

# **II Corinthians**

*Prepared by Trevor Bowen*



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# **Lesson 1 – Introduction and Outline of the Letter**

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## **General Introduction**

Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church is unlike his other works. While most of Paul's letters are systematically outlined, the second Corinthian letter is written with passionate concern and fervor. He reveals some of his own inner struggles and concerns, which are less obvious in his other works.

This touching letter contains fewer pointed instructions for the church, especially in comparison to the first epistle. However, it holds many great lessons that will aid us today in living a happier, wiser, and more righteous Christian life.

## **Important Fundamental Points**

When we begin to study II Corinthians, we are picking up in the middle of a dramatic sequel. Failure to understand the setting of I and II Corinthians would greatly hamper proper interpretation of II Corinthians.

Paul wrote the II Corinthian letter, when he was extremely concerned for the Corinthians. Moreover, the Corinthians were also having a troublesome time. The church was split with some eager to follow Paul's instructions, while others were bent on straying from God's authority and misleading the church. This created a potentially explosive situation for the Corinthians and Paul. The book of II Corinthians is best interpreted in the light of an inspired apostle writing to defuse the situation by encouraging the faithful while reprimanding the rebellious. Without the understanding of Paul's divided readers, many of his strong, but subtle, statements will be overlooked or misinterpreted.

It should also be understood that at no point did the apostle Paul lose his composure, or write anything rashly. Every word is deliberately chosen so as to produce a specific response (II Corinthians 12:16). Every passionate plea (6:1, 11-13; 7:1-16; 10:1,2) and powerful rebuke (10:6, 11; 11:1-4; 12:11-13:10) was necessary, as this letter was the final encouragement and warning before Paul's ominous return (12:11 – 13:10). Also, we should never forget that this is not the thoughts of a mere man, but it was inspired by the Holy Spirit using Paul's personality, knowledge, love, vocabulary, and style while establishing every word.

## **Background**

### **I. Author – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”**

#### **A. Internal Evidence**

1. Paul references himself at the opening of the letter (1:1). Also, the entire letter lends itself to the authorship of Paul. Only Paul could have written with the tone, style of writing, and deep concern exhibited in II Corinthians.
2. Timothy is also mentioned at the introduction of the letter; however, he is mentioned as a “brother” in contrast to Paul's title. Although Timothy would have sent greetings, he would not have been an inspired joint-author.

#### **B. External Evidence**

1. Clement of Rome (95 A.D.) quotes from both I and II Corinthians in his letters to the Corinthians and attributes both letters to Paul. Other numerous apostolic fathers have quoted and attributed I and II Corinthians to Paul.

2. Few critics have disputed the authorship of these letters. However, of the few critics who have endeavored to deny the Pauline authorship, most have managed only to discredit themselves (Coffman 5).

## **II. Date of Writing: 53–57 A. D.**

- A. Two basic dates are given for the writing of II Corinthians. One time span is late 53, early 54 A.D.; the other date is late 56, early 57 A. D. Lenski, Lipscomb and Barnes support the later dating. Jenkins and Coffman support the earlier dating.
- B. By using clues and subtle references, an approximate timeline can be calculated to relate events surrounding the establishment of the Corinthian church and the writing of I and II Corinthians. These events are matched to the timeline of secular history by the reference of Gallio, who was the proconsul of Achaia. He was mentioned in Acts 18:12 shortly after the establishment of the church. It is upon the date of his ruling that Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and all related events are based. The discrepancy in dating II Corinthians arises from the two different dates used for Gallio's short rule.
- C. The discrepancy between dates for the writing of II Corinthians is of little importance to us as students of God's Word, but understanding the general time of writing can be useful in better placing the Corinthian church in its proper historical context. This helps us to better understand problems that the Corinthians faced and the themes that Paul weaves throughout I and II Corinthians.

## **III. Establishment of the church at Corinth**

- A. The Corinthian church was established by the apostle Paul (Acts 18:1-21), during his second missionary journey (Map 1), about 51 A.D.
- B. Capital of the Roman province of Achaia, Corinth was a large commercial port city that was a converging point for large amounts of wealth, immorality, and idolatry.
- C. In spite of the corrupt culture in which it was entrenched, the work at Corinth was to have many members (Acts 18:9-10).

## **IV. Background to the writing of I Corinthians**

- A. After Paul's departure, the Corinthian church erred in multiple points, prompting a severe letter of rebuke from the apostle. Instructions were also included in the letter to withdraw from a man who was publicly known to be committing gross adultery (I Corinthians 5).
- B. I Corinthians was written while Paul was on an extended stay at Ephesus (I Corinthians 16:8), during his third missionary journey (Map 2), about 53 or 54 A. D.
- C. The first Corinthian letter did contain encouraging thoughts, but it was on the whole a corrective letter.
- D. The strong content of this letter sets the stage for the writing of II Corinthians. Understanding this part of the background is essential for fully appreciating the letter.

## **V. Background to the writing of II Corinthians**

- A. Paul had promised in the first letter he would soon come to Corinth (I Corinthians 16:5-9).
- B. He also mentioned that Timothy might visit them, but he requested that the Corinthians allow Timothy to return quickly because of his usefulness to Paul (I Corinthians 16:10-11). Timothy's helpful assistance in Paul's labors is supported by the fact that Timothy was with Paul when he wrote II Corinthians (1:1).

- C. However, as events unfolded Paul did not return to Corinth as quickly as he originally promised.
- D. This delay may have been caused by Paul being forced to flee from Ephesus to Troas, because of an uprising caused by Demetrius (Acts 19:21 – 20:1). Or, it may have been because of open doors at both Ephesus and Troas (Acts 19:8 – 20, II Corinthians 2:12). Or, Paul may have simply wanted to give them more time to consider and repent (II Corinthians 2:1).
- E. At some point Titus was sent to Corinth to begin collecting money for needy Christians in Judea and to check on the Corinthians reaction to Paul’s letter (II Corinthians 7:6-7, 13-16; 8:1-8). He may also have been sent partly because of Paul’s delay in coming.
- F. While in Troas Paul continued to work for the Lord (II Corinthians 2:12); however, he was restless while he waited on Titus’s return. So, Paul continued from Troas to Macedonia, where he met up with Titus (2:13, 7:6)
- G. After finally hearing Titus’s report, Paul writes second Corinthians and sends it with Titus (8:6, 16-24). In this letter Paul’s passionate concern shines through more than any of Paul’s other letters.
- H. The Corinthians’ treacherous condition called for Paul to make an emotional plea to strengthen the faithful and to provide one last warning for the rebellious before punishment.

