

2 Corinthians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus through the will of God,¹ and brother Timothy to the gathering in Corinth,² along with all those who are set apart in Achaia,³ **1:2** grace and shalom to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.⁴

1:3 Let me express the greatest admiration for God and the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah,⁵ the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,⁶ **1:4** who comforts us in the midst of all our suffering, so that we are able to comfort those who are in every kind of suffering with the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.⁷

1:5 For just as the sufferings that the Messiah experienced are plentiful in our lives,⁸ in the same way our comfort is plentiful in the light of the Messiah.⁹ **1:6** And if we are suffering, it is for the sake of your comfort and salvation.¹⁰ If we are being comforted, it is for the sake of your being comforted, that has its effect in your patiently enduring the same kind of sufferings that we also suffer.¹¹ **1:7** In addition, our expectation for you is certain,¹² because we know that just as you are participants in sufferings, likewise also you are participants in comfort.¹³

1:8 We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning our suffering that occurred in Asia—that we felt overwhelmed beyond our strength to the point that we despaired even of staying alive.¹⁴ **1:9** Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves¹⁵ with the express purpose that we not trust in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead,¹⁶ **1:10** who has rescued us from such a great threat of death and will rescue us.¹⁷ It is in Him that we have hoped, because, indeed, He will yet rescue us,¹⁸ **1:11** while you also assist us with your prayers,¹⁹ so that the gift to us may result in many being grateful through the many prayers on our behalf.²⁰

1:12 You see, our reason to boast is this, the testimony of our understanding about ourselves, that by means of single-minded resolve and purity of motive from God, and not by means of worldly wisdom, but by means of the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.²¹ **1:13** We certainly are not writing anything to you but either those things that you recognize as familiar or those things that you truly understand.²² And I certainly expect that you yourselves will understand them until the end,²³ **1:14** just as you also have understood us up until now, that we are your reason for boasting, just as you also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.²⁴

1:15 Indeed, on the basis of this confidence, we were formerly planning to come to you, so that you could have double the grace,²⁵ **1:16** that is, to pass through you to Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and to be sent on our way by you to Judea.²⁶ **1:17** Therefore, after I planned this, I did not treat the matter frivolously, did I? Or the things that I am planning, am I planning them according to the world's methodologies that stem from man's moral depravity, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no?²⁷

1:18 Instead, God is a believer that our message to you is not yes and no,²⁸ **1:19** because he who really belongs to God, the Son, Jesus the Messiah,²⁹ who was proclaimed among you through us, through me, Silvanus, and Timothy, did not become yes and no, but he has become and continues to be yes because of Him.³⁰ **1:20** As many promises of God as there are, they have become yes because of him.³¹ Therefore, also through him the Amen to God is for the purpose of His glory through us.³²

1:21 Again, He who establishes us along with you for the purpose of the Anointed One and has anointed us is God,³³ **1:22** who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.³⁴

1:23 I am calling on God as witness to my inner motivation, that, in order to spare you, I did not come to Corinth,³⁵ **1:24** because we are not being domineering over your belief. Instead, we are fellow-workers of your joy, for you have stood and continue to stand by means of your belief.³⁶

2:1 I reached a decision myself on this—not to come to you again in sorrow,³⁷ **2:2** because, if I am making you sorrowful, indeed who is the one who makes me happy except the one who was made sorrowful apart from me.³⁸ **2:3** And I wrote this very thing, in order that, when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice, because I had confidence in all of you that my joy has its source in all of you.³⁹ **2:4** With great difficulty and distress of heart, I wrote to you through many tears, not so that you would be made to grieve, but so that you would know the love that I have especially for you.⁴⁰

2:5 If someone has caused someone else sorrow, he has not caused me sorrow, but in part, in order that I would not be the burden, all of you.⁴¹ **2:6** Sufficient for such a one is this consequence by the many,⁴² **2:7** so that you should rather forgive and comfort the one who has done this, lest somehow such a one become drowned in even more sorrow.⁴³ **2:8** Therefore, I encourage you to confirm your love for him.⁴⁴

2:9 Consequently, to this end I also wrote, in order that I may know your authenticity, if you are obedient in everything.⁴⁵ **2:10** And the one whom you forgive, I also forgive, because, indeed, what I myself have forgiven and continue to forgive, if I have forgiven and continue to forgive anything, it is because of you in the presence of the Messiah,⁴⁶ **2:11** in order that we may not be exploited by the adversary, because we are not ignorant of his intentions.⁴⁷

2:12 When I came to Troas for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of salvation through the Messiah, and when a door was opened for me because of the Lord,⁴⁸ **2:13** I had no rest in my spirit when I did not find my brother Titus. Instead, saying good-bye to them, I left for Macedonia.⁴⁹ **2:14** Yet, thanks be to God who always leads us in His victory parade because of the Messiah, and who manifests the fragrance of the knowledge of him through us in every place,⁵⁰ **2:15** because we are an aroma of the Messiah for God among those who are being rescued and among those who are being destroyed.⁵¹ **2:16** On the one hand, we are a fragrance to those who are coming from a place of death and are going to a place of death, and, on the other hand, a fragrance to those who are coming from a place of life and are going to a place of life.⁵²

And who is qualified to produce these kinds of effects,⁵³ **2:17** because we are not like many, selling the message of God for a profit, but as from a pure motive, but as from God, we are speaking in the presence of God because of the Messiah?⁵⁴

3:1 Are we beginning to recommend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, actual written letters of recommendation to you or from you?⁵⁵ **3:2** You are our letter, having been written in your hearts, known and read by all men,⁵⁶ **3:3** as you demonstrate that you are a letter from the Messiah, served by us,⁵⁷ having been written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on organic tablets of human hearts.⁵⁸

3:4 And we have a confidence of such a kind toward God because of the Messiah,⁵⁹ **3:5** not that we are qualified in and of ourselves to consider anything as from ourselves, but our being qualified is from God,⁶⁰ **3:6** who, indeed, has made us to be qualified as servants of the New

