

Bible Study: 2 Corinthians

(Part 3 -Chapters 9-13)

by Gary T. Panell

The Third Part of 2 Corinthians

In our outline of the book, we are in: II Christian Giving Chapters 8-9 and

III Christian Minister 10-13

Chapter 9

(1-5) "Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.

"Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 4 lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of generosity* and not as a grudging obligation."

This passage is not speaking of our tithing, but of a special gift over and above our regular tithing. The brethren are the delegation (8: 16-24) sent ahead of Paul to prepare the offering before he arrives.

"Here we see the principle of New Testament sharing applied to the everyday lives of the early Christians. Again in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we find a long passage on stewardship principles that repeats the sharing concept:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. 13 For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; 14 but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack-that there may be equality. 15 As it is written, '*He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*'" (2 Corinthians 8:9, 13-15)

"According to shocking statistics from the U.S. Center for World Mission, only one-half of one percent of our church budgets in this country is used to preach Christ to the 3.8 billion unreached people of the world. More than 95 percent of our church budgets are spent at home.

"Of the 5 percent that is sent overseas for missions, 4.5 percent goes for social work and for subsidies to establish churches on the mission field.

"Can you imagine what would happen if Christians in the West were to grasp the principle of sharing and apply it to the needs of the Gospel around the world today? Within a few short years, native missionaries would have preached the Gospel in every lost village of the Third World!

"Could it be that the worship of money and materialism is at this moment keeping the world in the dark about the good news of salvation?

"Here's my challenge to you: *Live on less if that's what it takes-but determine right here and now that you will live as Christ would in your financial affairs.*

"I'm convinced that, if we would adapt the kind of radical, sharing lifestyle of the New Testament, we would turn our world upside down for Christ. If we would live according to the economic laws of the kingdom, we would easily be able to send out new missionaries by the hundreds of thousands. In our lifetimes, we would be able to provide the Word of God to every human being on this planet.

"And, of course, this powerful economic witness would be felt here at home as well as overseas. As we become detached from our worship of earthly things, we would learn to live more relaxed and contented lives. This freedom from covetousness and greed would allow us to escape the frenzied 'earn, spend and consume' syndrome that drives our culture. This is the merry-go-round which Satan now uses to hold our families, churches and society in economic bondage. But this bondage can be broken." (*Road to Reality* by K. P. Yohannan)

(6-9) "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

(10-15) Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

Again, this passage is not speaking of tithing, but of a special gift over and above our regular tithing. We are not to give because someone is forcing us to give, or because we feel like we have to give something. This kind of giving is wrong and will not be rewarded by God. I remember a story Billy Graham gave about himself. As I remember it he meant to put a five dollar bill in the offering, but he put a twenty dollar bill in by accident. I believe he told his wife he thought God would reward him for the twenty. His wife was quick to reply; 'no' you intended to give the five, so he would be rewarded for it, not the twenty.

(6) "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." "Probably a well-known proverb-but not taken from the OT book of Proverbs." (NIV Study Bible)

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7) Note also "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*." (Psalm 126:5, 6) The bountiful return promised by God for generous giving is not necessarily (though possibly it is in some cases) to be measured in material plenty:

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine." (Proverbs 3:9, 10) Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,

That there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you *such* blessing that *there will not be room* enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field, says the Lord of hosts; 12 And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3:10-12).

"He does, indeed, promise to supply our need 'And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:19), but perhaps more commonly the rewards are spiritual, which in terms of eternity are far more valuable (2 Corinthians 9:8-14). Therefore, when we give with abundance, we are not really 'giving,' but 'sowing.'" (*The Defender's Study Bible* Dr. Henry M. Morris)

"Paul knew that the Christians in Corinth were planning on giving to the Lord's work, and he had been bragging about their generosity. But in the middle of this discussion he reminded them of a great spiritual principle: 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.'"

"It is impossible to out give God. When we give to Him, He always gives back more to us. It doesn't make sense mathematically, but it works practically. There are many people who think they can't afford to give to the Lord. But perhaps the reason they don't have money to give to the Lord is because of their lack of obedience in this area.

"I learned this years ago, right after I graduated from college. I was planning an evangelistic trip back to Missouri, and I didn't know how I was going to pay for the trip. Right before I was scheduled to leave, I went to a missions rally and heard a man speak about the needs in Puerto Rico where he was a missionary.

"I only had five dollars to my name, but I felt like God was telling me to put it in the missions offering. Inside I felt like it was foolish because I didn't have money to get to Missouri; and here I was, giving my last five dollars to a missionary. But I gave the money because that is what I thought God wanted me to do.

"The very next day an attorney called who was representing a woman who was in an accident I had witnessed months before. They needed me to come and testify in the trial. I told them I was supposed

to leave for Missouri, and they told me they would pay my way to Missouri if I could stay around an extra day to testify. When you give to God, He will always go to great lengths to pay you back." (*The Word For Today Bible* by Chuck Smith)

Let me also suggest that you go to our links and look up Crown Financial Ministries for more information on this area of giving and finances.

(7) "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

"The only way to give to God is from a willing and grateful heart. God never wants you to feel pressured to give, and I never want to say anything to anyone that pressures him to give. It is between you and the Lord.

"And don't complain about how much you have given. God doesn't want your gift if that is your attitude. Keep your gift.

"the Greek word for 'cheerful' means 'hilarious.' If you aren't hilarious about your opportunity to participate in what God is doing by giving, keep your money. God doesn't want it. [or need it! -G.T. Panell] (*The Word For Today Bible*)

(8) "**All, always, and every** are the emphases in this verse. God can meet their own needs (financial, spiritual, and so on) and can increase their resources to meet the various needs of others." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"Abounding Grace. If you are giving to the Lord with the right heart, willingly and cheerfully, the result will be that you will always have everything you need. You will have 'all sufficiency in all things.' He will be good to you, and provide for you, if you have trusted your finances to Him.

"You can keep all your possessions and money to yourself if you want; but if you give it to Him, He will 'make all grace abound toward you.' It is a great deal. It helps make me cheerful to give." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

(9-11) "**Righteousness,** and 'act of righteousness or piety' refers to the lasting results of generosity.

"He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor." (Psalm 112:9)

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." (Matthew 6:1-4)

"[Here we notice] the same Greek word is translated 'charitable deeds.' (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

(12) "not only supplying the needs of God's people. The effect of generous giving on the part of the Corinthians will extend beyond Jerusalem, the destination of their gift, to the church as a whole, causing widespread prayer and praise to be offered (see vv. 13-14)" (*NIV Study Bible*)

"Generous giving meets the material needs of others but also produces a spiritual result: **many thanksgivings to God**

(13) "Proof of this ministry The Corinthians' **obedience** in contributing to the collection will be tangible evidence of the reality behind their **confession to the gospel of Christ.** (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

(14-15) "unspeakable [indescribable] The great gift of God to man in the sacrificial, redemptive death of His Son for our sins, which provides forgiveness and everlasting life, is beyond all human language to express adequately. We cannot merit such a gift; we can only thank Him for it and, like the Philippians, give ourselves to the Lord and live henceforth only unto Him (2 Corinthians 5:15; 8:5). His gift to us must define all our gifts to Him." (*The Defender's Study Bible* by Dr. Henry M. Morris)

(Also, we have a wonderful message by Pastor Tony Magaña on this area of giving that I would encourage you to listen to. Just click here for [mp3](#) or [wma](#).)

Warning!

I do believe it is extremely important, right here and now, that I make it very clear where I stand on the 'Faith' movement, since it talks so much about finances. There is a balance in the Word of God, and the 'Faith' teachers distort the Word of God on this subject of giving, and the many other false doctrines that they teach.

If you have not read *Christianity in Crisis* by Hank Hanegraaff yet, I suggest that you get the book and read it. Hank Hanegraaff has set the record straight about what is happening in the Christian Church in the area of false teaching on 'Faith.' Even some of the missionaries from our church, as they have gone into parts of Africa, find that this false teaching on 'faith' has infected the ministry of the Church and muddied the waters there.

Here are some of Hank Hanegraaff's comments about this false 'Faith' movement that is circling the globe, being spread by its thousands of 'trained ministers.'

