 *What is the teaching underlying what Paul says here?*

The underlying teaching here is that believers must never compare themselves with one another or engage in self-promotion. Those who do are without proper understanding of God's will. Our only concern should be what Jesus thinks of us (CP V18; 1Cor 4:4-5, 7; 2Cor 1:12; 2Ti 2:15 with 2Cor 5:9-10). Self commendation is both meaningless and foolish; the only true, meaningful commendation comes from God (CP Pr 25:27; 27:2; Jn 5:44; Ro 2:29; 1Th 2:4). Believers must also be content to stay within the bounds of their ministry (CP Ro 12:1-3 with 2Cor 10:13-15). See also comments on Mt 23:8-12 and Ro 12:3, and author's study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

11:2 *Does the virgin referred to here symbolize the church as the Bride of Christ?*

No, although this scripture is used as a proof text by many to teach that the church is the bride of Christ. Paul is simply addressing his converts in Corinth here telling them that he is anxious for them with the deep concern of God Himself - anxious that their love should be for Christ alone, just as a virgin saves her love for one man only; for the one who will be her husband. But Paul feared that in some way, just as Eve was deceived by Satan in the garden of Eden, the Corinthian Christians would be led astray from their simple love and devotion for Christ (CP V2-4). When kept in its proper perspective, it soon becomes clear that V2 is not alluding to the church as the Bride of Christ at all. Furthermore, Paul is only addressing his own converts in Corinth, not the whole church, which extends far beyond Corinth in the earth. It is not Paul's job to present the whole church to Christ anyway, only his own converts. Every Christian will have rejoicing in their own converts (CP Dan 12:3; 1Cor 3:11-14; 2Cor 1:14; Php 4:1; 1Th 2:19-20).

The Bride of Christ is clearly identified in scripture as New Jerusalem, the City of God (CP Rev 19:7-9 with 21:2, 9-10). New Jerusalem is the Lamb's wife that "made herself ready" in Rev 19:7 (CP Rev 19:7), and was "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" in

21:2 (CP 21:2). She will be adorned as a bride for her husband with the jewels of 21:18-21 (CP 21:18-21). It is granted to her that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints because she will be the eternal home of all the saints of God – Old Testament and New Testament alike – from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great Tribulation (CP 19:8 with 21:24-27). New Jerusalem is the City of God which God promised to the Old Testament saints and Jesus promised to the New Testament saints. They will all go to live in New Jerusalem together (CP He 11:1-2, 13-16 with Isa 2:1-4 (also Mic 4:1-3); Jn 14:1-3; He 12:22-23; 13:14; Rev 3:12; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 20:4-6; 22:1-5).

New Jerusalem is not called *new* because it is new in existence – it has always existed in Heaven – but to distinguish between it and earthly Jerusalem. It is called the *Father's House* in Jn 14 (CP Jn 14:1-3); the *Mother of us All* (allegorically the progenitor – mother – of all Christians) in Gal 4 (CP Gal 4:25-26); the *Heavenly Jerusalem* in He 12 (CP He 12:22); the *Tabernacle of God* in Rev 13, 15 and 21 (CP Rev 13:6; 15:5; 21:3); the *Beloved City* in Rev 20 (CP Rev 20:9); the *Bride*, the *Lamb's Wife* in Rev 21 (CP 21:2, 9); the *Holy Jerusalem* also in Rev 21 (CP 21:10), and the *Holy City* in Rev 21 and 22 (CP 21:2; 22:19). New Jerusalem will be moved from Heaven to earth after the Great White Throne Judgement to be among men forever as the capital of God in the new earth (CP 21:1-7, 24-27).