Covenant, not that which is based on a piece of writing but on the Spirit, because the piece of writing kills, but the Spirit produces life.⁶¹

3:7 At the same time, if the context of serving people that resulted in death and was engraved with words on stones⁶² came with awesomeness, so that the people of Israel were not able to look steadfastly at the face of Moses on account of the awesome shine on his face that actually was fading,⁶³ **3:8** how much more awesome will be the context of serving people that is characterized by the Spirit?⁶⁴

3:9 If the context of serving that results in condemnation is awesome, much more will the context of serving that results in a good standing before God flourish with greater awesomeness.⁶⁵ **3:10** Indeed, that which has been made awesome in this case has not been awesome at all on account of the awesomeness that surpasses it.⁶⁶ **3:11** In other words, if that which fades existed by means of glory, much more that which is permanent exists by means of glory.⁶⁷

3:12 Therefore, because we have such a certain expectation, we act with great boldness⁶⁸ **3:13** and are not like Moses. He put a veil over his face to the effect that the people of Israel could not look steadfastly at the end of what was fading.⁶⁹ **3:14** However, their minds were hardened.⁷⁰ Even up until this time, at the reading of the Old Covenant, the same veil remains and is not lifted away, because it is removed when someone is in the Messiah.⁷¹ **3:15** Indeed, up until today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart.⁷² **3:16** Yet,

whenever he returned to the Lord, he lifted off the veil <Exodus 34:34>.⁷³

3:17 The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, that's where you find freedom.⁷⁴

3:18 And we all with unveiled faces, while reflecting like a mirror the awesomeness of the Lord,⁷⁵ are being transformed into the same image from glory into glory, just as from the Lord, that is, the Spirit.⁷⁶

4:1 Therefore, having this responsibility of serving people that came to us in just the same way as we were granted mercy, we do not become discouraged.⁷⁷ **4:2** But we have renounced the things that one hides out of a sense of embarrassment,⁷⁸ while we do not operate according to any method of trickery or distorting of the message of God. Instead, with full disclosure of the truth, we commend ourselves to the whole understanding of men in the presence of God.⁷⁹

4:3 And if our good news has been concealed, it has been concealed from those who are being destroyed,⁸⁰ **4:4** in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving in order that they may not see the enlightening nature of the good news of the Messiah's awesomeness, who is the icon of God.⁸¹ **4:5** For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, and ourselves as your slaves on account of Jesus.⁸²

4:6 Because God is the one who said,

Light shall shine out of darkness <Gen 1:3; Is 9:2>,

He has caused light to shine in our hearts for the purpose of the enlightening effect of an understanding of God's awesomeness on the face of Jesus the Messiah.⁸³

4:7 We have this treasure in clay pots, in order that the exceeding quantity of power may be from God and not from ourselves,⁸⁴ **4:8** while we are being pressured by everything but not crushed, while we are uncertain but not despairing,⁸⁵ **4:9** while we are being persecuted but not

abandoned, while we are being thrown down but not destroyed⁸⁶—4:10 always carrying about the death of Jesus in the body in order that the life of Jesus may be demonstrated in our body.⁸⁷ 4:11 We who are living are always being handed over to death on account of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may also be demonstrated in our mortal flesh.⁸⁸ 4:12 For this reason, death is operating in us but life in you.⁸⁹

4:13 Because we have the same Spirit of belief according to what has been written,

I believed, therefore I spoke <Psalm 116:10>,

we also believe, and, therefore we speak,⁹⁰ 4:14 because we know that He who raised the Lord Jesus both will raise us with Jesus and will present us with you.⁹¹ 4:15 Consequently, everything is on account of you, in order that grace, after it has increased throughout the many, will cause thanksgiving to exist in abundance to the glory of God.⁹²

4:16 As a result, we are not discouraged, but if, indeed, our outer man is in the process of being destroyed, nevertheless, our inner man is being renewed day after day,⁹³ 4:17 because our momentary, insignificant trouble is producing for us an eternal, weighty awesomeness beyond all measure and proportion,⁹⁴ 4:18 while we do not pay any heed to the things that are seen but to the things that are not seen. The things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.⁹⁵

5:1 This is because we know that, if our earthly, tent-like dwelling is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens not made by human hands.⁹⁶ 5:2 Indeed, in this present condition we groan, while we greatly desire to be fully clothed with our dwelling from heaven,⁹⁷ 5:3 because, certainly, by being clothed, we will not be found naked.⁹⁸ 5:4 Certainly, we who are “in the tent” are weighed down and groaning, on the basis of which we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, in order that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.⁹⁹ 5:5 In addition, the one who made us for this very thing is God, who has given us the down payment of the Spirit.¹⁰⁰

5:6 Therefore, being always confident and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord¹⁰¹—5:7 for we live by means of belief and not by seeing¹⁰²—5:8 we are indeed confident and are resolved rather to be away from the body and to be at home with the Lord.¹⁰³ 5:9 Therefore, we also aspire, whether we are at home or away, to be pleasing to Him,¹⁰⁴ 5:10 because we must all appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah, in order that each person may receive what he is “due” for the things which he has done in the body, whether good thing or evil.¹⁰⁵ 5:11 As a result, because we understand the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men.¹⁰⁶

We are well known to God, and we hope that we also are well known in your minds.¹⁰⁷ 5:12 We are not again recommending ourselves to you, but we are giving you an opportunity to brag about us, in order that you may have something for those who brag about appearance instead of about the heart.¹⁰⁸ 5:13 If we are out of our minds, it is for God. If we are in our right minds, it is for you,¹⁰⁹ 5:14 because our love for the Messiah impels us, having seriously considered this, that one man died for all. Therefore all men died.¹¹⁰ 5:15 He died for all, so that those who live may no longer live for themselves but for him who died and was raised on their behalf.¹¹¹

5:16 Therefore, from now on we recognize no one on the basis of merely their external stuff. If, indeed, we have known the Messiah on the basis of his external stuff, nevertheless now we

know him no longer on this basis.¹¹² **5:17** Consequently, if someone is in the Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Look, new things have come into existence.¹¹³