## VI. The Lost Letters

- A. In Paul’s first letter (I Corinthians 5:9), he mentions “*I wrote to you in my epistle...*” Since Paul used the past tense, this quotation leads many scholars to conjecture that there must have been a lost letter written before I Corinthians.
- B. Some scholars believe that this may be referring to I Corinthians itself. This argument is based upon the fact that the tense of the verb “*I wrote*” (Greek epistolary aorist tense) could technically have been used so that it would have been referring to the letter that he was writing at that moment, I Corinthians.
- C. However, many scholars correctly point out that although this could technically be true, it would make Paul’s message into nonsense. It would be impossible for the Corinthians to have already misunderstood a statement that Paul was just then writing (I Corinthians 5:9-10).
- D. The likely truth is that Paul wrote some kind of letter that he sent to the Corinthians before he wrote I Corinthians. It should be remembered that if this letter was necessary to us, then the Holy Spirit would have preserved it for us.
- E. Some scholars believe that a second lost letter may have been written between I and II Corinthians. Paul references a “*severe*” letter that he wrote in II Corinthians 2:4; 7:8.
- F. However, in all likelihood this refers to I Corinthians, which could surely be regarded as a “*severe*” letter that Paul would have written out of “*much affliction and anguish of heart*”.

## VII. Higher Criticism

- A. Other liberal scholars, known as higher critics, believe that the “*I wrote*” quotation actually refers to a fragment of II Corinthians (6:14 – 7:1). However, these critics, who scoff at the idea of an inspired Bible, typically slice almost all Bible books into a

- ridiculous number of fragments by different authors at different times based on highly questionable and subjective methods.
- B. These liberal scholars also slice up II Corinthians into at least three separate fragments depending on which critic is to be believed. Each higher critic promotes a different story, but in general they create a picture where I and II Corinthians are letters that have been edited and spliced by multiple authors. They typically paint Paul as a weakling and coward who was completely rejected by the Corinthian church.
  - C. Such stories are based upon speculations about assumptions from opinions on subtle references. They are the products of critics who seek to elevate themselves by discrediting the Bible and its writers. Their stories are as creative as they are false, and few Bible students would consider their theories. However, as silly as these critics may be, their theories do influence more liberal students and eventually filter into the Lord's churches

## **General Outline**

The second Corinthian letter can be outlined into three major sections. Each section focuses on one main point with many secondary points. The progression of thought is both incredibly logical and deeply emotional, although each can be easily overlooked if careful scrutiny is not applied repeatedly. Many of the points have content regarding the previous or following topics, serving as a transitioning point.

### **Section One – Instruction and Introduction to Paul's Defense**

In the first section of II Corinthians, Paul addresses the part of the church that had mostly remained faithful to Christ through Paul's gospel. The tone of this section is more patient, although still very bold and impassioned in parts. The first section deals with factors that interfered with his plans, despite his best intentions and sincere motives. He begins a lengthy defense of his ministry, which is frequently – but not always – explicitly contrasted with the false apostles, who are more fully addressed in the third section. He concludes this section with a passionate plea to separate themselves from corrupting influences, while telling them of his deep love and concern for them.

#### **I. Greeting (1:1 – 2)**

#### **II. Reasons for delayed visit (1:3 – 2:13):**

- A. Suffering in Asia (1:3 – 11)
- B. Defense for failing to visit as previously promised – to spare them sorrow (1:12 – 2:2)
- C. Instructions to forgive and encourage the punished man (2:3 – 11)
- D. Door of opportunity in Troas and Macedonia (2:12 –13)

#### **III. Defense of Paul's ministry and that of his fellow laborers (2:14 – 5:21):**

- A. Lead by God to triumph in preaching the gospel – introduces "*sufficiency*" (2:14–16)
- B. Evidenced by the Corinthians themselves, as "*letters of commendation*" (2:17–3:4)
- C. Evidenced by a superior covenant, which God enabled Paul and his fellow workers to serve as its ministers (3:4–18)

- D. Evidenced by optimistic, steadfast perseverance in the face of terrible persecution (4:1 – 5:21)
  - 1. Because of superior covenant and God’s power, despite persecution (4:1–15)
  - 2. Because of faith in the unseen eternal glory of being with Christ (4:16 – 5:8)
  - 3. Because of the terror of the judgment of Christ (5:9 – 11)
  - 4. Because they are ambassadors for Christ, ministering reconciliation (5:12 –21)

**IV. Paul’s emotional plea (6:1 – 7:16)**

- A. Not abandon Paul’s salvation providing ministry, which had been “*commended*” by a multitude of demonstrations of sincerity, miracles, character, and true love (6:1 – 10).
- B. Separate themselves from corrupting influences, tugging at their affections (6:11 – 7:1)
- C. Expressed love, concern, and confidence in the Corinthians to ultimately overcome (7:2 – 16)

## **Section Two – Collection for Needy Saints**

Section two, the shortest section of the letter, primarily addressed the Corinthians part in collecting money for needy saints in Judea. Paul provided encouragement for the Corinthians to finish the collection that they had started under Titus’s guidance. He also informed them of the method of collection to reaffirm his sincerity and integrity. This second section also served as a buffer for transitioning the tone and changing the subjects addressed between sections one and three.