In light of scripture so clearly identifying New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ it seems incongruous that a teaching persists in the church that the church itself is the Bride of Christ, yet nowhere in scripture is the church ever referred to by a feminine pronoun. In fact, the church is only ever referred to as a man in scripture. (Some modern translations and paraphrased versions of the Bible refer to the church by feminine pronouns in Eph 5:25-27, but this is a contradiction in terms because these same translations and paraphrased versions refer to the church as a man in Eph 2:15 and 4:13. How can the church be a man in one teaching in scripture, and a woman in another (CP Eph 2:15-16; 4:11-13; 5:25-27)).

God's word does not contradict itself – it is the translators and interpreters of those versions who are responsible for this contradiction.

In Eph 2:15 *man* is from the Greek word **anthropos**, which refers to a human being, without reference to sex, whereas in 4:13 it is from **aner**, which refers specifically to a male. **Aner** is used metaphorically here of the church being brought to maturity – a *man* of mature understanding in Christ. It goes without saying that if God refers to the church specifically as a man in one part of scripture, then the translators and interpreters of God's word have no authority to refer to it as a woman somewhere else in scripture. Here is the literal English rendering of Eph 5:25-27 from the original Greek according to **Kenneth Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**,

"The husbands, be loving your wives in the manner in which Christ also loved the church and gave Himself

on behalf of it, in order that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the bath of water in the sphere of the word, in order that He might Himself present to Himself the church glorious, not having spot nor wrinkle nor any of such things, but in order that it might be holy and unblameable."

In Eph 5:25-27 Paul is teaching us of Christ's infinite love for the church. He compares the relationship of Christ and the church to that of a man and his wife. He is not teaching that the wife symbolizes the church or that the husband symbolizes Christ. He simply teaches that the relationship of Christ and the church is more easily understood through the dynamics of the marriage relationship between a husband and wife (CP Eph 5:22-32). The great mystery that Paul refers to in V32 is that marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between Christ and the church, which was completely unknown until revealed in the New Testament. Other scriptures which are also used to teach that the church is the Bride of Christ are Isa 62:5 and Ro 7:4, but it is soon apparent on examining them too, that they do not teach that either (CP Isa 62:5; Ro 7:4). There is nothing whatever in Isa 62:5 that can be used to teach that the church is the Bride of Christ. Isa 62:5 is simply a record of two comparisons God made of Judah and Jerusalem: as a young man marries a virgin, so will the sons of Israel come back to and marry, (be united with, the rest of Israel and their land Palestine, and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so too God will rejoice over His people and their land when they are married – eternally united (CP V1-4)). The Lord here expresses His determination to make Jerusalem a lighthouse for the world. *Hephzibah* and *Beulah* are symbolic names for Jerusalem, and *marry* in V5 is used in the sense of being united with.

In Ro 7:4 Paul simply illustrates the Christian's freedom from the law with the analogy of marriage showing how the death of one partner frees the other from life-long obligation. He compares it to Christians who, having died to the law, are now free to follow Christ – to become one with Him (CP Ro 7:1-6). Finally, the church is also referred to as a man in 2Th 2:7. The *he* who is presently restraining Antichrist from revealing himself is the church (CP 2Th 2:1-9). This refers to the *rapture* of the church – when the church will be “caught up” in the air with Jesus when He comes to take all the saints of God back to Heaven with Him at the First Resurrection (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:12-23, 32, 42-44, 50-58; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20:4-6). Many Christians believe that the *he* of 2Th 2:7 is the Holy Spirit, but that is not correct as all these scriptures clearly show. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will still be on earth after the First Resurrection to convict the multitudes of their sins who get saved during Antichrist's reign, because nobody can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (CP 1Cor 12:3). See also comments on Ro 7:4, Eph 2:15-16(B); 4:13, 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9 and 21:2 and author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

11:7-11 *Why did Paul not seek financial assistance from the Corinthian church?*

Paul could have exercised his right to be financially supported by the Corinthian church, but it was more important to him to win souls to Christ than to exercise that right (CP 1Cor 9:1-18). Paul allowed the Macedonian church to support him as their missionary in Corinth, but not the Corinthians themselves, so he could cut off the occasion for his enemies in Corinth - the false apostles - to slander him (CP 2Cor 11:12-15). When Paul said he "robbed" other churches to minister to the Corinthians in V 8 he simply meant that the other churches received no direct benefit from the financial support they gave him, and the Macedonians themselves were financially worse off than the Corinthians (CP 8:1-4).