5:18 All things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through the Messiah, and who gave to us the service of reconciliation,¹¹⁴ **5:19** namely, that God was reconciling the world to Himself by means of the Messiah by not accounting to them their acts of disobedience and by placing in our trust the message of reconciliation.¹¹⁵ **5:20** Consequently, we are ambassadors for the Messiah as God exhorts people through us, “We beg you on behalf of the Messiah, be reconciled to God.”¹¹⁶ **5:21** He made him who knew no evil “evil,” in order that we may become those who are justified before God by means of him.¹¹⁷

6:1 Because we work with him, we also encourage you not to receive the grace from God in vain,¹¹⁸ **6:2** because He says,

At the acceptable time I really listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you
<Isaiah 49:8>.¹¹⁹

Behold, now is the truly acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation,¹²⁰ **6:3** while we give no reason for someone to criticize us in anything, in order that our service not be criticized.¹²¹

6:4 Instead, in everything, we are recommending ourselves as God’s servants—in much endurance, in tribulations, in pressures, in stressful circumstances,¹²² **6:5** in beatings, in imprisonments, in confusing moments, in labors, in sleepless nights, in times of going without food,¹²³ **6:6** in single-minded resolve, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in unhypocritical love,¹²⁴ **6:7** by means of the message of truth, by means of the power of God, by means of the weapons of a good standing before God for the right and left hands,¹²⁵ **6:8** through circumstances where some people think we are great and others think we are awful, through circumstances where some people slander us and others talk about us with glowing reports, as those who are looked upon as deceivers by some and men of truth by others,¹²⁶ **6:9** as those who are said to be absolutely ignorant and stupid by some and those who are seen as possessing the only true and accurate truth of reality by others, as those who are actually dying and yet, behold, we are alive, as those who are being disciplined and yet we are not being put to death,¹²⁷ **6:10** as grieving but always rejoicing, as poor and yet making many rich, as having nothing while also possessing everything.¹²⁸

6:11 Our mouth has been opened to you, Corinthians. Our heart has been totally open.¹²⁹ **6:12** You are not finding restrictions in us, but you are finding restrictions within your own guts.¹³⁰ **6:13** So in a reciprocal manner, as though I am speaking to my children, also open up to us.¹³¹

6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, because what partnership does righteousness have with lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?¹³² **6:15** And what agreement does the Messiah have with Beliar, or what part does belief have with unbelief?¹³³ **6:16** And what agreement is there between the temple of God and that of idols, because we are the temple of God, just as God says,

I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people <Exodus 29:45>.¹³⁴

6:17 Therefore, “come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean, and I will welcome you <Isaiah 52:11>.”¹³⁵

6:18 And “I will be your Father, and you will be My sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty <II Samuel 7:14, Isaiah 43:6>. ¹³⁶

7:1 Therefore, because we have all these promises, those whom I love, let us cleanse ourselves from all polluting of our flesh and spirit, while finishing being separate in the fear of God. ¹³⁷

7:2 Make room for us. We harmed no one. We corrupted no one. We took advantage of no one. ¹³⁸ **7:3** I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts, in order to die with us and to live with us. ¹³⁹ **7:4** Great is my confidence in you. Great is my bragging about you. I have been filled with encouragement. I am increasing more and more in joy in all our tribulation. ¹⁴⁰ **7:5** In fact, when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest. But we were troubled in every way—battles without, fears within. ¹⁴¹ **7:6** Nevertheless, God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us by means of the appearing of Titus. ¹⁴² **7:7** And not only by his appearing but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged through you, reporting to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more. ¹⁴³

7:8 Consequently, even though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it, even though I was sad to see that the letter caused you sorrow, even if for a little while. ¹⁴⁴ **7:9** Now I rejoice, not because you were caused to grieve, but because you were caused to grieve for the purpose of repentance. You were caused to grieve according to God, so that, because of us, you should not suffer loss in anything. ¹⁴⁵ **7:10** The sorrow that is according to God produces a repentance that a person does not regret experiencing and that results in salvation. However, the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹⁴⁶

7:11 Look at how much earnestness (σπουδήν) this very same having-been-caused-according-to-God-sorrow has produced in you, including vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging of yourselves. In every matter you have shown yourselves to be authentic. ¹⁴⁷ **7:12** Therefore, when I wrote to you, it was not strictly for the sake of the one who did wrong, nor just for the sake of the one who was wronged, but so that your earnestness (τὴν σπουδήν) on our behalf could be demonstrated to you before God. ¹⁴⁸

7:13 We have been encouraged on account of this, and, because of our encouragement, we rejoiced even more over the joy of Titus—that his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. ¹⁴⁹ **7:14** Therefore, if I have bragged about anything to him concerning you, I have not been disappointed. Instead, just as we spoke all things to you because of the truth, thus also our boasting to Titus proved to be the truth. ¹⁵⁰ **7:15** In addition, his affections are even greater toward you as he remembers the obedience of you all, just as you welcomed him with fear and trembling. ¹⁵¹ **7:16** I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you. ¹⁵²

8:1 We make known to you, brothers, the grace of God that has been given within the gatherings of Macedonia, ¹⁵³ **8:2** that, in a great proving out of their authenticity through tribulation, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their single-minded commitment. ¹⁵⁴ **8:3** I declare that, according to their potential and beyond their potential, they made their choice on the basis of their own free and independent agency (αὐθαίρετοι), ¹⁵⁵ **8:4** begging us with much persuasion for the grace and participation in serving those who have been set apart. ¹⁵⁶ **8:5** In fact, not just as we had hoped, they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in the light of the will of God, ¹⁵⁷ **8:6** so that we urged Titus that, just as he had begun, thus also he complete in you this gracious work. ¹⁵⁸ **8:7** Besides, just as in everything you are flourishing—in belief, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness (πάσῃ σπουδῇ), and in love from us in you—as a result, thrive also in this gracious work. ¹⁵⁹