**V. Exhortation to complete their collection by mentioning other examples (8:1 – 15)**

- A. Macedonians gave above and beyond their ability (8:1 – 7)
- B. Corinthians should be willing to give like Christ for others good, and their own (8:8 – 15)

**VI. Collection is gathered and delivered in a manner beyond reproach (8:16 – 24)**

**VII. Exhortation to complete the contribution voluntarily and cheerfully (9:1-15)**

- A. Finish collection in advance to avoid giving begrudgingly out of shame (9:1-5)
- B. God appreciates and rewards cheerful givers (9:6 – 9)
- C. Their contribution causes praises to be given toward God and fostered care and thanksgiving from others toward the Corinthians (9:10 - 15)

## **Section Three – Paul’s Defense for his Authority as Apostle of Jesus Christ**

The third section of II Corinthians provides Paul’s last exhortation to the rebellious faction of the church in Corinth. The tone is first begging followed by the threat of a powerful confrontation, if they did not submit to Christ and His gospel, ministered to them by Paul. This section would have encouraged those to repent who had been most influenced by the factious, false teachers. It would also have been an indirect, but final warning for the false teachers before Paul’s next visit to Corinth. The nature of this visit would have been determined by their response to this final warning.

**VIII. Operate according to spiritual principles, not fleshly appearances (10:1 – 18)**

- A. Pleads to repent lest he comes to punish using spiritual weapons, not fleshly (10:1 – 6)



- B. Warns that Corinthians had misjudged Paul's meekness, because they judged according to the flesh (10:7 – 11)
- C. Implies Corinthians had accepted faulty boasting according to the flesh (10:12 – 18)
  - 1. Beyond God appointed limits
  - 2. Beyond authority
  - 3. Beyond honest claims
  - 4. Beyond the Lord's glory

**IX. Answering the foolish boasts and charges of false apostles (11:1 – 15)**

- A. Expresses concern they had been deceived by folly (11:1 – 4)
- B. Answers the folly that had deceived them into accepting false apostles (11:5-15)
  - 1. Not similarly trained in "*speech*", but demonstrated requisite "*knowledge*" (11:5-6)
  - 2. Not accepting payment only to cut off opportunity of false apostles (11:7-15)

**X. Overcoming the foolish comparisons on their own terms (11:16 – 12:13)**

- A. Explains that the Corinthians foolishness had forced him into brief folly to expose it (11:16 – 21)
- B. Paul's superior boasts in lineage – but primarily in persecution and sufferings (11:22 – 33)
- C. Paul's superior boasts in visions and miraculous knowledge (12:1 – 6)
- D. Paul's handicap, sent by God, to help him avoid self-exaltation over boasts (12:7 – 10)
- E. Boasting should have been unnecessary, because Paul repeatedly worked undeniable signs of an apostle before the Corinthians (12:11 – 13)

**XI. Conclusion and Benediction (12:14 – 13:14)**

- A. Desire to help them, despite their mistreatment of him (12:14 – 18)
- B. Desire to help them grow, not chastise and discipline the unrepentant (12:19 – 21)
- C. Warning to not spare depending upon testimony of witnesses, when he visited (13:1-4)
- D. Desire for self-examination and prayer for righteousness, regardless of their estimation of him (13:5-9)
- E. Last warning, farewell, and benediction (13:10 – 14)

## **Questions**

1. What evidence is available to confirm that Paul was indeed the author?
  
2. What are the dates for writing I and II Corinthians, and why is there discrepancy between sources?

3. What kind of city was Corinth?
4. In what kind of condition was the Corinthian church when Paul wrote I Corinthians?
5. Who went to visit Corinth after the first letter was delivered, while Paul anxiously waited in Macedonia for his return?
6. In what kind of condition was the Corinthian church when Paul wrote II Corinthians?
7. Into how many main sections may the second Corinthian letter be divided?
8. What is the tone of each section, and to whom is each section addressed?
9. Why did Paul expose his emotions with his passionate pleas for repentance and powerful rebukes of rebellion?

## **Commentaries**

- Barnes, Albert. “Barnes’ Notes on the Old & New Testaments: II Corinthians – Galatians.”
- Coffman, James Burton. “First & Second Corinthians.” Volume 7
- Jenkins, Ferrell. “New Testament Epistles: First Corinthians.” Florida College Notes.
- Lenski, R. C. H. “The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians.”
- Lipscomb, David and J. W. Shepherd “A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: II Corinthians – Galatians.” Volume 3.
- MacKnight, James. “Commentary and Notes on the Epistles.”

# Related Maps of Paul's Second and Third Journeys



Map 1 – Paul's Second Journey



Map 2 – Paul's Third Journey

## **Lesson 2 – Greeting, Blessings, and Confidences, II Corinthians 1:1 – 14**

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### **Introduction**

Although brief, Paul opens the letter of **II Corinthians** with his traditional greeting, followed by a prayerful blessing. Next, he immediately moves into a discussion of the blessings they receive as a result of Paul’s suffering and persecution, which would have surely contributed to his delay and their concern. He emphatically declares his integrity and transparency, confident that they knew him to be so, just as he was confident in them.

### **Questions**

1. How did God comfort the Corinthians through Paul?
2. What evident attitude helped Paul and the others in this role?
3. How is the Corinthians’ care for Paul evidenced in Paul’s deliverance?
4. What did Paul think was going to happen to him in Asia?
5. What was Paul’s boasting? Explain this mutual boasting.
6. How could Paul have been confident in them, given the correction already delivered in **I Corinthians** and that which was still to be delivered in **II Corinthians**?

## **Lesson 3 – Sorrow, Joy, and Forgiveness, II Corinthians 1: 14 – 2:13**

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### **Introduction**

After declaring his sincerity, Paul explains that personal plans are made “*according to the flesh*”, and may therefore need to be changed as circumstances and judgments change. He distinguishes between personal plans and the certain truths he declared to them by the gospel. He powerfully affirms that only their best interest – their own joy – motivated any reluctance to visit them again, emphasizing their close relationship and interdependency.

Although less difficult than a personal visit for the same purpose, Paul's previous letter was both written and received with great anguish, and it ultimately resulted in the Corinthians disciplining one of their own (likely, the man from **I Corinthians 5**). Having repented of his sin, the Corinthians now need to "*reaffirm their love*" to him in forgiveness and comfort, along with Paul's own forgiveness.

Lastly, the urgent need in both Troas and Macedonia is mentioned as further complications to his original plans, while also potentially indicating his great concern for them.