11:23-29 *See comments on 2Cor 12:7*

11:30 *What are his "infirmities" (KJV) that Paul refers to here?*

Infirmities here mean weaknesses. What Paul is saying in effect is "if I must boast, I will boast in the things that show how weak I am". The things that showed how weak he was here was his ignominious escape from Damascus by being lowered down the wall in a basket (CP V31-33 with Ac 9:23-25). This happened many years before at the beginning of Paul's ministry, but it had obviously left an indelible impression on him. It was a humiliating experience for Paul who had gone to Damascus initially as a zealous Jewish crusader *breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*, but then had to flee the city to save his own life (CP Ac 9:1-2). See also comments on Ac 9:23-28 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

12:7 *What was Paul's thorn in the flesh?*

Many Christians believe that Paul's thorn in the flesh was some form of sickness of which God would not heal him, but the bible does not teach that. The bible teaches that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan - a demon - sent to cause extreme hardships to befall Paul so that he would not be lifted up with pride because of what he had seen and heard in heaven when he was taken there for a time of learning with Jesus, about fourteen years earlier (CP V1-10). The third heaven referred to here is the very presence of God - the highest of the heavens. *Buffet* in V 7 means to maltreat, treat with violence. It conveys the notion of punishment for the correction and betterment of Paul; to keep him in touch with his limitations (CP 1Cor 4:11 with 1Pe 2:20). The outworking of the demon's buffeting of Paul is recorded for us in 2Cor 11:23-33 and Ga 4:13-14. Five times Paul received thirty-nine lashes; once he was stoned and left for dead, but God raised him up again. Three times he was beaten with rods; three times he was shipwrecked, and one time he was in the water for a night and a day; he was attacked by robbers; he was attacked by unbelievers; he was attacked by his own countrymen; he was imprisoned many times. Paul suffered many

things for the gospel's sake. He was often cold and weary, and hungry and in pain, but he was never sick (CP 2Cor 11:23-33 with Ga 4:13-14).

Paul's "infirmity of the flesh" in Ga 4:13 refers to his physical appearance after his near-death stoning which happened at Lystra soon after he and Barnabas took the gospel to Galatia on his first apostolic mission (CP Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20). Paul's appearance was so repulsive after being stoned that he wondered how the Galatians would receive him, but they welcomed him like they would Jesus Himself. Everywhere the word *infirmity* is used in the scriptures we have been studying here it means feebleness, want of strength, or physical weakness. It never means sickness, yet many modern translations and paraphrased versions of the bible refer to it as sickness in Ga 4:13-14. The same translators and interpreters however refer to it as weakness in 2Cor 11:30 and 12:5, 9-10. This is a contradiction in terms (CP 2Cor 11:30; 12:5, 9-10 with Ga 4:13-14).

Paul never prayed to be healed of sickness, but that the demon would be removed from him. God would not remove the demon though because he had instigated its presence in the first place (CP 2Cor 12:7-8). Paul was not sick, and nowhere in the bible does it teach that he was ever sick. Paul knew the power of God in him - no sickness could touch him. We only have to read Ac 28:1-10 to learn that (CP Ac 28:1-10). Paul's thorn did not hinder the faith of Publius and the others that got healed here, and we should not let it hinder ours either. Furthermore, how could Paul labour more abundantly than the false apostles he had to contend with in Corinth if he was always sick, as we have been led to believe (CP 2Cor 11:22-23). To say Paul's thorn in the flesh was sickness that God refused to heal destroys the very foundation upon which faith for healing must rest. This means that faith does not come by the word of God alone, as scriptures teach, but that it comes by praying until a special revelation comes that it is God's will to heal us. That is false teaching (CP Ro 10:17 with 1Jn 5:14-15).