8:8 I am not speaking by way of commandment, but as proving out by means of the earnestness of others (διὰ τῆς ἐτέρων σπουδῆς) the authenticity of your love also.¹⁶⁰ **8:9** You know about the gracious gift of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that, while being rich, he became poor on your account, so that you may become rich by means of his poverty.¹⁶¹ **8:10** Thus, I give my opinion in this matter.¹⁶²

This is better for you, who a year ago not only began to do this but also began to *desire* to do this.¹⁶³ **8:11** Therefore, now indeed, finish the doing of it, so that, just as there was the willingness of desire to do it (ἡ προθυμία τοῦ θέλειν), thus also there will be the completion of it out of your means.¹⁶⁴ **8:12** If the willingness (ἡ προθυμία) is present, it is acceptable according to whatever a person has, not according to what he does not have,¹⁶⁵ **8:13** because it is not in order that there may be relief for others and tribulation for you, but because of equality.¹⁶⁶ **8:14** At the present time, your abundance exists for their need, in order that their abundance also exist for your need, so that there may be equality,¹⁶⁷ **8:15** just as it has been written,

He who gathered much did not have more than was necessary, and he who gathered little was not in need <Exodus 16:18>.¹⁶⁸

8:16 Thanks be to God, who gives the same earnestness (τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδὴν) on your behalf to Titus' heart,¹⁶⁹ **8:17** because, on the one hand, he has embraced God's persuasion, and, on the other hand, being very earnest (σπουδαιότερος), he went to you on the basis of his own free and independent agency (αὐθαίρετος).¹⁷⁰ **8:18** We also sent with him the brother who is admired with respect to the good news throughout all the gatherings.¹⁷¹ **8:19** And not only this, but also he was handpicked by the groups as our companion for glorifying his Lord and for our interest in serving, as we traveled with this gracious gift that is being administered by us.¹⁷²

8:20 We were avoiding this very thing—someone's finding fault with us with respect to this abundant gift that is being administered by us,¹⁷³ **8:21** because we care about what is morally right—not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men.¹⁷⁴

8:22 In addition, we have sent with them our brother of whom we have often determined to be genuine in his being conscientious in many situations, and now he is even more conscientious because of his great confidence in you.¹⁷⁵ **8:23** As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker for you. As for our brothers, they are envoys of the gatherings, the glory of the Messiah.¹⁷⁶ **8:24** Therefore, show them, in full view of the gatherings, the evidence of your love and of our bragging on your behalf.¹⁷⁷

9:1 Certainly, to write to you concerning the service to the set apart ones is more than I really need to do,¹⁷⁸ **9:2** because I know your willingness of which I boast to the Macedonians concerning you, "Achaia has been prepared for a year." Thus, your zeal has stirred up most of them.¹⁷⁹ **9:3** And I have sent the brothers so that our boast concerning you will not be an empty one in this matter, with the result that, just as I was saying, you may be prepared,¹⁸⁰ **9:4** lest somehow, if the Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention, you) would be embarrassed in this situation.¹⁸¹

9:5 Therefore, I considered it necessary to persuade the brothers to go to you ahead of us and to prepare beforehand your previously promised generous gift, that it may be ready in this way as a generous gift and not as a gift that is grudgingly granted with greed.¹⁸² **9:6** There is this principle, "He who sows meagerly will also reap meagerly, and he who sows generously will

also reap generously.¹⁸³ **9:7** Each person should sow just as he decided beforehand in his heart, not out of sadness or under compulsion, because God loves a happy giver.¹⁸⁴

9:8 Plus, God is able to cause all grace to exist in abundance towards you with the result that, in everything, always having all contentment, you may abound in every good work,¹⁸⁵ **9:9** just as it was written,

He distributed. He gave to the poor. His righteousness endures into the age <Psalm 112:9>.¹⁸⁶

9:10 He who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed and will increase the products of your righteousness,¹⁸⁷ **9:11** as you are made wealthy in every situation for a completely single-minded commitment that is producing through us thanksgiving to God,¹⁸⁸ **9:12** because the service of this assistance/help is not only fully supplying the needs of the set apart ones, but also is causing an abundance through many thanksgivings to God.¹⁸⁹ **9:13** In the light of proving out your authenticity by this service, they will glorify God for your submission to your confession to the good news of the Messiah and for your single-minded commitment to participate with them and with all others,¹⁹⁰ **9:14** as they, in their prayer for you, long for you on account of the extraordinary grace of God in you.¹⁹¹

9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.¹⁹²

10:1 It is I myself, Paul, on the one hand, humble in your midst when I am face to face with you and, on the other hand, bold toward you when far away from you, who is encouraging you with gentleness and kindness that comes from the Messiah.¹⁹³ **10:2** I ask that, when I am present, that I need not show boldness with the confidence with which I dare to show boldness towards some who consider us as living according to the flesh.¹⁹⁴ **10:3** Even though we are *living in the flesh*, we are not *fighting according to the flesh*,¹⁹⁵ **10:4** because the weapons of our battle are not of the present realm. Instead, they are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.¹⁹⁶ We are demolishing arguments **10:5** and every exalted thing that is being lifted up against the knowledge of God. Indeed, we are taking captive every thought in order to be obedient to the Messiah.¹⁹⁷ **10:6** In addition, we are ready to avenge all disobedience whenever your obedience is brought to completion.¹⁹⁸

10:7 You are looking at things outwardly. If anyone is convinced that he himself belongs to the Messiah, let him consider this once more in regard to himself, that just as he belongs to the Messiah, so also do we.¹⁹⁹ **10:8** And even if I brag some more about our authority that the Lord gave us for your building up and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed.²⁰⁰ **10:9** My purpose is not to seem as if I am intimidating you by my letters.²⁰¹ **10:10** There is the fact that someone says, "On the one hand, his letters are heavy and strong, but, on the other hand, the appearance of his body is weak, and the delivery of his message is worthy of contempt."²⁰² **10:11** Let such a person consider this, that what we are in our message through our letters when we are far away from you, such also we are in deed when present with you.²⁰³