## Questions

1. Based on Paul's defense found in **1:15-17**, what apparent event did he have to explain?
2. How might this have affected the Corinthians' faith, based upon Paul's continued apology?
3. What *purpose* was served by the "*Spirit ... given us ... in our hearts*" (v. 22)? How does it fit in the context?
4. Did Paul use an oath in verse 23? What is the *purpose* of the statement?
5. What kind of "*dominion*" did Paul *not* have over the Corinthians? What kind of rule might he have possessed over them, but was cautious to exercise?
6. What was the primary motivation for Paul's delay in visiting them, contrary to his previous plans?
7. Was Paul simply avoiding or putting off a difficult trip? How had the delay served his purpose?
8. Why did Paul express that he wrote "out of much affliction and anguish of heart"?
9. How could Paul write, "*if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me*" (v. 5)? How can this be harmonized with the previous statement about writing "*with many tears*"?

10. What purpose would be served by such an emotional expression?
11. What would have been the punishment “*inflicted by the majority*”? What is the only punishment that the church ever “*inflicts by the majority*”?
12. Why was it critical that they “*reaffirm their love to him*”?
13. Why was it unusual for Paul to push on to Macedonia? What did this imply about his concern for them?

## **Lesson 4 – Lead to Triumph in Christ, II Corinthians 2:14 – 3:6**

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### **Introduction**

After answering possible charges or concerns about his delayed visit, Paul transitions into the defense of his ministry. He first observes that it is a triumphant ministry, requiring qualifications and “*sufficiency*”. He briefly mentions that God has made them sufficient, while moving quickly into the absurdity of his having to defend his sufficiency to them. Paul should not have needed to defend himself to the Corinthians. They were originally converted by Paul, and they would have directly benefitted from his teaching, convicting, and even bestowing of miraculous gifts, as is discussed later. Therefore, they were proof enough to his authenticity as an apostle of Christ. With this point Paul begins his defense in earnest by contrasting his authority with the false apostles.

Beyond the Corinthians themselves, the first argument that Paul offers to their sufficiency is divine authority. God – not man – equipped Paul. Therefore, letters of commendation from any men would have been inappropriate, because it was God who had authorized Paul, not men.

### **Questions**

1. How could the same fragrance produce two different results?
2. Why would “*diffusing*” such a “*fragrance*” require special “*sufficiency*”?
3. Who else is introduced here, who likewise proclaimed to preach God’s Word? How was Paul different? How might this contrast have been evident?

4. What were Paul’s “*letters of commendation*”? How were they superior to those required and offered by others?
  
5. How would God have made Paul “*sufficient*” to be a “*minister of the new covenant*”? How does this help or contrast his defense?
  
6. What are the “*letter*” and the “*spirit*” in verse 6? How do you know? After you finish reading this chapter and answering the other questions, try to improve upon your answer.

### **Contrast in Authority**

In this section, Paul begins a series of comparisons and contrasts between the preachers of the gospel, and the interloping false apostles. While so doing Paul highlights various differences in authority, doctrine, character, and reward. Often he provides one half of the comparison, leaving the obvious contrast unsaid, inferred. The following charts may help us see the details of Paul’s comparisons, while maintaining a clear vision of Paul’s main point.

<b>Contrast</b>	<b>False Teachers</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Related Scriptures</b>
<b>Epistle</b>	Letter of Commendation	Corinthian church	
<b>Author</b>	[Men – Jewish Authorities]	Christ	
<b>Ministered by...</b>	[more mere men]	Paul and apostle	II COR 1:1
<b>Written...</b>	With ink	By the Spirit of the Living God	
<b>Written on...</b>	Tablets of stone	Tablets of flesh, hearts	
<b>Source of Sufficiency and Trust</b>	[themselves]	God, through Christ toward God	
<b>Ministers of...</b>	[old covenant – adulterated Word of God]	New covenant	II COR 2:17

## **Lesson 5 – Ministers of a Superior Covenant, II Corinthians 3:4 – 18**

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### **Introduction**

Developing the thought introduced in verse 6, Paul clearly shows the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. Since Paul hammers this point, it would be reasonable to conclude that the false apostles were Judaizing teachers, advocating the Corinthians to keep the Old Law in addition to the New. This marks the second major distinction between the false apostles and Paul, doctrine. He was preaching a superior covenant, whereas they were still teaching bondage to the Old!

### **Questions**

1. To what event in Israel history is referenced by the Israelites being unable to look upon Moses' face?
2. What 3 contrasts does Paul develop between the two "*ministries*" discussed in verses 7-11?
3. How was Paul's proclamation of the New Covenant different than Moses' proclamation of the Old?
4. Why is that "*same veil*" not lifted, even today? When is that veil taken away?
5. How is one "transformed from glory to glory" (v. 18)?

### **Contrast in Doctrine (3:6 – 18)**

Verses 4-6 serve as a transition between the first point of comparison and the second, their doctrine. Paul and his companions were ministers of the new and superior covenant while the false teachers enforced parts, if not all, of the inferior old covenant. It is from reading this section that the student realizes that those who were steering the Corinthian church astray were Judaizing teachers. It is their doctrine that he refutes and their behavior that he condemns which is so typical of these false teachers who had doggedly pursued Paul. This point served as one of the most significant differences to persuade the Corinthians, but it is also a powerful proof-text for the "passing away" of the old law for us today.



<b>Contrast Point</b>	<b>False Teachers / Old Law</b>	<b>Paul / New Law</b>	<b>Related Scriptures</b>
<b>Ministers of...</b>	[old covenant – adulterated Word of God]	New covenant	II COR 2:17
<b>Ministry of...</b>	Letter [Old Law]	Spirit [New Law]	ROM 2:29
<b>Results of Ministry</b>	Kills	Gives life	JHN 6:63
<b>Ministry of...</b>	Death	[gives life]	ROM 7:7-12
<b>Written on...</b>	Stones	[Hearts]	EXO 34:1; HEB 8:10
<b>Law delivered by...</b>	Moses	Spirit	JHN 14:26; 16:7-13
<b>Glory of Deliverer</b>	Passed away	[eternal]	
<b>Ministry of...</b>	Condemnation	Righteousness	ROM 5:19; 9:30-10:13; GAL 5:5,6; PHI 3:9
<b>Extent of Glory</b>	Glory	Glory that excels	
<b>Duration of Glory</b>	Passing away	Remains	HEB 8:13; 12:18-29
<b>Forthrightness and Clarity of Law</b>	Moses veiled face, veiling the fact that glory was passing	Unveiled, used boldness of speech proclaiming hope	
<b>Results in...</b>	Veiled heart, blindness	Unveiled heart	
<b>Veil removed when...</b>	[never], “to this day”	One turns to the Lord, in Christ	
<b>Brings...</b>	[bondage]	Liberty	GAL 4:24, 25
<b>Viewed with...</b>	[veiled face]	Unveiled face	
<b>View into...</b>	[darkly, dim mirror]	[perfect] mirror	I COR 13:12, JAS 1:25
<b>View image of...</b>	[blurred image]	The glory of the Lord	I COR 13:12
<b>Results in...</b>	[continued blindness]	Transformed into the same image	ROM 8:29; 12:2