"I have become both weary and wary of those who use the perversions of the Faith movement to drive a wedge between charismatic and noncharismatic Christians. Frankly, this is both counterproductive and divisive, for the Faith movement is not charismatic; it is cultic.

"I want to make it crystal clear that the issues discussed in this book do not involve an 'in-house' debate among committed Christians over such matters as the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. This book is not about whether you speak in tongues or whether God still heals today. It is not about the way you were baptized.

"I want to stress that sincere and dedicated believers can differ in good conscience when it comes to peripheral issues. They cannot do so, however, when it comes to the primary doctrines that separate Christianity from the Kingdom of the cults.

"When it comes to such matters as the fabric of faith, the nature of God, and the atonement of Christ, there must be unity. As Saint Augustine so aptly put it: 'In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.'

"For the most part, charismatics and noncharismatics are unified when it comes to the essentials of the historic Christian faith. Their primary differences involve nonessential Christian doctrine. Therefore, while we may vigorously debate secondary matters within the faith, we must never divide over them.

"Not so, however, when it comes to the Faith movement; there we must draw the line. The Faith movement has systematically subverted the very essence of Christianity so as to present us with a counterfeit Christ and a counterfeit Christianity. Therefore standing against the theology of the Faith movement does *not* divide; rather, it unites believers.

"It would be a grave error to equate the Faith movement with the charismatic movement. It is indeed a travesty that the Faith teachers have been able to cleverly disguise themselves as charismatics, thereby tarnishing the reputation of a legitimate movement within Christianity.

"Furthermore, it is tragic that a number of noncharismatics have attempted to use the Faith teachers to prove that the charismatic movement is in chaos. In fact, some have used the inane statements of the Faith teachers to label charismatics as having zeal without knowledge and enthusiasm without enlightenment-in short, being keen but clueless. This, of course, is clearly untrue.

"Are we prepared to call a man like Dr. Gordon Fee, one of the foremost Bible scholars today, 'keen but clueless'? Are we going to say that Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute and father of the modern-day countercult revolution, had zeal but not in accordance with knowledge?

"Do we really want to categorize Chuck Smith, pastor of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, California, and founder of one of the largest and most effective Christian movements in modern-day history, as having enthusiasm without enlightenment?

."Moreover, some of the most scholarly rebuttals of Faith theology have come from within the charismatic movement itself. Notable examples include the works of Walter Martin, Gordon Fee, Dan McConnell, Charles Farah, Elliot Miller, H. Terris Neuman, and Dale H. Simmons.

"What is especially tragic, however, is that a wide assortment of Christian men and women (both charismatic and noncharismatic) are endorsing leaders within the Faith movement. It is incredible to think that this cultic system has become so powerful that otherwise credible Christians have given it carte blanche to proliferate its poisonous doctrinal perversions to an unsuspecting public.

"One is left to wonder where the heroes of the faith are. Where are those who are willing to stand for integrity? Where are those men and women who, like the saints of old, are willing to face 'the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane, and the fires of a thousand deaths' to preserve the faith once for all delivered to the saints?

"If Christians were willing to give their very lives in days gone by, shouldn't we be willing to sacrifice our positions, platforms, and popularity in order to preserve the faith?

"We are currently faced with a crisis within Christianity. But this crisis is not the fault of the charismatic renewal. Rather, it is focused on a life-and-death struggle between orthodoxy and heresy-between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the cults.

"As we examine the primary purveyors of Faith theology, we will see living proof of the maxim that 'error begets error and heresy begets heresy.' If, for example, you examine the cultic progression of E.W. Kenyon's theology, you will discover that his original deviations from orthodox Christianity were minor compared to those which characterized the later stages of his ministry. And with each of Kenyon's successive disciples, the errors become ever more pronounced.

"Hagin, who popularized Kenyon, not only expanded Kenyon's errors but added to them as well. The progression from bad to worse has continued with people like Kenneth Copeland and Charles Capps, and is now sinking to new depths through ministry leaders such as Frederick Price, Benny Hinn, and Robert Tilton.

"**Essek William Kenyon**, whose life and ministry were enormously impacted by such cults as Science of Mind, the Unity School of Christianity, Christian Science, and New Thought metaphysics, is the true father of the modern-day Faith movement. Many of the phrases popularized by today's prosperity teachers, such as 'What I confess, I possess,' were originally coined by Kenyon.

"**Kenneth E. Hagin** boast[ed] of alleged visits to heaven and hell, but he recounts numerous out-of-body experiences as well. Virtually every major Faith teacher has been impacted by Hagin, including one of his star pupils, Kenneth Copeland.

"**Kenneth Copeland** got his start in ministry by memorizing Hagin's messages. It wasn't long before he had learned enough from Hagin to establish his own cult. To say his teachings are heretical would be an understatement. Copeland brashly pronounces God to be the greatest failure of all time, boldly proclaims that 'Satan *conquered* Jesus on the Cross,' and describes Christ in hell as an 'emaciated, poured out, little, wormy spirit.'

"**Benny Hinn** is one of the fastest-rising stars on the Faith circuit [at the time of this writing] According to an October 5, 1992, article in *Christianity Today*, sales of his books in the last year-and-a-half have exceeded those of James Dobson and Charles Swindoll combined.

"While claiming to be 'under the anointing,' Hinn has uttered some of the most unbelievable statements imaginable, including the claim that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that women were originally designed to give birth out of their sides.

"Despite his outrageous antics, Hinn has managed to gain wide acceptance and visibility within the evangelical Christian church. His platform on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, as well as his promotion by a mainstream Christian publisher, has catapulted him into prime-time visibility.

"**Frederick K.C. Price** is the most notable of a growing number of African-American prosperity preachers. His church in Los Angeles now claims some 16,000 members. He is seen nationally on television and has referred to himself as the 'chief exponent of Name It and Claim It.'

"Price has added his own unique twists to Faith theology by asserting that Jesus took on the nature of Satan *prior* to the crucifixion and by claiming that the Lord's Prayer is not for Christians today.

"Despite telling his followers that he doesn't allow sickness in his home, Price's wife has been treated for cancer in her pelvic area. Referring to his wealth, Price says the reason he drives a Rolls Royce is that he is following in Jesus' steps.

"John Avanzini is billed by his Faith peers as a recognized authority on biblical economics. The truth, however, is that he is an authority at separating poor people from their money. Whenever Faith teachers need money, they inevitably call on 'Brother John.'

"Armed with a full range of Bible-twisting tricks, he tells the unsuspecting that 'a greater than a lottery has come. His name is Jesus!

"According to Avanzini, if Jesus was rich, we should be rich as well. He recasts Christ into a mirror image of himself-complete with designer clothes, a big house, and a wealthy, well-financed advance team. Thinking otherwise, Avanzini claims, will prevent Christians from reaping the prosperity God has laid out for them.

"Robert Tilton hit the big time as a fisher of funds by developing a religious 'infomercial' called 'Success-N-Life.' It all began when he traveled to Hawaii to hear from the Lord. Says Tilton, 'If I'm going to go to the cross, I'm going to go in a pretty place. Not some dusty place like Jerusalem, That's gravel is all that place is.'

"While languishing in his exotic wilderness, Tilton 'realized his mission was to persuade the poor to give what they could to him, God's surrogate-so they too could be blessed.

"It now appears that Tilton's empire may dwindle rapidly amid reports of scandal and a variety of lawsuits. Responding to charges that the prayer request letters he promises to pray over end up in dumpsters.

"Marilyn Hickey, much like Tilton, employs a broad range of tactics to induce followers into sending her money. Among her many ploys are anointed prayer cloths, ceremonial breastplates, and ropes that can be used as points of contact.

"In one of her appeal letters, Marilyn promises she will slip into a ceremonial breastplate, 'press your prayer request to [her] heart,' and 'place your requests on [her] shoulders'-all for a suggested donation.

'For the most part, Hickey's teachings are recycled from other prosperity preachers such as Tilton, Hagin, and Copeland. Her message is peppered with such Faith jargon as 'the God-kind of faith,' 'confession brings possession,' and 'receiving follows giving.'

"Paul Yonggi Cho (David Cho) Paul Yonggi Cho-pastor of the world's largest church, located in Seoul, South Korea-claims to have received his call to preach from Jesus Christ Himself, who supposedly appeared to him dressed like a fireman.