10:12 We definitely are not bold to classify or compare ourselves with any of those who recommend themselves. In contrast, those who measure themselves by means of themselves and compare themselves with themselves lack understanding.²⁰⁴ **10:13** Plus, we will not brag beyond the limits of our work, but according to the measure of the assignment that God allotted to us, to reach even as far as you.²⁰⁵ **10:14** We are not overextending ourselves as if we did not reach to you, for, indeed, we were the *first* to come to you with the good news of the Messiah.²⁰⁶ **10:15** We are not going to brag in the labors of others that extend beyond our limits. But we have

the expectation that, as your belief increases, it will result in our being greatly enlarged among you according to our assignment.²⁰⁷ **10:16** The result will be to preach the good news to regions beyond you so as not to boast in another's assignment towards those who have been prepared.²⁰⁸ **10:17** Instead,

Let him who boasts boast in the Lord <cf. Jeremiah 9:24>.²⁰⁹

10:18 Consequently, he is not approved who recommends himself but whom the Lord recommends.²¹⁰

11:1 I wish that you would put up with a little foolishness from me. Indeed, you are putting up with me.²¹¹ **11:2** I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God. I promised you in marriage to one husband in order to present you to the Messiah as a pure virgin.²¹² **11:3** However, I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve with his craftiness, your minds would be seduced away from a single-minded resolve and pure sincerity towards the Messiah.²¹³ **11:4** If someone comes proclaiming a different kind of Jesus whom we did not proclaim, or you receive another spirit that you did not receive, or another message of the good news which you did not accept, you put up with it well enough.²¹⁴

11:5 It is true that in no way do I consider myself inferior to the "super-apostles."²¹⁵ **11:6** If I am an amateur in speech, nevertheless I am not in knowledge. Certainly, in every way, we have demonstrated this to you in everything.²¹⁶ **11:7** Or did I commit immorality by humbling myself in order that you could be exalted, because I proclaimed the good news of God to you without charge.²¹⁷ **11:8** I robbed other churches by taking wages from them in order to serve you.²¹⁸ **11:9** Therefore, when I was present with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone. Instead, when the brothers came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you and will continue to do so.²¹⁹

11:10 The truth of the Messiah is in me, because this boasting on my behalf will not cease in the regions of Achaia.²²⁰ **11:11** Why? Because I do not love you? God knows that I do.²²¹ **11:12** And what I am doing, indeed I shall continue to do, so that I may destroy the opportunity of those who desire an opportunity to be found just like us in that which they are boasting.²²² **11:13** Such men are pseudo-apostles, dishonest workers, who masquerade as apostles of the Messiah.²²³ **11:14** And no wonder, because the adversary himself pretends to be an angel of light.²²⁴ **11:15** Therefore, is it not surprising if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds?²²⁵

11:16 Again I say, no one should think me a fool. But if you do, indeed receive me as a fool so that I may also boast a little.²²⁶ **11:17** What I am saying, I am not saying according to the Lord but as a fool in this situation of boasting.²²⁷ **11:18** Because many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also,²²⁸ **11:19** because you, being wise, gladly endure the foolish.²²⁹ **11:20** You endure someone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he grabs hold of you, if he puts on airs, if he beats you on the face.²³⁰ **11:21** To my shame, I must confess that we have been weak.²³¹

However, in whatever someone is bold (I am talking like a fool), I also am bold.²³² **11:22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.²³³ **11:23** Are they servants of the Messiah? I am speaking as one who is out of his mind. I far more—in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, in more severe beatings, in frequent dangers of death.²³⁴ **11:24** Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.²³⁵ **11:25** Three times I was beaten with a stick. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day adrift at sea.²³⁶ **11:26** In frequent travels I have experienced dangers

from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the desert, dangers on the sea, dangers from false brethren.²³⁷

11:27 I have been in labor and hardship, through frequent sleepless nights, in famine and thirst, often without food, in cold and nakedness.²³⁸ **11:28** Besides these external experiences, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the gatherings.²³⁹ **11:29** Who is weak without my being weak? Who is caused to commit immorality without my burning with concern?²⁴⁰

11:30 If it is necessary for me to brag, I will brag about my weaknesses.²⁴¹ **11:31** The God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, He who is blessed into the ages, knows that I am not lying.²⁴² **11:32** In Damascus, the ethnarch under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to arrest me.²⁴³ **11:33** Then, I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and thus escaped his hands.²⁴⁴

12:1 It is necessary for me to brag. Even though it is not profitable, yet, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.²⁴⁵ **12:2** I know a man in the Messiah fourteen years ago, whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows, where such a man was snatched away up to the third heaven.²⁴⁶ **12:3** I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows,²⁴⁷ **12:4** that he was snatched away into paradise, and he heard words too holy to speak that are not possible for a man to speak.²⁴⁸ **12:5** I will brag on behalf of such a man, but on behalf of myself I will not brag except in regard to my weaknesses.²⁴⁹ **12:6** If I desire to brag, I will not be foolish, for I will speak the truth. However, I am holding back, lest someone attribute to me more than what he sees me doing or what he hears from me.²⁵⁰

12:7 In the light of the extraordinary degree of revelations, therefore, in order that I would not have an undue sense of my self-importance, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of the adversary, in order to torment me, in order that I would not have an undue sense of my self-importance.²⁵¹ **12:8** Regarding this thorn, I entreated God three times that it would leave me,²⁵² **12:9** but He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for My power completes its purpose in your weakness." With pleasure, therefore, I would rather brag about my weaknesses, so that the power of the Messiah may take up its abode in me.²⁵³ **12:10** Therefore, I find satisfaction in weaknesses, in insults, in times of necessity, in persecutions and stressful circumstances for the sake of the Messiah. For when I am weak, then I am strong.²⁵⁴

12:11 I have become a fool, and you have forced me to do so. I should have been commended by you, because I was not inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am a nobody.²⁵⁵ **12:12** To be sure, the signs of an apostle were performed among you with all perseverance—by signs and wonders and powerful acts.²⁵⁶ **12:13** In what respect were you treated worse than the other gatherings, except that I myself did not become a burden to you. Forgive me for this injustice.²⁵⁷