Contrast Point	False Teachers / Old Law	Paul / New Law	Related Scriptures
Accomplished by...	....	The Spirit of the Lord	

According to Lipscomb, the following conclusion is clearly stated by Paul in verse 17, which summarizes the above contrasts:

- Now, the Law of “Moses” is represented by “the letter” and where the “letter” of Moses is, there is bondage.
- But the Law of “the Lord” is represented by “the Spirit” and where the “Spirit” of the Lord is there is liberty.

The end of the new law is to become like Christ, like God. The old law could only bring one to Christ, but it failed in providing forgiveness of sins. It also failed to clearly reveal the image of our Creator, who we are to become like.

## Lesson 6 – “We do not lose heart”, II Corinthians 4:1-15

### Introduction

Following this stark contrast between the teachings proclaimed by the false apostles and his own, Paul develops another contrast between himself and these false apostles, character. Paul has openly proclaimed the gospel in honesty, transparency, and integrity, which everyone can see, except those willingly blinded by the Devil. Because of God’s inspiration, Paul and others have served the Lord and others at their own expense, even to the point of suffering severe persecution and loss. This attests to his sincerity, but their powerful success attests to their divine authority. Let us look to this profound example of devotion, conviction, and commitment, and learn from it, “not losing heart”!

### Questions

1. Why did Paul and his companions “not lose heart”?
2. How did Paul “receive mercy” to receive his “ministry”?
3. Why was the gospel veiled from some? Why was this unexpected, given Paul’s preaching style?
4. From verse 4, it may appear that the Devil “veils” the gospel, “blinding” those “who are perishing”. From the context, show that they are willing participants and can reverse it, if they so desire.

5. How did Paul’s behavior among the Corinthians manifest his sincerity?
  
6. Can we have the same “*light shining in our hearts*” or carry the same “*treasure in earthen vessels*” as did Paul and others? Please explain.
  
7. What did Paul and his companions “*carry about in the body*”? How was this demonstrated? And, what did this fact demonstrate?
  
8. In a word, what caused Paul to speak? If we fail to teach the gospel to others by our own choice (or negligence), what does this indicate about us?
  
9. Specifically, why did Paul not fear persecution, even martyrdom?
  
10. Why did Paul suffer so?

## **Contrast in Character**

In this section of Paul’s comparison, he shifts from directly comparing aspects of both parties to descriptions of his motivation and sincerity. Consequently, there is a complete absence of references to the false teachers in this section. However, his evident character stands in stark contrast to the character of the false teachers, which topic he briefly mentioned previously in 1:12 and 2:17.

<b>Comparison Point</b>	<b>False Teachers</b>	<b>Paul and His Companions</b>
<b>Hidden things of shame</b>	Continued therein	Renounced
<b>Handling of God’s Word</b>	Craftily and deceitfully	Manifestation of Truth
<b>Integrity</b>	[hide motives & actions]	Commend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God
<b>Ultimate truth veiled from...</b>	[all who believed, were deceived]	Only those who were perishing

<b>Preach foremost...</b>	[themselves]	Christ Lord Jesus
<b>Relationship to Christ</b>	[Jesus owed them salvation]	Bondservants (in debt) to Christ
<b>Inspiration</b>	[blinded by Satan]	Enlightened by God

## **Lesson 7 – “Walk by faith, not by sight”, II Corinthians 4:16 – 5:8**

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### **Introduction**

The restating of Paul’s conclusion (“*Therefore, we do not lose heart*”) in 4:16 indicates that this is a continuation of the discussion begun in 4:1. It is a wonderful thought that, even though the body we see is wearing down every day, the unseen spirit that dwells within us is actually being renewed and growing stronger. Of course, this depends upon us leading a spiritual life, as did Paul.

It is critical that we always remember that this life is temporary. The things of this life are of no significance compared to how we live this life. This is much easier to understand intellectually than to accomplish practically. But, we must keep trying. We must allow our spiritual conviction to permeate every aspect of our lives, including family bonds, work relationships, casual friendships, and spiritual ties.

This passage reminds us that the Christian should never quite feel comfortable here. They should always have a sense of uneasiness. Just as we often sing, “This world is not my home; I’m just a passing through...”

### **Questions**

1. Paul maintained “*heart*”, in spite of what daily discouragement? How?
2. Would you consider Paul’s “*affliction*” to be light? How does this make you feel?
3. Does Paul mean that he cannot see things here (v. 18)? What does he mean?
4. Was it death that Paul desired? Why or why not?
5. Who is the “*we*”, who received “*the Spirit as a guarantee*” in 5:5? What did it produce (5:6)? How is He a “*guarantee*”? (See, **Appendix A.**)

6. What does it mean to “*walk by faith*”? How can we use this for self-examination?

## **Lesson 8 – “*Be reconciled to God*”, II Corinthians 5:9–21**

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### **Introduction**

Here, Paul concludes his reasons that should have given the Corinthians an “*opportunity to boast*.” By faith, he has been moved to preach the gospel to help prepare all men for the Day of Judgment. He was motivated not by his own insecurity, but fear for the fate of those still unprepared.