"Cho has packaged his faith formulas under the label of 'fourth-dimensional power.' He is well aware of

his link to occultism, arguing that if Buddhists and Yoga practitioners can accomplish their objectives through fourth-dimensional powers, then Christians should be able to accomplish much more by using the same means."

[These men and women are teaching such things also as] "'You don't have a God in you, you are one.' 'God cannot do anything in this earth unless we give Him permission.' 'Satan conquered Jesus on the cross.' 'Being poor is a sin.' "'There will be no sickness for the saint of God, not even a headache, sinus problem, not even a toothache-nothing!'

"How would you respond? Past generations of Christians would have been shocked at such blasphemy. The truth, however, is that such statements have become commonplace in the books and broadcasts of a powerful cultic movement which has now invaded the church.

"Under the banner 'Jesus is Lord,' these teachers are leading thousand of unsuspecting Christians away from the Kingdom of Christ and into the kingdom of the cults.

"*Christianity in Crisis* is a rousing call for the church to take a firm stand for the faith 'once for all delivered to the saints' while there is yet time to avert a disaster of unimaginable proportions."

(*Christianity in Crisis* by Hank Hanegraaff) I would also suggest that you read another book by Hanegraaff, and that is *Counterfeit Revival*.

Hanegraaff goes on with more names of people in the Faith movement like Charles Capps, Jerry Savelle, Morris Cerullo and Paul Crouch, but I think you get the picture.

I am not saying these men and women are not saved, I believe many of them are, but I do believe they have been deceived into thinking what they are teaching is correct. As a young pastor, I was confronted with the extreme 'Faith movement.'

So I know firsthand what I am speaking about here. No one could even get a cold around these Christians without being criticized. They believed every Christian should live to be 70-80 or there was something wrong with them. If they were not healed, it was because they did not have enough faith, they would say.

When my dad lost his right hand in a back hoe accident, he said the hardest thing he had to endure was when a Christian told him he must have really sinned bad to have that happen to him. Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel in commenting on these false teachers points out that what they say today is exactly what Eliphaz told Job, and that is the reason Job was sick, was because he had sinned.

"Remember now, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? (Job 4:7)
"Here, Eliphaz was saying, 'Job, you're not an innocent man.' Well, I wonder about Abel. Surely Eliphaz knew the story of Cain and Abel, how that Abel was innocent, yet his brother killed him. Of course, I also think of Jesus Christ. The innocent do perish. The innocent do suffer. My being innocent or my being pure does not give me immunity from suffering, sorrows, or problems.

"We make a very serious mistake if we follow the philosophy of Job's friends. There is a dangerous doctrine that has manifested itself in many churches for some time: that it is God's will that everyone be strong and healthy and prosperous.

"If you're going through troubles, if you're going through sicknesses, or whatever, then there is something wrong with your faith. There must be something wrong with your relationship with God. Because if you only had enough faith, you would not be sick!

"It is interesting to me how many of these men who have publicly advocated this heresy have become so sick themselves. I wouldn't say that this is a judgment of God, but I would think that it is a demonstration by God that the righteous do suffer. The righteous often get sick. The righteous also die. To suggest you can be cured of any malady just by following a prescribed pattern of faith is to make man sovereign instead of God, and that's a serious heresy." (*The Word For Today Bible* by Chuck Smith)

There is much I could say myself about the extreme 'Faith Movement,' but probably one of the worst things that happens is, that it leads to a false hope and then to bondage. Everyone who believes these false doctrines are led to believe that if they have enough faith they can live without pain and suffering and persecution in this life.

This is just the opposite of what the Bible teaches. It says, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12) "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22b) I could give many of verses on these subjects.

These teachers would say to me, if Paul and Steven had had enough faith they would not have had to suffer persecution. I told them, Why is it then that Jesus stood up when Steven was being stoned to death? No, Steven and Paul were doing exactly what God wanted them to do, and that was to preach the Word and be a witness for the Him!

You might say why did you put this information into a study of 2 Corinthians? Well, I will tell you why. That is because this teaching is mainly about 'self, materialism and money.' Even though the 'Faith Teachers' do teach a lot about healing, their main teaching seems to be about you becoming rich. So a lot of emphasis is put on giving to these leaders of the movement, so you can get rich. (I wonder who they really want to be rich.) This teaching in itself, is contrary to the Word of God.

"Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5) That is not to say that there are not some rich Christians, but if they are living for the Lord, their goal is not the riches, but to serve the Lord. So as we give to the Lord's work, let us do it for the right motive, and stand up against this false teaching that says 'give to get.'

Scripture goes on to say, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content."

"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of*

evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1Timothy 6:6-10)

It is true that God does bless those who serve Him, and sometimes it is not only spiritual blessings, but also sometimes physical blessing. However, let us in turn give that back to the Lord Jesus and His work, not to some self proclaimed prophets or 'Bible teachers' who just want our money.

Now as we move away from this area of giving, let us give for the right motive, "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35b)

In our outline we are at: III Christian Minister Chapters 10-13

Chapter 10

(1-6) "Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-who in presence *am* lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. 2 But I beg *you* that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

(1-2) "Note the emphatic **Now I Paul myself-** as if anticipating the defensive role he now assumes against those who would impugn his apostolic authority. On **in presence**, see 10:10; 1 Cor 2:3, 4. Paul says he will act sternly **against some** at Corinth who were imputing worldly standards to him (cf. 13:2, 10). (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

(3-4) "Our Weapons. We are living in the flesh in this material world, but our warfare isn't of this world. Our war is in the spirit realm, and our weapons are mighty spiritual weapons. Our problem is that we keep getting tangled up in battles of the flesh; and when we get in the flesh, we are defeated. If we get in the flesh, Satan has an advantage over us.

"If we remain in the Spirit, the advantage is ours, and we can't lose. We are indestructible if we wear the whole armor of God ([Eph. 6:10-18](#))." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

"war after the flesh Paul often used a military metaphor to describe the Christian life (2 Timothy 2:3,4). In this verse, 'flesh' is not used theologically, but physiologically, referring to our natural human abilities. We 'walk' like all natural men physically, but our warfare is conducted in the realm of the spirit, not with swords or guns.

"not carnal Our weapons are not 'fleshly' weapons but spiritual. In fact, Paul enumerates them in Ephesians 6:13-18 as 'the whole armor of God,' namely truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. All too often, Christians and their churches try to do God's work in ways that appeal to the flesh-great organizations, Christian entertainment, human wisdom and philosophy, beautiful facilities, glamorous advertising, and the like.

"These are 'carnal' weapons, not the weapons provided by the Lord, and those who use them are in danger of eventual spiritual defeat, even if outward appearances seem impressive." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

I would just like to say a hearty amen to these statements of Dr Morris. It seems, today, that the Church has tried to take on everything that the world does. The world raises money by fancy advertizing, so we think in the Church we can do this too. Whatever happened to praying about what we need?

"We must face the fact that (with all our mass evangelism; with all our compromised, theatrical presentation of the Gospel; with all the billions spent on radio and television preaching) we have not made a dent in the moral corruption of the nations. *We are still a valley of dry bones* . More than ever we need to sing with Bessie Porter Head:

O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy Church with life and pow'r;
O Breath of Life, come cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy Church to meet this hour.
Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord-the world is waiting!
Equip Thy Church to spread the Light.

By Bessie Porter Head

"Let the fires go out in the boiler room of the church, and the place will still look smart and clean, but it will be cold. The Prayer Room in the church is the boiler room for its spiritual life.

"When holy passion has ceased to move the intercessor in the Prayer Room, coldness ensues, power is lost, and mortification sets in. The place still looks viable, but it is no longer a birthplace of souls.

"God ignores the *cold* church. He rejoices in the church *hot* with the Spirit's presence. He vomits the *lukewarm* church from His holy mouth.

"The lukewarm church in the Revelation was called 'Laodicean.' I believe this name designates it as a church of mob rule, where everything was decided by popular opinion and majority votes, and not by prayer and fasting. It may have had packed church business meetings, but sparsely attended prayer meetings. (Is it like this in your church?).

"Today, deacons and elders are usually 'men of standing.' In the New Testament Church they were 'men of kneeling'- praying men. Who checks the prayer lives of the men to be elected? Usually no one. In other words, we will choose whom we want and hope that the Lord will mercifully bless us.