12:14 Behold, this is the third time that I am ready to come to you, and I will not burden you, because I do not seek what you have but you. Children are not obligated to save up for their parents but parents for their children.²⁵⁸ **12:15** And I will gladly spend and be spent for your lives. If I love you so much more than the false apostles do, am I to be loved less than you love them?²⁵⁹ **12:16** Be that as it may, as for me, I did not burden you. But being the crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.²⁶⁰

12:17 When I have sent anyone to you, I have not taken advantage of you through him, have I?²⁶¹ **12:18** I encouraged Titus to go, and I sent with him the brother. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?²⁶²

12:19 You have probably been thinking that all along that we have been defending ourselves to you. Actually, we are speaking in the presence of God because of the Messiah. Thus, all things, beloved, are for your spiritual improvement.²⁶³ **12:20** I am afraid, lest somehow when I come, I may not find you to be as I wish, and I may not be found by you to be as you wish, lest somehow there be strife, jealousy, angry feelings, conflicts, slanderous exchanges, gossips, prideful feelings, and confusing situations.²⁶⁴ **12:21** I am afraid, lest when I come again, God may humiliate me before you, and I will mourn over many of those who have committed immorality in the past and not repented of the uncleanness, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced.²⁶⁵

13:1 This is the third time that I am coming to you.

Every fact shall be substantiated on the basis of the testimony of two or three witnesses
<Deuteronomy 19:15>.²⁶⁶

13:2 I have said before, and I am saying again as when I was present the second time and now when I am absent, to those who have committed immorality in the past and to all the rest, that, whenever I come again, I will not spare anyone,²⁶⁷ **13:3** because you are seeking proof of the one who is speaking in me, the Messiah, who is not weak towards you but is powerful within you.²⁶⁸ **13:4** Indeed, he was crucified because of your weakness, but he lives because of the power of God. We also are weak because of him, but we live with him because of the power of God towards you.²⁶⁹

13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Prove yourselves to be in the faith. Or do you not understand something about yourselves, that Jesus the Messiah is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?²⁷⁰ **13:6** I hope you understand that, as for us, we do not fail the test.²⁷¹ **13:7** We pray to God that none of you do evil, not so that we may appear as having passed the test, but so that you may do what is good, even if we are as those who have failed the test.²⁷²

13:8 We can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth,²⁷³ **13:9** meaning that we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This indeed we pray for, i.e., your maturation.²⁷⁴ **13:10** For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that, when I am present, I may not use severity according to the authority that the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.²⁷⁵

13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, mend your ways, be encouraged, and be like-minded. Be in shalom, and the God of love and shalom will be with you.²⁷⁶ **13:12** Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.²⁷⁷

13:13 The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the love of God, and the commonality of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.²⁷⁸

¹ Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ – Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter. He is also an authoritative spokesman for the Messiah, who is Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, from the story in Acts 9, we learn that he is the sole apostle to the Gentiles. All the other apostles are assigned the responsibility of proclaiming the message of Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews. Paul also indicates that he received this responsibility as a result of God’s eternal plans and purposes. He probably wrote this letter from the northern province of Macedonia approximately 18 months after 1 Corinthians, i.e., about the fall of A.D. 56, during his third missionary journey, having first visited Corinth during his second missionary journey approximately 3-4 years earlier.

² καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς τῆ ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ τῆ οὔσης ἐν Κορίνθῳ – Paul is writing to the same group of people to whom he wrote 1 Corinthians, the believers in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and who have been changed inwardly by God to become believers.

³ σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ – Whereas Paul had used much the same phrase and made this group very general in 1 Corinthians (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ = in every place), here he is more specific and refers to the other Christians in southern Greece on the north coast of the Peloponnesus surrounding Corinth. All of them must have experienced some interaction with the false apostles, whose situation he describes in more detail in chapters 10 & 11, and because of the effects that they are having on the Corinthian Christians, he is mainly writing this letter.

⁴ χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul wishes God to continue working out His favorable purposes and plans in these Achaian Christians to bring about their shalom, i.e., moral perfection and forgiveness, in the eternal Kingdom of God where Jesus as the Messiah will rule over them after he plays the very important role of their high priest (cf. Hebrews) and advocate (cf. 1 John 2:1ff.) at the final judgment. Paul calls God the Father of believers as both their source of existence and the one who has adopted them to be His children, who, as a result, become members of the group who will inhabit the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁵ εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Under the present circumstances of Paul’s own suffering and potential rejection as an apostle by the Corinthians, he begins by expressing the greatest admiration for God and His project that involves Jesus as the Messiah and ruler over the created reality as God’s Son, the final Davidic king.

⁶ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρῶν καὶ θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως – God is the very source of mercy (plural in the Greek) and forgiveness that is necessary in order for morally depraved human beings to obtain citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, He also provides the necessary comfort and persuasion intellectually and inwardly for people to embrace fully the biblical message as truth. Being changed inwardly and comforted and persuaded fully and enduringly over the course of the present life is God’s requirement of human beings for their receiving His eternal mercy and entering in the Kingdom of God.

⁷ ὁ παρακαλῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul refers specifically to himself and Timothy, as shown by the fact that he continues by using the contrasting personal pronouns “we/us” and “you/you.” Paul and Timothy are able to be successful in comforting and persuading others of the truth of the biblical message only when God miraculously works within these other people. This divine comfort and persuasion is the same that is occurring in Paul and Timothy in the midst of their suffering which, theoretically, could destroy their belief. Thus, Paul and Timothy’s ability to comfort and persuade others is their ability to continue believing and proclaiming the biblical message in the midst of the hardship of their suffering. However, the actual comforting and persuading of others is accomplished only by God’s inward work in these other people.