He concludes by highlighting the transforming nature of the gospel, which includes his perspective towards all men. He has become a new creation, and there is a subtle implication that the Corinthians should also change how they estimate others – not by appearance. He emphasizes the earnestness of God’s gospel plea, a ministry of reconciliation given to them (again emphasizing a contrast in doctrine and its result). This should have drawn a stark contrast, as it concludes this section of defense, and prepares tender hearts for the imminent, impassioned plea of chapters 6 and 7

### **Questions**

1. Why was it critical to be “*well pleasing to Him*”?
2. Why did Paul preach the gospel with such urgency and fervor?
3. What does this passage teach about us inheriting the guilt of the sins of Adam and our forefathers?
4. Was Paul defending himself to the Corinthians? Explain.
5. What can we conclude from the fact that “*One died for all*”?
6. How did this change Paul’s estimation of others? How should it have affected the Corinthians? How should it affect us?
7. How does one become a “*new creation*”?

8. What is the chain of “*reconciliation*” mentioned in verses 18-20?
9. Can we be “*ambassadors for Christ*”, like as was Paul and others of the 1<sup>st</sup> century? Explain.
10. God’s earnestness in pleading for reconciliation is manifested by what extreme event?

## **Lesson 9 – A Truly Credentialed Ministry, II Corinthians 6:1-10**

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### **Introduction**

As this first section begins to end, Paul shifts the tone and thrust of his writing. He has answered his first rhetorical question (2:16) by showing his worthiness to serve as an ambassador for Christ, chosen by Christ. He has answered his second rhetorical question (3:1) by giving them a defense with which they can answer others. The preceding chapters should have provided encouragement to strengthen and renew their confidence in Paul as an apostle.

With the profound weight of his reasoning laying heavy on their consciences, he now begins his plea. It is this plea that will return many to Christ. By heeding this plea, the lines will become clear, and those who failed to heed it will become the sole recipients of the rebuke in section three.

### **Questions**

1. What evident danger were the Corinthians approaching, even if they did not realize it?
2. What is the context of the quote from Isaiah in verse 2?
3. In verses 4 – 10, Paul provides a list of events, blessings, traits, and paradoxes. What is their purpose?
4. Was Paul bragging on himself in these verses? He says, “*We commend ourselves*”. Explain.
5. How did persecutions commend the ministry of Paul?

6. How did the things mentioned in verses 6-7 commend Paul to them as a true minister of God?
7. What choice did the paradoxes of verses 8-9 present to the Corinthians? To us?

## **Lesson 10 – Avoiding Corrupting Influences, II Corinthians 6:11-7:1**

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### **Introduction**

Having reminded the Corinthians of his defense thus far established, Paul now openly bares his heart and pleads along with Christ, “*Come out from among them and be separate.*” Because of their misplaced affections, the Corinthians had joined themselves to corrupting influences. Although this invaluable lesson might apply in many instances, the original application here was to avoid the compromising relationships with idolaters – and possibly the Judaizing false apostles, who were evidently having a leavening influence upon them. We see once again the deep love that Paul had for the Corinthians as he pleads like a parent to his children, trying to spare them from destruction.

### **Questions**

1. What effect did Paul hope that his openness would have upon the Corinthians? Why would he have that hope or expectation?
2. What 2 fundamental reasons does Paul give for not being “*unequally yoked*”?
3. What application did these verses imply for the Corinthians? What application do these verses hold for us today?
4. To what promises is Paul referring in 7:1?

**Note:** These verses arguably most directly relate to the question of Christians marrying non-Christians. We will reserve this specific consideration for a later lesson, after we have finished the book. For this lesson, please focus on understanding the underlying principles, outline, immediate application to them, and general application to us, so we can maintain focus on the book as a whole until we complete its general study.

## **Lesson 11 – An Impassioned But Confident Plea, II Corinthians 7:2-16**

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### **Introduction**

Again, Paul pleads plainly with the Corinthians to open their hearts to him. He begins to conclude his plea by recounting both his confidence and concern for them in regards toward their reception of the first Corinthian letter. He was clearly overjoyed by their reaction, but he clearly wrote the first letter with great pains. Despite whatever troubles the Corinthians faced as a result of their own immaturity and outside influences, Paul exudes confidence in their ultimate triumph, which Titus now also shared. Paul's boast in them should have reinvigorated their possibly flagging optimism.

These verses close discussions begun earlier (about Titus, 2:12, and accepting Paul's previous written correction, 2:3-11), and prepares them for the next major section of the second Corinthian letter.

### **Questions**

1. Based on Paul's observations, why might the Corinthians have closed their heart toward Paul?
2. Paul wrote, "*I do not say this to condemn.*" Did he mean they had done nothing wrong? Or, that he was unwilling to correct their wrong? Or, something else? Please explain.
3. Putting these verses together with 2:12-13, the overall thrust of the letter, and the tone of the immediate context, to what fear is Paul most likely alluding in 7:5?
4. What two things had brought comfort to Paul?
5. In verse 8, does Paul mean that he was mistaken to write the first epistle to the Corinthians? Please explain.
6. In practical terms, how can we examine ourselves (or others) and determine if we are truly "*sorry in a godly manner*"? How can we use this to make sure we do not repeatedly commit the same sins?
7. In verse 12, is Paul implying that he did not care about the brother who sinned or who he may have sinned? Was Paul only concerned about how they perceived him?



8. Who else had been impacted by their repentance? What should that mean to us?
  
9. Imagine you were in the place of the Corinthians. How would you feel after reading verses 14-16? What can we learn from this chapter – as well as previous verses – about correcting and reaching those who are either lost or in danger of being lost?

## **Lesson 12 – Examples in Sacrificial Giving, II Corinthians 8:1-15**

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### **Introduction**

This second section fits perfectly into the flow of the context when the accomplishments of the first section are reviewed. Paul has successfully explained and dismissed the suspicions of the Corinthians, answered the accusations of the false teachers, encouraged the faithful, and finally rejoiced in the renewed determination of much of the Corinthian church. Based upon Titus's report of their whole-hearted repentance, Paul now directs their zeal by reminding them of their previous determination to contribute to a collection for needy saints. To encourage them in this good work, he provides them with two examples: the Macedonians and Christ. It should be remembered that the boasting, encouragement, and instruction were addressed to those who would listen. The unfaithful few and the false teachers who could not be included in the statements about repentance were obviously not included in the statements of confidence and encouragement.