"Our spiritual immaturity never shows up more than in our lack of praying, be it alone or in a church prayer meeting. Let twenty percent of the choir members fail to turn up for rehearsal and the choir master is offended. Let twenty percent of the church members turn up for a prayer meeting, and the pastor is elated."

"Why revival- *God's way*? Because we have tried every other way. Because, instead of healing the cripple at the gate of the church (in the Acts story he was a type of the crippled world), the 'Church' is now crippled and asking alms of them to carry on the Lord's work. How amazing! 'In God We Trust' may be on our coins, but who does trust Him? Do the radio and television preachers trust Him for their needs? If they did they would never drag His name before a cynical world in their tearful begging sprees.

"I often am asked to pray for the healing of the nation. No! I am praying for the healing of the *Church*. Then the healing of America, Britain and other nations will follow. As the Church goes, so goes the world! (*Revival God's Way A Message for the Church* by Leonard Ravenhill)

(5-6) imaginations The spiritual panoply of weapons ordained by God may not appear impressive outwardly to a humanistically oriented society, but it is only these that can pull down the strong holds of Satan in this world, casting down the humanistic 'reasonings' (literal meaning of 'imagination') of the leaders of this world's educational and political systems. Otherwise, the enemy will 'spoil' us-that is, defeat us and despoil us of the carnal weapons we have tried to us. (*The Defender' Study Bible*)

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

"**every thought** 'Thought' here is the same word as 'mind.' Judicious use of our spiritual weapons- especially the one offensive weapon, 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17) will result in opening the blinded 'minds' " whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." (2 Corinthians 4:4) of those who have rejected God and His Word and capture them for Christ.

(7-11) "Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's. 8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed— 9 lest I seem to terrify you by letters. 10 "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." 11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present."

(7) "In this context, being **Christ's** means more than merely belonging to Him. It means being His servant or His disciple (see v. 8).

(8) "Paul had **authority** as an apostle for edification, a word that means 'building up.' His exhortation in his letter was aimed at correcting abuses, not the **destruction** of the church. The word **destruction** means 'tearing down.' Paul repeated his authorization at the end of his letter (13:10)." (*Nelson Study Bible*)

(10) weak "Paul was evidently small and unimpressive in appearance, though certainly not a weakling in view of the many hardships he had to overcome. Neither was he an eloquent orator. He probably would seem outwardly to compare very unfavorably to many charismatic preachers and evangelists today.

"Nevertheless, by both his spiritual power and his intellectual ability, he was probably the most effective missionary who ever lived. And his writings, of course, the so-called Pauline Epistles, are indeed 'weighty

and powerful' - among the greatest ever written, even by secular standards." (*The New Defender's Study Bible*)

(12-18) For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13 We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us-a sphere which especially includes you.

14 For we are not overextending ourselves (as though *our authority* did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; 15 not boasting of things beyond measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but having hope, *that* as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, 16 to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.

17 But "*he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.*" 18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends."

(12) "Paul says that it is unwise to compare ourselves among ourselves. It is so easy for me to get complacent and overlook my failures and sins if I am looking at others. I may think, I am wrong, but at least I'm not as wrong as he is.

"On the other hand, if I compare myself with others, I may also judge myself too harshly, thinking I don't measure up to what someone else has accomplished. It is all foolishness.

"If we judge ourselves by comparing ourselves to Jesus, we all fall so short that, we need Him constantly. And that is the point. Any other comparison is meaningless." (*The Word For Today Bible* by Chuck Smith)

"**They**, Paul's critics, commended themselves (see 3:1), measured themselves by their own personal opinions, and compared themselves with others. Contrast Paul's advice to esteem others above oneself (Phil. 2:3, 4)

(13-15) "Paul boasted only within the **sphere** of ministry God had given him, but that sphere included the Corinthians. By implication, Paul's critics were boasting of what they had not worked at or cultivated, perhaps the results of Paul's ministry in Corinth."

(16) regions beyond you: In the Book of Romans, which Paul wrote around this time, he said his ambition was to preach the gospel in Spain (Rom. 15:24) (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

"**regions beyond.** Paul earnestly desired that the gospel should be preached, as Christ had commanded, to 'the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8)

(17-18) He that glories Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty *man* glory in his might, nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I *am* the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24) ".that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.*" (1 Corinthians 1:31) (*The New Defender's Study Bible*)

Chapter 11

(1-4) Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly-and indeed you do bear with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted-you may well put up with it!

(1) "my foolishness[NIV]. [little folly NKJV, my folly KJV] In order to compare his own ministry with that of the false apostles who have invaded the Corinthian church, Paul has to speak about himself, which inevitably seems like foolish boasting." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(12) "espoused [betrothed] you. The true church of Christ, encompassing all who have received Him as Savior and Lord [look at our article the Holy Catholic Church], is also called the bride of Christ. Paul, as the spiritual 'father' of the Corinthian Christians, desired to present his 'daughter' pure and whole to the heavenly Bridegroom when He comes to claim her and take her to His Father's house, where He has prepared 'mansions' for her (John 14:2-3).

"There are numerous other references to this unique relation of the church to Christ (John 3:29; Ephesians 5:31-32; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2, 9), as well as numerous Old Testament references to Israel as the wife of Jehovah (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19 [Song of Solomon]).

"chaste virgin. The New Testament writers use the engagement relationship of the bride to the bridegroom as a type of the ideal relation of the church to Christ, which proves unequivocally that each human bride should come to her marriage as a chaste virgin; the same is equally true of the bridegroom. This is surely the best foundation for a godly home. God can and does forgive repentant sinners, but it is far better-especially in marriage-if this sin has never been committed at all.

(3) "serpent beguiled [deceived] Eve. Paul here asserts and confirms that the Genesis record of Eve's temptation and fall is true and historical, not allegorical. The 'serpent' in Genesis is explicitly identified as Satan, the arch deceiver (note 11:14), who turned Adam's bride against her Maker, in similar fashion to what he was doing at Corinth, using false apostles (instead of a serpent's body) to turn His espoused bride away from the soon-coming Bridegroom. Note also Revelation 12:9.

(4) "another Jesus. It means little that a preacher or teacher talks about 'Jesus,' for false prophets and false teachers have always invoked His name whenever it suited their purposes, and they still do. There is the 'buddy' Jesus of country music, the socialist Jesus of liberal theology, the esoteric Jesus of the New Age, and the ritualistic Jesus of sacramentalism, but none of these Jesus-figures is the Savior. The true Jesus is the Creator of the universe, the Word made flesh, the one Sacrifice for sins forever, the resurrected Lord and our coming King.

"Another [different] spirit. There are many evil spirits at large in the world who would seek to counterfeit the Holy Spirit in the believer's experience if they could. We must 'try the spirits.' "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." (1 John 4:2)

"Another [different] gospel. Paul warned against believing any man or even any angel who came preaching some other gospel than the true saving gospel of Christ which he had preached "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9) That gospel includes the fullness of the person and work of Christ, from eternity to eternity." (The New Defender's Study Bible)

"Simplicity in Christ. The gospel is so simple. Just 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved' (Acts 16:31) Just believe that Jesus came from God, took my sin, died in my place, and rose again. Simple!

"But it is amazing how men can complicate something so simple. It is amazing all the requirements they can add. You have to keep the law. You have to be circumcised. You need to be baptized. You need to pray three hours a day. You need to tithe. They make it so complicated. Don't lose the simplicity of the gospel." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

(5-11) For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6 Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.

7 "Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!"

(5) "those 'super-apostles [NIV].' [eminent apostles NKJV] Paul's sarcastic way of referring to the false apostles who had infiltrated the Corinthian church and were in reality not apostles at all, except in their own arrogantly inflated opinion of themselves (cf. 10:12)

(6) "I may not be a trained speaker. Using the skills, references and flourishes of professional rhetoric (see note on 10:10). *I do have knowledge.* As the Corinthian believers well knew, Paul had knowledge of Christ that was true, powerful and God-given, totally distinct from the powerless human wisdom the false teachers were attempting to deceive them with (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-10).

(7) "free of charge. Another slanderous criticism made by Paul's adversaries was that his refusal to accept payment for his instruction proved that it was worth nothing. This accusation at the same time helped to cloak their own grasping character, since their method of operation, like that of first-century traveling philosophers and religious teachers, was to demand payment for their 'professional' services.