We human beings find it most difficult to be comforted and persuaded of the truth of God’s love and mercy in the midst of the most painful suffering. Suffering truly tests the authenticity and endurance of a person’s belief in the biblical message. Thus, it actually requires a miracle of God to cause a suffering morally depraved human being to be comforted and persuaded that the biblical message is true, and, indeed, this is God’s project with respect to individuals that involves Paul’s also continuing to use every appropriate human means at his disposal, especially the articulation of his theological ideas through speech and writing, to comfort and persuade other human beings (cf. Romans 5:3-5). Paul also recognizes that however God comforts and persuades him of the truth of the biblical message, probably referring to the evidence of the Old Testament and the ideas of Jesus as the Messiah which result from both a close study of the OT and the information which directly came to light when Jesus was on earth, along with God’s inward work through His Spirit, it is this same method, content, and dynamic which are at play when Paul is seeking to comfort and persuade others of the biblical truth when they are going through suffering.

⁸ ὅτι καθὼς περισσεύει τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς – Jesus assured his apostles that they would suffer hostility from the world similar to what he had experienced. Therefore, it is no surprise to Paul that Timothy and he are going through the level of similar suffering that they are. Indeed, Paul is saying this in a manner, i.e., “For just as...,” where he means that it is just a fact of reality that Jesus’ apostles would experience the same kind of mistreatment by people who categorically object to the good news of God’s mercy as he had.

⁹ οὕτως διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ περισσεύει καὶ ἡ παράκλησις ἡμῶν – It is also a fact of reality that Paul and Timothy enjoy a level of comfort and persuasion of the truth of the biblical message that is commensurate with the level of their suffering for this message—all by the miracle of the grace of God at work within them that occurs because of God’s plan to use them in bringing about the fulfillment of His project of producing a people fit and qualified through their authentic belief for the eternal kingdom and realm where Jesus will be their king.

¹⁰ εἴτε δὲ θλιβόμεθα, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως καὶ σωτηρίας – The purpose of Paul’s and Timothy’s suffering that results in God’s further comforting and persuading them of the truth of the biblical message is so that they may be authoritative spokesmen for the good news of God’s mercy to the Gentiles, and specifically the Corinthian Christians in this context. Implied

of course is that this is on the basis of Paul's being called by God to be the sole and unique apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, God fully intends to use Paul and Timothy as His tools to comfort the Corinthian Christians and persuade them of the truth and value of the biblical message that ultimately results in their eternal salvation and participation in the eternal Kingdom of God.

¹¹ εἶτε παρακαλούμεθα, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως τῆς ἐνεργουμένης ἐν ὑπομονῇ τῶν αὐτῶν παθημάτων ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς πάσχομεν – There is a kind of theologically symbiotic relationship between Paul's and Timothy's suffering/persuasion and the Corinthians' suffering/persuasion. The former results in the latter—through the inward miracle of God in both parties. The Corinthian Christians patiently persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah through their sufferings as a result of Paul's and Timothy's doing the same and as a result of Paul's and Timothy's continuing to teach and exhort them to embrace the biblical message. Logically, this symbiotic relationship exists between anyone else down through history and the apostles' "speaking" as preserved for us in the New Testament documents. And, by extrapolation, this symbiotic and sequential relationship exists between any authentic Christian's suffering/persuasion and another authentic Christian's suffering/persuasion where the former is able to encourage the latter. The obvious difference, however, is that only Paul is an inerrant and authoritative spokesman for the Messiah. The rest of us are merely seeking to learn from Paul (and the other biblical authors) as well as we can.

¹² καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς ἡμῶν βεβαία ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν – Paul's and Timothy's long term expectation of the eternal salvation of the Corinthian Christians is well based on the miraculous role that suffering will play in their being comforted and persuaded of the truth of the biblical message as God continues to comfort and persuade them inwardly through His grace. And most likely Paul's and Timothy's confidence comes from having watched God work in the Corinthians to the effect that they truly seemed to embrace the message of Jesus as their king and priest and to live their lives accordingly after they initially chose to believe.

¹³ εἰδότες ὅτι ὡς κοινωνοὶ ἐστε τῶν παθημάτων, οὕτως καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως – Assuming with some confidence that the Corinthian Christians are genuine in their belief in the apostolic message, Paul's and Timothy's theological understanding of reality assures them that as they experience the same kind of hostility from the world that Jesus experienced, they also will experience the same miraculous comfort and persuasion of the truth of the message in the midst of the hardship of their suffering. Thus, Paul and Timothy can also feel confident that the Corinthian Christians' ultimate destiny is eternal salvation and life from God. God does not give up on His people in whom He has powerfully worked to change their hearts and cause them to become believers.

¹⁴ οὐ γὰρ θέλομεν ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν τῆς γενομένης ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ δύνάμιν ἐβαρήθημεν ὥστε ἐξαπορηθῆναι ἡμᾶς καὶ τοῦ ζῆν – Paul and Timothy do not mind telling the Corinthians that they almost died. The suffering that they experienced in Asia, western Turkey, was so intense that they wondered seriously if this was the end of their lives on earth.

¹⁵ ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχέκαμεν – Paul and Timothy had been told officially that they were sentenced to die in Ephesus (?).

¹⁶ ἵνα μὴ πεποϊθότες ὦμεν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγειρόντι τοὺς νεκροὺς – Here is probably the wisest notion that a human being can grasp and express, that hard times come into our lives for the express purpose of causing us to look forward to and trusting ultimately in God's raising us from the dead and welcoming us into the eternal Kingdom of God at the second coming of Jesus when he sets up his millennial kingdom. In other words, God is not the God who saves us from physical death on this earth, and trusting Him for things in this life except ongoing belief is nothing in comparison to trusting Him for raising us from the dead and mercifully granting us eternal life. Thus, God is mostly concerned with saving us from eternal condemnation and destruction, in order that we may rise from the dead and live eternally in Jesus' kingdom.

¹⁷ ὅς ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ῥύσεται – God ultimately has rescued Paul and Timothy from "such a great a threat of death," physically speaking, in Asia, where "death" is a metonymy for "possibility" or "threat" of physical death. Then, he adds that God will rescue them from something in the future, which, connected to the rest of this verse and the "hope" which Paul mentions, is eternal death. They have set their hope and confidence in God to rescue them eternal death and condemnation, and Paul repeats for emphasis sake that God will definitely rescue them.