God does not promise Christians protection from buffeting by Satan through ungodly men, such as Paul suffered. He actually does promise that we will have persecutions and fiery trials etc. (CP Mt 10:38; Mk 10:29-30; Ac 14:22; Ro 8:17; Php 1:29; 2Ti 2:11-12; 3:12; 1Pe 4:1, 12-19). But God also promises us protection from sickness and disease, and that is what we should expect (CP Psa 91 with Isa 53:5; Ga 3:13; 1Pe 2:24). See also comments on 1Cor 4:9-13 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

12:14 *Can this scripture be used to justify the teaching by some in the church that Christians must set aside reserves to meet their family's future needs?*

No! When studied in its context, it is plainly evident that this verse has nothing whatever to do with the teaching that Christians must set aside reserves to meet their family's future needs (CP 2Cor11:8-11;

12:12-17). These scriptures are dealing with the subject of Paul's current financial support by the Corinthian Christians, not his future needs. Paul had the right to be supported by them financially, but he refused to exercise that right (CP 1Cor 9:1-15). Paul was only interested in the Corinthian's salvation, not their financial support, which is what he was emphasizing in 2Cor 12:14. Paul saw himself as a parent to the Corinthian Christians - he was their father in the faith (CP 1Cor 4:15; 2Cor 6:11-13).

Another verse used to justify Christians setting aside reserves for their family's future needs is 1Ti 5:8 (CP 1Ti 5:8). But, again, when studied in its context, it is plainly evident that this verse also has nothing whatever to do with the teaching that Christians must set aside reserves for their family's future needs (CP V3-10, 16). Here again Paul is not talking about future needs, but the day to day care of the widows. Paul insists that their Christian relatives must care for them, or they are worse than unbelievers.

Still another scripture used to teach that Christians must make provision for their family's future needs is Pr 6:6-8 (CP Pr 6:6-8). We see here that the ant makes provision for the future, and Christians are taught that they must do the same on the basis that sluggards are told here to imitate the ant. But again, when studied in its context we see that it also cannot be used to teach that Christians must set aside reserves for their family's future needs (CP V6-11). This passage is addressing sluggards who do no work at all, not Christians who provide for their family's day to day needs. It is teaching that sluggards should imitate the industriousness of ants who carry out life's work without being forced to do so by a guide, overseer or ruler. It has nothing whatever to do with Christians having to make provision for their family's future needs.

To teach that Christians must set aside reserves for their family's future needs is totally unscriptural and in fact contradicts what Jesus himself teaches (CP Mt 6:19-21, 25-34, Php 4:6; 1Ti 6:6-8; He 13:5-6; 1Pe 5:6-7).

None of this is teaching however, that Christians are prohibited from providing a family home and the necessities of life for their family (CP Psa 112:1-3; Pr 8:21; 21:20). But Christians are forbidden setting aside reserves for future needs because that could become the focus of their life. Then they would no longer see life from the vantage point of eternity. Their goal and fulfilment would no longer be in God, but in themselves and the wealth they have set aside for future needs.

The word *conversation* in He 13:5 (KJV), means manner, or way of life. This teaches that a Christian's way of life has to be without the desire for more than that which will satisfy their everyday needs. Then they can boldly say, as V6 says, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (CP V6). See also comments on Mt 6:24; Lu 12:16-21, 12:33-34; 1Ti 6:6-10 and He 13:5-6 and author's study *Christians and Wealth* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and

Christians – Flee from Idolatry in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