"Paul, his enemies said, was lowering himself and committing a sin by breaking the rule that a teacher should receive payment in proportion to the worth of his performance.

(8) "robbed other churches. [The Macedonians were poorer than the Corinthians (8:2). *New Spirit Filled Life Bible*] Accepted freely given support from established congregations.

(9) "burden. A financial liability... This reinforced his teaching that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a free gift. *Brothers who came from Macedonia.* They brought gifts from the churches in that province (Acts 18:5), particularly from the church at Philippi (Philippians 4:15).

"*I will keep on.* Paul will not be deterred from presenting the gospel without charge. Actually, this practice made his adversaries look bad. They were greedy for gain, and it would have suited them better if Paul had been willing to accept money for his teaching, for this would have put him on a level with their practice." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(12-15) "But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. 13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."

(12-13) "Many centuries later, the cast of characters has changed, but the story remains the same. The church continues to be infiltrated by those who advocate unbiblical ideas. Many of these present-day 'false teachers' appear to be very sincere. They speak with great passion and eloquence.

"Their ideas seem to make perfect sense. But we must exercise extreme caution. The lucrative potential of modern mass communications has attracted hucksters who tickle the 'itching ears' (2 Timothy 4:3) of their audiences in an attempt to profit personally. Every message must be weighed against the Word of God.

"And what is a church body to do if it detects false teachers in its midst? On this issue, the New Testament is clear: Those who foster division within the church by persistently advocating unbiblical beliefs are to be removed from fellowship (6:14; Romans 16:17, 18; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:9-11; 2 John 9-11). There is to be no toleration. When unaddressed, false doctrine is like a cancer that permeates a body, weakening it, and ultimately bringing about its demise." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

Just to show you how far away from the truth of God's Word we have fallen in our times here are some startling statistics. "Here is a report of a survey of 10,000 Protestant **ministers** conducted by Sociologist Jeffery Hadden; 7,441 responded to the questions.

"Here are the horrifying statistics. Read them, then wonder why God is grieved with our spiritual life. (I am indebted to *Christ for the Nations*, May 1982, for this information, Leonard Ravenhill in his book *Revival God's Way A Message for the Church.*)

Jesus born of a virgin?

60% of Methodists said "No"; 49% of Presbyterians said "No"; 44% of Episcopalians said "No"; 19% of American Lutherans said "No"

Jesus the Son of God?

82% of Methodists said "No"; 81% of Presbyterians said "No"; 89% of Episcopalians said "No"; 57% of American Lutherans said "No"

Bible-inspired Word of God?

82% of Methodists said "No"; 81% of Presbyterians said "No"; 89% of Episcopalians said "No"; 57% of American Lutherans said "No"

Existence of Satan?

62% of Methodists said "No"; 47% of Presbyterians said "No"; 37% of Episcopalians said "No"; 33% of Baptists said "No"; 14% of American Lutherans said "No"

Physical resurrection of Jesus?

51% of Methodists said "No"; 35% of Presbyterians said "No"; 30% of Episcopalians said "No"; 33% of Baptists said "No"; 13% of American Lutherans said "No"

If this is what **pastors** believed in 1982, how much worse is it today?!

(13) "Things aren't always as they appear to be. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. He can make himself look very attractive. And if he can do it, Paul wasn't surprised that some of these false prophets could also be very convincing.

"You can't accurately judge people by outward appearances. Satan is sneaky and deliberately deceptive, and so are many of his followers. They look really slick until you inspect their fruit." (*The Word for Today Bible*)

(14) **angel of light.** "Satan originally was the highest of all the angels (Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-15), and he still has great authority (note Jude 9) and power to produce great 'signs and wonders.' These, however, are 'lying wonders' (2 Thessalonians 2:9), intended, 'if it were possible [to] deceive the very elect' (Matthew 24:24).

"One must always test such pretenders by their faithfulness to the Word of God and the full deity and sinless humanity of Jesus Christ, as well as their genuine Christian character and behavior. It was such a false 'angel of light' who has deceived many founders of false religions [Mohammed of the Muslims, Joseph Smith of the Mormons, Joseph Rutherford and Nathan Knorr of the Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.]

(15) **ministers of righteousness.** "There are many who profess to be servants (i.e., 'ministers') of righteousness, even appearing on occasion to work miracles, but these in themselves prove nothing. "He that does the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21)-that is the test, according to Jesus. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? 23 And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:22-23).

(16-21) "I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. 17 What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. 19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise! 20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you*, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To *our* shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold-I speak foolishly-I am bold also."

Their works. "Perhaps here Paul was also alluding to those Judaizers who were demanding that Christians adhere to the righteousness of the law in order to attain salvation, undermining the great doctrine of salvation by grace. But those who seek salvation by works must then be judged by their works, and none can measure up to the divine standard (Galatians 2:16). All who are judged 'according to their works' shall be 'cast into the lake of fire.' Revelation 20:13, 15).

(17) "**not after the Lord.(KJV) not according to the Lord (NKJV)**, Paul is not denying divine inspiration of his words at this point, but simply stating that boasting of one's pedigree and achievements was not normal and proper behavior for a Christian, even for an apostle. It is evident throughout this whole passage (11:16ff) that it was painfully embarrassing for him to have to recite his own qualifications in this way.

"The Corinthians had rendered it necessary, however, by receiving the teachings of the fake apostles as superior to those of Paul and submitting themselves to their undeserved and even despotic leadership, primarily because of their professed superior qualifications. The apostle Paul surely has set an example here for other true Christian leaders.

"Boasting of one's achievements and experiences is ill becoming to a Christian, the only exception being when it is necessary, for the sake of the testimony, to rebut the false claims of those who are thereby deceiving others and keeping them from believing God's Word." (*The New Defender's Study Bible*)

(18-20) "The false apostles were boasting **according to the flesh**, that is, they measured themselves by their own standards rather than by God's. Unfortunately, the Corinthians were listening to them." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

(22-29) "**Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?-I speak as a fool-I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. 25**

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness,

"in perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation?*"

(23) "this remarkable catalog of Paul's sufferings endured in preaching the gospel (23-33) certainly demonstrates the fulfillment and reality of his original call (Acts 9:15). It is only a representative list, not including all of his sufferings as described in Acts. On the other hand, it includes a number of items not mentioned in Acts, showing that the Book of Acts [Look at our Acts Study] was not written as a biography of Paul or other apostles but rather to chronicle the spreading of the gospel in the early years." (*The New Defender's Study Bible*)

(24-30) "Paul had been the victim of a lot of negative talk about him. People had been putting him down by questioning his credentials, his background, his motives, and even his teaching style. [As pastors or Christian workers today, expect the same or worse.]

Today and throughout history Christians have suffered for the Lord. Most often those who have been persecuted have been the ministers of the Gospel:

THE MARTYR'S CROWN

"The saints of old were beaten, tried, condemned and even crucified. These martyr men [and women] beat not retreat when flames were licking at their feet. They saw the tyrant's brandished steel, but still they offered no appeal.

"They struck no bargain for their lives, for their children or their wives. All slowly roasted in the flames while angels wrote each of their names within a book God calls His own, to be proclaimed before His throne.

"Then we shall know of these renown when each receives his [her] martyr's crown, when God shall say to these, 'Well done. You ran the race, pressed on, and won, when in that race men said, 'Insane.' But now I gladly own your name, now you are home! Come dwell with Me in joy through all eternity." (*Revival God's Way A Message for the Church* by Leonard Ravenhill)

To check out some martyrs go to: [Voice of the Martyrs](#) and [Gospel for Asia](#).

(30-33) "If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands."

"In response, though Paul said he was being forced to boast, he didn't brag about all his converts or all the churches he had started or the books he had written. Instead, he chose to boast about all the problems and sufferings he had endured. What could they say to that? He had certainly paid his dues." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

"**Hunger and thirst** means involuntarily going without food and drink; **fastings** means voluntarily going without food for the sake of the ministry (see 6:5). Infirmity means 'weakness.' Paul explains his weakness further in 12:7-10.