### **Questions**

1. How did the Macedonians' reaction manifest the "*grace of God*"?
  
2. How can "deep poverty" promote one to "abound in the riches ... of liberality"?
  
3. What else did the Macedonians give beside "*the gift*"?
  
4. How were the Macedonians able to give so abundantly (vs. 5)?
  
5. What did Paul mean, "*I speak not by commandment*" (vs. 8)? Was **not** giving a commandment?
  
6. How did Jesus go from richness to poverty? How did this enrich us?

7. How was it to the Corinthians advantage to finish this good work that they had started (vs. 10)?
8. What are the scales of balance by which God compares and accepts our contributions?
9. Do verses 13-15 teach that Christians should have an equality of wealth, i.e. should the rich give to the poor until all have equal amount of goods? Explain.

## **Lesson 13 – Honor in the Sight of All, II Corinthians 8:16-24**

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### **Introduction**

Ever mindful of avoiding false allegations and maintaining all propriety, Paul introduces those who will be journeying to the Corinthians to collect the contribution they had previously promised. He also explains the motivation for including so many people. Please also note that this passage exemplifies and explains much of the New Testament pattern for intra-congregational cooperation in benevolence.

### **Questions**

1. Who else had apparently required a little encouragement and exhortation beside the Corinthians? What sacrifice may he have made as part of accepting this exhortation?
2. What two additional things did this “*gift*” manifest and accomplish?
3. What were the two reasons for the extra people carrying the collection? Was one person not sufficient?
4. Upon what basis were these people chosen to help? (In other words, why were they each chosen instead of someone else? What were the qualifications?) What lessons can we learn?
5. What other passages speak of promises without fulfillment or well-wishes without substance?

## Lesson 14 - “God’s indescribable gift”, II Corinthians 9:1–14

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### Introduction

Paul, having provided inspiring examples in sacrificial giving, continues to build the motivational case for the completion of Corinthians promised contribution. Besides the encouragement to not embarrass themselves, this chapter is rich in reasons that should have motivated the Corinthians to not just give, but to give with the proper heart. This closes Section II of this letter.

The abundance of motivation suggests that there must have been some hesitance, possible desertion, of their original purpose. All of the encouragement that Paul provided to the Corinthians serves as a landmark lesson for us today. Although we may give faithfully today, these lessons give us reason to reexamine our contribution and our hearts, and to encourage us if we become disheartened in the future. Moreover, these lessons would help the one who may not give at all, or adequately when compared with their abundance, to urgently repent and “*avenge*” (7:11) their wrongdoings. Whatever our case, there is much in these two chapters that is important for us, even if it is *only* a reminder (II Corinthians 9:1; II Peter 3:1).

### Questions

1. Why was it “*superfluous*” for Paul to write about the collection of the saints?
2. How would it have affected the Corinthians to learn that their example had been used to stir up the Macedonians?
3. What 2 (or 3) things was Paul trying to avoid by encouraging the Corinthians to prepare?
4. How does one “*reap bountifully*” if he “*sows bountifully*”? Is this the promise of a “health and wealth” gospel? Please explain.
5. How could the Corinthians avoid being “*grudging givers*”? Likewise, how can we ensure that we will be “*cheerful givers*”?
6. How would God’s grace help them in this task?
7. What would be the many results of their contribution? (Remember, what ethnicity were many of the Corinthians versus the “*needy saints*”?)

8. What did their contribution prove about Paul's work and their conversion (vs. 13)?
9. Does the latter part of verse 13 authorize the church doing benevolent work for those outside of the church, "all men"?
10. What was, and is, "*God's indescribable gift*"?

## **Lesson 15 – The Weakness of Appearance, II Corinthians 10:1 – 10:18**

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### **Introduction**

As section one subtly transitioned into two, section two abruptly transitions into three. With the profound thought of God's indescribable gift still ringing in their ears, Paul now swiftly turns to the profound weakness and impotence of these false apostles' case presented before godly apostles. These false teachers are not directly addressed; however, Paul warns any sympathetic, unstable, or double-minded Corinthian of the fundamental failure of these false teachers: Their strength was rooted in appearance and the shared accolades of their peers. However, Paul's authority and might was from God, and it would be exercised fully. Much like God warning Moses to remove himself from the Israelites, lest he also be consumed in His wrath, Paul warns the faithful and undecided to separate themselves from these enemies, who would surely suffer the punishment entrusted to the apostles.

### **Questions**

1. Verses 1 and 10 indicate what allegation had been levied against Paul?
2. Why might Paul have had such a presence among them? (Consider verses 6, 10, and 11 also.)
3. Can we develop these "*weapons of warfare ...mighty in God*"? If so, how? If we succeed, how do we them?
4. What basis for judging had the Corinthians been using? What other passages warn against this?
5. How is Paul's "*boasting*" different than the "*commendation*" he condemns in verse 12?

6. What 2 kinds of “*boasting*” **were** these false apostles doing? Contrast this with the 4 kinds of “*boasting*” Paul was **not** doing.
  
7. How can we “*glory in the Lord*”? Application?
  
8. How do we avoid “*commending ourselves*”? Application?

## **Lesson 16 – Cutting off Deceivers, II Corinthians 11:1–15**

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### **Introduction**

In this passage, Paul accomplishes three things. Continuing to build upon his case, distinguishing his divine authority from the carnal mindset of the false teachers, he entreats the Corinthians to endure his boasting, now at their carnal level. The possibility of the Corinthians rejecting this entreaty stood in ironic contrast to their foolishness by which they had gladly endured the boasting and accepted the perverted gospel of the false teachers – even to their own corruption. The second thing Paul accomplishes was to answer the charge concerning his manner of speech. The sarcastic response did not answer the charge but redirected the focus toward the appropriate point. While their speech may have at best been more appealing, his speech contained true, spiritual knowledge. Finally, he addresses a distinction that the false prophets had realized and were seeking to remove. His refusal of financial support from the Corinthians contrasted with the false teachers’ acceptance exposed their carnal mind in their desire for wealth and recognition.