12:20-21 **How are these sins defined?**

Debates, in V20, means strife and discord, contentions, wrangling (CP 1Cor 1:11; 3:3; Tit 3:9). Debates in this context is not the same as disputing for truth (CP Ac 9:29; 15:2, 7; 17:17; 19:8-9). *Envyings* here is from the Greek word **zelos**, from which the English word zeal is derived in a favourable sense, or jealousy, as here, in an unfavourable sense (CP Ac 13:45; Ro 13:13; Jas 3:14-16). *Wraths* refers to anger, fierceness, indignation (CP Ac 19:28; Ga 5:20; Rev 12:12). *Strifes* mean contentions, rivalry. It represents a motive of self-interest (CP Ro 2:8; Php 2:3; Jas 3:14-16). *Backbitings* are false accusations, speaking evil of others, slander (CP Jas 4:11; 1Pe 2:1). *Whisperings* mean slander of others secretly, detraction; hurtful gossip that destroys men's reputations (CP Ro 1:29). *Swellings* means puffed up, swelling with pride, ambition, arrogance. Used only in 2Cor 12:20. *Tumults* refers to disorder, confusion, commotions (CP 1Cor 14:33; 2Cor 6:5; Jas 3:16).

Uncleanness in 2Cor 12:21 refers to moral uncleanness, impure dissolute living (CP Ro 1:24; 1Cor 6:19; Eph 4:17-19). *Fornication* means any form of sexual immorality. It includes adultery, incest, homosexuality, prostitution etc (CP Mt 5:32; 1Cor 5:1; 7:2). *Lasciviousness* means licentiousness, debauchery, sexual excess, wantonness (CP Ro 13:13; 1Pe 4:3; Jude 1:4). See also comments on Ro 13:11-14; 1Cor 6:9-10 and 6:15-20, and author's study *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

13:1-2 **What exactly does Paul mean here?**

Paul is telling the Corinthians here that just as judgment is made sure by the agreement of two or three witnesses, so too will disciplinary action be sure for any sin he finds there when he comes (CP De 17:6; 19:15; Mt 18:16 with 1 Ti 5:19; and He 10:28).

13:5 **There is a profound teaching here - what is it?**

This teaches that believers need to constantly test the genuineness of their faith (CP Ro 8:10; Jas 2:14-26). No knowledge is so important to believers as the certainty of eternal life (CP 1Jn 5:13). We should all be certain that our salvation is a present reality (CP 1Cor 1:18; 9:24-27; 2Cor 2:15). Salvation is only fully certain however, to those sowing to the Spirit at the end of their earthly life (CP Lu 13:22-27; Ga 6:7-8; Php 2:12; Rev 2:1-7, 8-11, 12-17, 18-29; 3:1-6, 7-13, 14-22; 22:11-12). See also comments on 1Cor 1:18 and author's study *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

13:12 **See comments on Ro 16:16.**

13:14 **What core truth of the Christian faith underlies what Paul says here?**

Paul's blessing on the Corinthian church here witnesses to the three-in-one Godhead of Christianity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (CP 1Cor 12:4-6; Eph 2:13-18; 4:4-6; 2Th 2:13-14). This teaching is a core truth of the Christian faith and is central to an understanding of biblical revelation and the message of the gospel. Scriptures clearly teach that the Father is God (CP Ro 1:7; 1Cor 8:6). The Son is God (CP Isa 7:14 and 9:6 with Mt 1:23; Jn 1:1-2; 10:30; 20:26-28; 1Cor 15:45-47; Php 2:5-8; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8; 1Jn 5:20). The Holy Spirit is God (CP Isa 6:8-11 with Ac 28:25-28; Ac 5:3-4; 1Cor 2:10-12; 3:16; 2Cor 3:17-18; He 9:14). Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct and separate co-equal members of the Godhead, and have been through all eternity. They all had a role in creation (CP Gen 1:1-2; Psa 90:2; Jn 1:1-3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:12-13, 16-17; He 1:1-2, 8-12; 11:3; Rev 3:14; 4:11). See also comments on Mt 3:16-17 and author's study *The Doctrine of the Trinity* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.