"**Aretas the king:** Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40), the father-in-law of Herod Antipas, was king of Nabatea, a kingdom whose capital was Petra. Nabatea included the city of Damascus before the city was

incorporated into the Roman province of Syria. Aretas was able to appoint a governor over Damascus because the Emperor Caligula (A.D. 37-41) gave Aretas control over the city. "Escaping from Damascus in a basket was Paul's example of boasting in his weakness (30)." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

Chapter 12

(1-4) "It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows-such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows- 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

(1) "Paul prepared to boast about **visions and revelations** he received from God, possibly to counter similar claims by the false teachers, but he set them in contrast to the trials he had suffered in his ministry (vv. 7-10).

(2) "It becomes apparent later in the passage (see vv. 5-7) that Paul was writing here about himself, but he modestly presented this experience about **a man in Christ** as if it had happened to someone else." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

"fourteen years ago. This unique experience of Paul may have been when he was stoned to apparent death at Lystra, then recovered, possibly being miraculously resurrected from the dead (Acts 14:19-20).

(3) **"in the body.** Paul had already written about a future bodily rapture into heaven and also about the departure of the soul from the body into heaven (5:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), so both types of events are possible. In this case he was not sure which it was. Perhaps in his visit to heaven he had encountered men in physical bodies (e.g., the Old Testament saints raised after Christ's resurrection-Matthew 27:52-53) and also translated souls awaiting resurrection, and he could not be certain of his own state at the time.

"third heaven. The pagans in many cases believed in seven heavens, but there is no biblical hint of any such thing. It is possible that Paul was translated in time to the future heaven-that is, the new heaven and new earth, the first having been destroyed by water, the second by fire (2 Peter 3:5-13).

"More likely, however, he was translated beyond the heaven of the stars and the heaven of the birds (Genesis 1:15, 20) to the heaven where God's throne is (Job 22:12; Isaiah 14:13), the heaven to which Christ ascended to the right hand of God at His throne (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20).

(4) **paradise.** 'Paradise' with the 'third heaven' (12:2), or more likely some specific part of the third heaven. The word 'paradise' does not occur in the Old Testament, though the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament into Greek did use it to translate 'the garden of Eden.' It occurs only two other times in the New Testament. Christ told the dying thief. "today you will be with Me in 'Paradise.'" (Luke 23:43)

"Also, He told the church at Ephesus, 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' (Revelation 2:7) This statement relates paradise back to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9; 3:22) and also to the future New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:2, 14). We cannot now be dogmatic, but it seems that paradise (perhaps incorporating also the New Jerusalem now

being prepared-John 14:2-3) is that region of the third heaven where all the departed saints are blissfully waiting with Christ, the soon-coming day of His return to earth." (*The New Defender's Bible*)

Now I would like to shift gears for a bit. I would not put a story about a person raised from the dead into my commentary unless I believed it was a true story, first, and second, that it fits with the text. I do believe this is a true story that God intended for me to put right here. The reason I say this is because I believe it was not a coincidence how I came across this true testimony.

We were coming back from my sister's home in Walla Walla, Washington. My grandkids wanted to stop in at the mall in Tri-cities so we did. Marlene and I had time to look around while the grandkids shopped, so we went to a book store. The Lord, I believe, led me to this book at this time that I might share it with you, in this study.

There are many people who have claimed they died and went to heaven, but this is one of the first times I have believed that their experience was really authentic. That is, of course, except for Paul's experience in this passage. He said it was just such an experience, words would not do it justice. Don Piper in this true testimony would tell you the same thing, but he does the best he can to put into words and shows us a little taste of what it is like to be in heaven. Don is a Baptist pastor and he was prayed for by a Baptist pastor.

"On the way home from a conference, Don Piper's car was crushed by a semi that crossed into his lane. Medical personnel said he died instantly. While his body lay lifeless inside the ruins of his car, Piper experienced the glories of heaven, awed by its beauty and music.

"When I died, I didn't flow through a long, dark tunnel. I had no sense of fading away or of coming back. I never felt my body being transported into the light. I heard no voices calling to me or anything else.

"Simultaneous with my last recollection of seeing the bridge and the rain, a light enveloped me, with a brilliance beyond earthly comprehension or description. Only that. In my next moment of awareness, I was standing in heaven.

"Joy pulsed through me as I looked around, and at that moment I became aware of a large crowd of people. They stood in front of a brilliant, ornate gate. I have no idea how far away they were; such things as distance didn't matter.

"As the crowd rushed toward me, I didn't see Jesus, but I did see people I had known. As they surged toward me, I knew instantly that all of them had died during my lifetime. Their presence seemed absolutely natural.

"They rushed toward me, and every person was smiling, shouting, and praising God. Although no one said so, intuitively I knew they were my celestial welcoming committee. It was as if they had all gathered just outside heaven's gate, waiting for me.

"The first person I recognized was Joe Kulbeth, my grandfather. He looked exactly as I remembered him, with his shock of white hair and what I called a big banana nose. He stopped momentarily and stood in front of me. A grin covered his face. I may have called his name, but I'm not sure.

"Donnie!" (That's what my grandfather always called me.) His eyes lit up, and he held out his arms as he took the last steps toward me. He embraced me, holding me tightly. He was once again the robust, strong grandfather I had remembered as a child.

"After being hugged by my grandfather, I don't remember who was second or third. The crowd surrounded me. Some hugged me and a few kissed my cheek, while others pumped my hand. Never had I felt more loved.

"More and more people reached for me and called me by name. I felt overwhelmed by the number of people who had come to welcome me to heaven. There were so many of them, and I had never imagined anyone being as happy as they all were. Their faces radiated a serenity I had never seen on earth. All were full of life and expressed radiant joy.

"Time had no meaning. However, for clarity, I'll relate this experience in terms that refer to time. I saw my great-grandfather, heard his voice, and felt his embrace as he told me how excited he was that I had come to join them. I saw Barry Wilson, who had been my classmate in high school but later drowned in a lake. Barry hugged me, and his smile radiated a happiness I didn't know was possible.

"He and everyone who followed praised God and told me how excited they were to see me and to welcome me to heaven and to the fellowship they enjoyed. Just then, I spotted two teachers who had loved me and often talked to me about Jesus Christ.

"As I walked among them, I became aware of the wide variety of ages-old and young and every age in between. Many of them hadn't known each other on earth, but each had influenced my life in some way. Even though they hadn't met on earth, they seemed to know each other now.

"As I try to explain this, my words seem weak and hardly adequate, because I have to use earthly terms to refer to unimaginable joy, excitement, warmth, and total happiness. Everyone continually embraced me, touched me, spoke to me, laughed, and praised God. This seemed to go on for a long time, but I didn't tire of it.

"My father is one of eleven children. Some of his brothers and sisters had as many as thirteen children. When I was a kid, our family reunions were so huge we rented an entire city park in Monticello, Arkansas. We Pipers are affectionate, with a lot of hugging and kissing whenever we come together.

"None of those earthly family reunions, however, prepared me for the sublime gathering of saints I experienced at the gates of heaven. Those who had gathered at Monticello were some of the same people waiting for me at the gates of heaven. Heaven was many things, but without a doubt, it was the greatest family reunion of all.

"Everything I experienced was like a first-class buffet for the senses. I had never felt such powerful embraces or feasted my eyes on such beauty. Heaven's light and texture defy earthly eyes or explanation. Warm, radiant light engulfed me. As I looked around, I could hardly grasp the vivid, dazzling colors. Every hue and tone surpassed anything I had ever seen.

"With all the heightened awareness of my senses, I felt as if I had never seen, heard, or felt anything so real before. I don't recall that I tasted anything, yet I knew that if I had, that too would have been more glorious than anything I had eaten or drunk on earth.

"The best way I can explain it is to say that I felt as if I were in another dimension. Never, even in my happiest moments, had I ever felt so fully alive. I stood speechless in front of the crowd of loved ones, still trying to take in everything.

"Over and over I heard how overjoyed they were to see me and how excited they were to have me among them. I'm not sure if they actually said the words or not, but I knew they had been waiting and expecting me, yet I also knew that in heaven there is no sense of time passing.

"I wasn't conscious of anything I'd left behind and felt no regrets about leaving family or possessions. It was as if God had removed anything negative or worrisome from my consciousness, and I could only rejoice at being together with these wonderful people.

"They looked exactly as I once knew them-although they were more radiant and joyful than they'd ever been on earth.