### **Questions**

1. How was Paul’s “*godly jealousy*” different than any possible jealousy exhibited by the false apostles?
  
2. What fear of Paul had already been partially realized in the Corinthians?
  
3. Who are the “*chief apostles*” or “*most eminent apostles*” of verse 5? Was Paul comparing himself to Peter, James, John, or other apostles of the Lord (compare to, **Galatians 2:2, 9**)?

4. In what 2 ways mentioned here, was Paul evidently charged as being “*inferior*” to these apostles? How does he answer the first charge?
5. Why did Paul not ask support from the Corinthians?
6. What does this pattern show about evangelists drawing outside support?
7. How would a “*false apostle*” transform himself into an “*apostle of Christ*”? In case we are curious, what does this teach us about the parallel transformation of the Devil?
8. From the context, what distinguishing feature did Paul provide to help them (and us) recognize the Devil’s “*ministers*”?
9. Go back to consider verse 1. What was “*foolish*” (“*a little folly*”) about Paul’s reasoning between verses 11:1-15?

## **Lesson 17 – Dismissing the Competition, II Corinthians 11:16–33**

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### **Introduction**

In the last two passages, Paul exposed the folly of judging based upon the fleshly appearances and the self-commendation. Both the Corinthians and the false teachers had been focused on carnal things rather than those spiritual. Having deflated the foundation of such an approach, Paul continues his withering attack on the false teachers’ charges, which the fallen Corinthians had accepted. He dismantles their logical fortress brick by brick - already without foundation - by comparing his pedigree to their own on their terms. In this passage, he focuses on his fleshly heritage and his persecutions for Christ. Although Paul felt no personal need to compete with these false apostles, the Corinthians’ folly had required him to stoop to their level, so he might restore them.

### **Questions**

1. What was foolish about the “*boasting*” that the Corinthians had accepted?
2. If it was so foolish, why then was Paul engaging in such boasting?

3. In verses 19-21, was Paul commending the Corinthians and admitting his own failings – or something else? If so, what? How would you reconcile this tactic with I Corinthians 13:4-8 and Romans 13:10?
4. Why would lineage have been an issue of importance to the false teachers? How would it have to their benefit to brag about this trait in a world that was dominated by Gentiles?
5. How are the boasts of 11:23-27 different from the boasts of 11:28-29? How are they similar, sharing a common theme?
6. Even though Paul was forced to boast, how did he still manage to boast in a humble manner?
7. Does the Christian have the right to flee persecution? If so, when and why? How do we ever choose between 2 options, if both are authorized?

## **Lesson 18 – Of Visions and Thorns, II Corinthians 12:1–10**

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### **Introduction**

Although forced to boast, Paul continues to emphasize his weaknesses and infirmities. Moreover, when briefly mentioning the visions, emphasis is placed on Paul's relation to Christ. His unnamed "*thorn in the flesh*" also emphasizes his trust and dependence upon Christ, which provides a tremendous lesson in humble faith for all of us.

Paul's case has devastated the false apostles' claim to superiority on 6 fronts: 1) Knowledge – He thoroughly demonstrated his ability to teach in their conversion and establishment; 2) Ulterior motives – Paul did not preach for financial gain from them; 3) Accomplishments and Accreditations – Ignoring parity in pedigree, Paul was superior in labors, sufferings, and infirmities; 4) Revelations – False apostles had not received such heavenly visions; 5) Humility – Paul boasted in his weaknesses as opposed to his strengths. In so doing, Paul confessed Jesus as the source of his strength, and he confessed the reality that he was, in and of himself alone, nothing. This, the false teachers would have never uttered in their arrogance. Finally, 6) Paul proved his authority through the signs of an apostle, which should have ended all argument before it began, if the Corinthians had not been so easily deceived.

## Questions

1. Who is the subject of verses 2-4? Did Paul have these visions or was it somebody else? How could verses 5 and 7 be reconciled with Paul being the recipient of these visions?
2. What and where is the “*third heaven*” (verse 2)? What and where is “*Paradise*” (verse 4)?
3. If the one having the visions was indeed Paul, then how would you reconcile verse 5 with this idea?
4. How does Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh*” relate to his persuasive argument to the Corinthians?
5. Would a “*messenger of Satan*” deliberately help Paul to be humble? How do you explain this result?
6. Did Paul receive an answer from the Lord to his prayer after the first request? When he was answered, did he receive the answer he wanted? How does our standing with the Lord compare to Paul’s? Lessons for us?
7. Explain this paradox, “*For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (12:10).
8. Why was it foolish that Paul had to stoop to this level of boasting?
9. What were and are the signs of a true apostle? What could apostles do that no other 1<sup>st</sup> century saint could do?



## **Lesson 19 – Final Warnings and Benediction, II Corinthians 12:14 – 13:14**

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### **Introduction**

The defense, rebukes, and pleas now concluded Paul closes the letter with a final warning and invitation. A few final points are made. His intentions and love for them is once again stated and asserted. Paul's love for them is manifested, because he holds their salvation dearer than his own appearance. They are reminded that Christ appeared his weakest right before his triumph and the manifestation of his true strength. A final appeal is made to their conscience. He reaffirms both his authority and desire to avoid its exercise, as well as his deep preference to build up. He bids them farewell, illuminates the path towards spiritual completion, and then closes the letter. Surely then, he took up again his watchful, tearful, and loving prayer as would any true father.

### **Questions**

1. How did the “*parent ... children*” relationship relate to Paul’s responsibilities and actions toward the Corinthians? How might it apply to our responsibilities and actions toward other adults?
2. How can we distinguish between those, who “*love less as more abundantly loved*”, and those, who “*love more as more abundantly loved*”? Based on Paul’s example, how should we respond to such people?
3. What is meant by the phrase, “*being crafty, I caught you by cunning*”? Had Paul been deceitful with the Corinthians? Explain. Lessons for us?
4. How would “*excusing ourselves*” be different than what Paul had been doing? Was he not excusing himself? Explain.
5. Who or what are the witnesses of 13:1, and to what truth might they testify?
6. What undeniable sign might the Corinthians at the last received?
7. How would self-examination help them recognize Paul’s genuine relation with Christ?

8. According to verse 13:7-10, what else had Paul sacrificed for their “*strength*”? Lessons for us?