"My great-grandmother, Hattie Mann, was Native American. As a child I saw her only after she had developed osteoporosis. Her head and shoulders were bent forward, giving her a humped appearance. I especially remember her extremely wrinkled face. The other thing that stands out in my memory is that she had false teeth-which she didn't wear often.

"Yet when she smiled at me in heaven, her teeth sparkled. I knew they were her own, and when she smiled, it was the most beautiful smile I had ever seen.

"Then I notice something else-she wasn't slumped over. She stood strong and upright, and the wrinkles had been erased from her face. I have no idea what age she was, and I didn't even think about that. As I stared at her beaming face, I sensed that age has no meaning in heaven.

"Age expresses time passing, and there is no time there. All of the people I encountered were the same age they had been the last time I had seen them-except that all the ravages of living on earth had vanished. Even though some of their features may not have been considered attractive on earth, in heaven every feature was perfect, beautiful, and wonderful to gaze at.

"I felt loved-more loved than ever before in my life. They didn't say they loved me. I don't remember what word they spoke. When they gazed at me, I *knew* what the Bible means by perfect love. It emanated from every person who surrounded me.

"I stared at them, and as I did I felt as if I absorbed their love for me. At some point, I looked around and the sight overwhelmed me. Everything was brilliantly intense. Coming out from the gate-a short distance ahead-was a brilliance that was brighter than the light that surrounded us, utterly luminous. As soon as I stopped gazing at the people's faces, I realized that everything around me glowed with a dazzling intensity.

"In trying to describe the scene, words are totally inadequate, because human words can't express the feelings of awe and wonder at what I beheld. Everything I saw glowed with intense brightness. The best I can describe it is that we began to move toward that light.

"No one said it was time to do so, and yet we all started forward at the same time. As I stared ahead, everything seemed to grow taller-like a gentle hill that kept going upward and never stopped. I had expected to see some darkness behind the gate, but as far ahead as I could see, there was absolutely nothing but intense, radiant light.

"A holy awe came over me as I stepped forward. I had no idea what lay ahead, but I sensed that with each step I took, it would grow more wondrous. Then I heard the music. As a young boy I spent a lot of time out in the country and woods. When walking through waist-high dried grass, I often surprised a covey of birds and flushed them out of their nests on the ground.

"A whooshing sound accompanied their wings as they flew away. My most vivid memory of heaven is what I heard. I can only describe it as a holy swoosh of wings. But I'd have to magnify that thousands of times to explain the effect of the sound in heaven.

"It was the most beautiful and pleasant sound I've ever heard, and it didn't stop. It was like a song that goes on forever. I felt awestruck, wanting only to listen. I didn't just hear music. It seemed as if I were part of the music-and it played in and through my body. I stood still, and yet I felt embraced by the sounds.

"As aware as I became of the joyous sounds and melodies that filled the air, I wasn't distracted. I felt as if the heavenly concert permeated every part of my being, and at the same time I focused on everything else around me.

"A second sound remains, even today, the single most vivid memory I have of my entire heavenly experience. I call it music, but it differed from anything I had ever heard or ever expect to hear on the earth. The melodies of praise filled the atmosphere. The nonstop intensity and endless variety overwhelmed me.

"The praise was unending, but the most remarkable thing to me was that hundreds of songs were being sung at the same time-all of them worshipping God. As I approached the large, magnificent gate, I heard them from every direction and realized that each voice praised God.

"I write *voice*, *but* it was more than that. Some sounded instrumental, but I wasn't sure-and I wasn't concerned. Praise was everywhere, and all of it was musical, yet comprised of melodies and tones I'd never experienced before.

"Hallelujah!" "Praise!" "Glory to God!" "Praise to the King!" Such words rang out in the midst of all the music. I don't know if angels were singing them or if they came from humans. I felt so awestruck and caught up in the heavenly mood that I didn't look around.

"My heart filled with the deepest joy I've ever experienced. I wasn't a participant in the worship, yet I felt as if my heart ran out with the same kind of joy and exuberance.

"If we played three CDs of praise at the same time, we'd have a cacophony of noise that would drive us crazy. This was totally different. Every sound blended, and each voice or instrument enhanced the others.

"As strange as it may seem, I could clearly distinguish each song. It sounded as if each hymn of praise was meant for me to hear as I moved inside the gates.

"Many of the old hymns and choruses I had sung at various times in my life were part of the music-along with hundreds of songs I had never heard before. Hymns of praise, modern sounding choruses, and ancient chants filled my ears and brought not only a deep peace but the greatest feeling of joy I've ever experienced.

"The celestial tunes surpassed any I had ever heard. I couldn't calculate the number of songs-perhaps thousands-offered up simultaneously, and yet there was no chaos, because I had the capacity to hear each on and discern the lyrics and melody.

"Obviously, I can't really know how God feels, but I find joy and comfort in thinking that He must be pleased and blessed by the continuous sounds of praise." I will leave the book right there because I don't want to spoil it for you. Please get it and read the rest, it will truly encourage your soul! (*90 MINUTES IN HEAVEN* by Don Piper, Revell Grand Rapids, Michigan)

(5-7) "Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. 6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure."

"**Thorn** means 'splinter,' 'stake,' or 'something pointed.' **Flesh** can refer to the body or to the sinful nature. Three basic suggested interpretations of the thorn are as follows: (1) If flesh is a reference to the body, then it is a physical ailment like an earache, headache, eye trouble, epilepsy, or recurrent fever. (2) If flesh is a reference to the fallen nature, then the thorn could be a temptation.

"(3) If the expression is figurative, it could refer to persecution or opposition. Most commentators interpret it as a physical ailment. Many suggest that it was eye trouble, on the basis of Galatians 4:15. **Messenger of Satan:** God permitted Satan to afflict Paul as He did Job (see Job 1; 2). **Buffet** means 'to strike with the fist' (see Matthew 26:67). Paul's thorn was a painful, humiliating experience given to prevent pride." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

(8-10) "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

"Paul had been given a 'thorn in the flesh.' This was probably a physical malady, perhaps an eye ailment, but we don't know exactly what it was. It was bothering him so much that he continued to ask God to heal him, and God didn't.

"Instead, God said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Paul went on to say that he had learned 'when I am weak, then I am strong.'

"Sometimes we find that we will never truly experience the strength of God until we first experience our own weakness in some glaring way. Do you want power? It might come through infirmities." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

"Paul's prayers and spiritual gifts had brought physical healing to many others, yet he could not heal himself. God is often pleased to answer prayers for healing, but it must always depend upon the will and purpose of God for the individual. It may be best in many cases not to heal in God's infinite wisdom and in the light of eternity, and we must be content if that is so." (*The Defender's Bible*)

"[I]t is important to note that Jesus' answer was not seen by Paul as punitive; nor did it cause him to resign himself to buffeting with a defeatist attitude. Rather, it affirmed in Paul that whenever Satan buffets him (either directly as the destructive adversary or indirectly as God's controlled agent to bring about character development) he can **boast** in his **infirmities** because Jesus' **grace** and **strength** will be **sufficient** to enable him to continue in his apostolic ministry.

"Neither the thorn, any messenger of Satan, nor any character-refining test from God will cause him to cease serving God. He can therefore **take pleasure. for when** he is personally **weak, then** he can be **strong** in Jesus." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*) Please check out link [Joni and Friends](#) for more on how God could take someone who is paralyzed and use her to win thousands to Himself.

(11-13) "I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. 13 For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!"

(11-13) "The Corinthians **compelled** Paul to boast because they listened to the false apostles (11:4) and were taken in by them 11:12). When Paul established the church in Corinth, he performed the signs of an **apostle**, miracles or supernatural evidences that proved his authority as an apostle (Acts 14:3) "Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

"What many would list first in an assertion of spiritual authority, Paul mentioned last and did not elaborate, since the Corinthians had witnessed them." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

(14-15) "Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."

(14-15) "**for the third time I am ready to come:** Paul's first visit to Corinth was on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1). Because of Paul's mention of a "painful visit" in 2:1, some consider Paul's second visit as occurring sometime when he was staying in Ephesus and before he wrote this letter (Acts 19:1). Others discount a second visit before this time. They insist that *ready* in this verse indicates that Paul

had prepared to come to Corinth, but did not make the trip (see 1:15, 16, 23; 2:1 for evidence of this). He promised not to be **burdensome**, that is, to take financial support from them." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

"I Will Be Spent For You. Paul was not ministering to the Corinthians so that he could get something out of it. He said that he'd do it at his own expense, even if it cost him his life. His reason was his love for them, even though it seemed like the more he loved them, the less they loved him.

"How different this attitude is from what is typical in so many ministries today, where gimmicks and fund-raising are all designed to separate the people from their money. Paul said, 'I'm not seeking your money; I'm seeking you!'" (*The Word For Today Bible* by Chuck Smith)

Not always is it the pastors who are causing the problems, like those who are greedy for money, as Pastor Church Smith said. I would just like to say here, since we are in the part of the outline on **Christian Minister**, chapters 10-13, this is the type of thing, also, a lot of pastors are faced with today. That is, congregations that don't seem to be satisfied very long with pastors. They seem to want to go on to 'greener' pastures, in other words take another pastor.

So today pastor, you need to be aware of this as you look at congregations. Don't expect that all will be rosy, look at what Paul went through, and you couldn't find a more Spirit filled minister. So it is not always your fault if people don't accept you or your message. Realize that we are living in the last days. There is also the 'falling away,' you may even be in one of those churches that we mentioned earlier, that are not even believing the basics of the Word of God. If this is the case, how long do you think you will last if you do teach the Word?

16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! 17 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

(16-18) "Earlier Paul said he was "not walking in craftiness" (4:2). He also pointed out that Satan was deceitful (11:3) and that the false apostles were like Satan (11:13, 14). Now he sarcastically echoes his critics charge that he was **being crafty**. But how did he trick them? He tricked them into not supporting him. Through sarcasm, Paul was vindicating himself against the charge of both trickery and fraud.

"Apparently **Titus** was being implicated through the false apostles accusations because Paul had recommended Titus for the collection task (8:16, 17). However they did not have any evidence against Titus. He was above reproach." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

Chapter 13

(1-4) "This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." 2 I have told you before, and foretold as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare- 3 since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4 For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you."

(2-4) "The third time has been interpreted two different ways. Those who hold that Paul had visited Corinth twice before writing this letter take this statement at face value, that Paul had been there twice and was now ready to come a third time. Those who say that Paul had been to Corinth only once point to 12:14 and say that he was prepared to come again but did not actually do so.

"told you before: In 1 Corinthians, Paul warned against sexual immorality (see 1 Cor. 6:12). By writing this letter, he was warning them a second time (see 12:21). **Not spare** means he would confront them if necessary.

"Paul would confront those who were sinning (v. 2) since the Corinthians were seeking **a proof of Christ speaking** in him. Apparently Paul's critics claimed that an apostle should be a strong individual. Paul was saying that when he came again he would be strong.

"For indicates that Paul was going to explain how Christ, who is strong, could be speaking through Paul, who was weak. As Christ appeared to be weak when he was crucified, but was raised by **the power of God**, so Paul was weak, but by the power of God he would live with Christ in strength toward them. Paul was not speaking of the future resurrection but of his next visit." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

(5-6) "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified."

(5) **Test Yourselves.** "There were people in Corinth who were doing things that are totally out of character for a child of God. Many of them had been attacking Paul. So Paul gave them a good piece of advice. 'Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.'

"There are many people who are living lives of sin, while believing themselves to be Christians. How important it is that we each examine ourselves! Are we really in the faith? Is the evidence of regeneration flowing forth from our lives?" (*The Word For Today Bible*)

I believe personally that when it is all said and done, many who think they are Christians will find out to their horror that they were not even saved. Imagine a person thinking all their lives that they were saved and then waking up in hell! There are so many people in churches today who claim to be Christians, but their life doesn't show it. If anything they are a hindrance to the Gospel because they are such poor testimonies.

Then there are those, sadly, who are in a church which claims Jesus but they don't even believe the basic doctrines of the Word of God. The Scripture says: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **having a form of godliness but denying its power.**

"And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these

also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was." (2 Timothy 3:1-9)

"Paul here reminds the Corinthians and us that it is quite possible for a man or woman to profess Christ and salvation, yet still be unsaved. They may even deceive themselves into thinking that such a profession has saved them.

"Therefore, we need to examine ourselves, to prove ourselves. The sure proof is the realization that Christ is indwelling us by the Holy Spirit, resulting in godly lives and glad acceptance of all the revealed Word of God, as inspired by the Holy Spirit."

Reprobates (KJV) Disqualified (NKJV) "A 'reprobate' is one who has failed a proof test. It does behoove anyone who is doubting and disobeying God's Word to carefully examine the reality of the professed conversion to Christ. Every professing Christian needs to 'give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1:10). (*The New Defender's Bible*)

(7-10) "Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction."

(10) "**Edification, Not Destruction.** Paul was telling the Corinthian Christians some difficult things by letter so that they could absorb it, pray about it, and deal with it, before he got there in person. He wanted to build them up, not to destroy them, so they would have something to celebrate about when he arrived.

"Sometimes God has a tough message to deliver to us, and it hurts. But He is always only hurting us to keep us from hurting ourselves even more. He is trying to build us up, but some demolition may be necessary first." (*The Word For Today Bible*)

(11-14) "Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

"Here, as in other passages, **farewell** no doubt means "rejoice" (Phil. 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:16). Paul's concluding benediction invokes the blessing of the triune God: **grace** from **the Lord Jesus Christ** (see 8:9), the **love of God** (v. 11), and the **communion of the Holy Spirit**.

"At the end of his letter, Paul identifies the solution to many of the Corinthians problems. The Holy Spirit, who dwelled in each of them, could empower them to live righteously. Furthermore the Spirit could reconcile them to each other. They could love and encourage each other instead of fighting each other (12:20). They needed God's grace, not selfishness; God's love, not anger; and communion, not conflict." (*The Nelson Study Bible*)

"A Trinitarian Benediction. Paul ended this book by referring to the three members of the Godhead. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.' Three persons, but one God. They all work together, but they are distinct from each other. Do I understand it? Not even close. Do I believe it? Absolutely!" (*The Word For Today Bible* by Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel)

"This is the only one of Paul's Epistles which he closes with such a full Trinitarian benediction. Nevertheless, it fully reveals his faith in the trinity of the Godhead, a doctrine absolutely unique to Christianity among all the varied religions and philosophies of the world. It is also a doctrine vital to the true Christian life, for each Person is vitally involved in the creation, redemption, guidance, and ultimate glorification of each believer." (*The New Defender's Study Bible* by Dr. Henry M. Morris)

MY PRAYER FOR PREACHERS

"Eternal Father, In the majesty of [Your] glory, look down in mercy on these men. As they fall before [You] in prayer, be pleased to fall upon them in power! As they enter their seclusion as preachers, may they emerge from it as prophets.

"According to Your promise, give them a new heart. According to Your Holy Word, put a new spirit within them. Anoint their eyes with holy eye salve that they may see what [before] they have not seen.

"Unstop their ears that they may hear Your voice in a way You could not previously speak to them. Touch their lips with a live coal from the altar of eternity that they may step back into time like men who have tasted the powers of the world to come. Grant that their theology may become almost a theophany.

"In these days of Noah-like society, when the earth again is corrupt before [You] and when violence has become a way of life, and sexual immorality a sport; when iniquity is legislated and unborn babies are mutilated in the womb; in this dread hour, challenging [You] to judge us, grant these men a compassion and a passion, motivated by the love of [Your] Son, for doomed humanity.

"We tremble as we see the over-blest, over-fed, over-come nations wallow in sin on the brink of destruction; [a]s we see that the law of the day is lawlessness, the faith of the day is faithlessness, the philosophy of the day is hopelessness, the evident condition of the Church is powerlessness.

"In this unprecedented state of moral anarchy and spiritual debility, [l]et these men not dare to see the faces of men again until they are renewed in the Holy [Spirit]. If these men are not the men to shake the nation before The King comes, then in mercy find such men to shake earth and hell, and fill heaven with praise that He has seen of the travail of His soul to His satisfaction.

"These things I ask in the name of and for the glory of [your] only begotten Son, the only Savior of men, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen." (*Revival God's Way A Message for the Church* by Leonard Ravenhill)

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