¹⁸ εἰς ὃν ἠλπικαμεν ὅτι καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται – Paul repeats for emphasis sake that Timothy and he are confident that God will rescue them from eternal death.

¹⁹ συνυπουργούντων καὶ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῇ δεήσει – Paul's role in human history is to proclaim the biblical message of Jesus as Messiah to the Gentiles, and he himself with Timothy will receive the same gift of eternal life from God which the Corinthian Christians will receive. In addition, Paul knows that Timothy and he need God's grace, strength, power, and faithfulness to persist in their belief just as much as any Christian needs. Therefore, he is counting on the Corinthian Christians to pray for the perseverance of his faith as he is praying for theirs. In this way, people who have been affected by Paul's fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles will be grateful when he too obtains entrance into the eternal kingdom of God along with them, thus further demonstrating the verity of the message which he has proclaimed to everybody's benefit.

²⁰ ἵνα ἐκ πολλῶν προσώπων τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστηθῇ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν – Eventually, when Jesus returns, all the people who prayed for Paul and Timothy will be able to thank God for his gift of eternal life to them, notwithstanding the fact that Paul was most likely the instrument by which God conveyed the information of Jesus as the Messiah to them for the benefit of their own eternal salvations. In other words, being grateful for Paul's salvation will be in the midst of their being grateful for their own salvations too.

²¹ ἢ γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὐτῆ ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἀπλότῃ καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ' ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul's and Timothy's single-minded resolve and whole motivation from God as a result of His kindness and work within them and that leads them to perform Paul's gift and role as the apostle to the Gentiles is what gives them confidence in the authenticity of their belief. Indeed, no one

can carry out his responsibility as a human being within the biblical story apart from God's causing him to do so. It is not human wisdom that is guiding Paul and Timothy to fulfill their apostolic role, but God's grace and independent work within them according to His ultimate plans and purposes. The combination of the objective and the subjective are what convince Paul and Timothy that they are true Christians and carrying out Paul's apostolic responsibility, and ultimately they brag about God's grace and not about anything coming from themselves which is accomplishing their own salvations.

²² οὐ γὰρ ἄλλα γράφομεν ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἢ ἃ ἀναγινώσκετε ἢ καὶ ἐπιγινώσκετε – What Paul and Timothy are writing now about God's grace as the first cause of their carrying out their responsibilities and their acquiring eternal salvation is completely consistent with what they had taught the Corinthians during the 18 months that they initially had spent with them. Therefore, all this information is not new news to them, and the Corinthians can say either that they are at least familiar with these concepts, even if they have not fully grasped them, or that they have a really good understanding of them. In other words, Paul and Timothy are implying that there is a process of growth of understanding, so that people should not be expected to know or grasp completely even the most "essential" ideas of the biblical message in order to be saved and acquire eternal life. Nevertheless, they should desire to know the apostolic message, and their *desire* for truth, which has come about by virtue of God's changing their hearts and orienting them towards Him, is really the essential intellectual ingredient in order to obtain eternal life (cf. Philippians 2:13).

²³ ἐπιζῶ δὲ ὅτι ἕως τέλους ἐπιγνώσεσθε – Here, hope is not just hope but Paul's being able to expect with great certainty that the Corinthian Christians will continue to grasp what he is saying about God's grace and its effects until the end of their lives or Jesus' return, whichever comes first. It is this perseverance of belief throughout the rest of their lives that will ultimately qualify them for mercy at the final judgment and, therefore, entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God. Notice Paul briefly switches to the first person singular "I" and then back again to the first person plural "we."

²⁴ καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους, ὅτι καύχημα ὑμῶν ἐσμεν καθάπερ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ – Paul and Timothy had the pleasure of seeing the Corinthian Christians clearly grasp God's apostolic role for them in their lives and their role in Paul's and Timothy's lives, i.e., to be grateful for one another at the judgment when Jesus intervenes on behalf of all of them. This correct understanding of each other lasted until the pseudo-apostles came along and disrupted it on the part of the Corinthians. Paul is now, with this letter, in the process of restoring a correct understanding to both of them. In other words, if there is any reason for the Corinthian Christians to brag about their association with other people, it is their relationship with Paul and Timothy as God's authorized apostolic workers who, with them, will receive eternal mercy and life when Jesus returns.

By extrapolation it is all other Christians down through history and their association with the apostles and their message through their writings in the New Testament who can boast in this association as the former also approach the time when they will receive eternal mercy and life when Jesus returns. While it is not entirely inappropriate to boast of sorts about our relationship with other Christians, including those in Christian history who lived after the apostles, nevertheless we should never elevate these others and our relationship to them above that of our relationship to the biblical authors, especially the apostles and their writings in the New Testament. Therefore, it certainly can be the case that all the glowing talk that we modern Christians use to describe the people with whom we are associated is completely off the mark according to Paul. There are only certain men and women, all from past history and all within the biblical account, with whom we should claim association, starting with Abraham and ending with the apostles. To claim association with anyone else with too much emphasis is to put them between us and the biblical persons, which Paul demonstrates in Galatians is just plain evil, if it is not hopefully only out of total naiveté.

²⁵ καὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πεποιθήσει ἐβουλόμην πρότερον πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν ἵνα δευτέραν χάριν σχῆτε – Because Paul and Timothy were counting on God's working within the hearts and minds of the Corinthian Christians in conjunction with their mutual relationship and understanding of one another, i.e., with Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers and the Corinthians as recipients of their apostolic message, they planned to return to them and keep the discussion, encouragement, and relationship going. Paul and Timothy wanted the Corinthians to receive a double gift of grace from God that they explain in the next verse.

²⁶ καὶ δι' ὑμῶν διελθεῖν εἰς Μακεδονίαν καὶ πάλιν ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑφ' ὑμῶν προπεμφθῆναι εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν – The double gift of grace to the Corinthians would be in the form of their being exposed twice to the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah by Paul and Timothy who would pass through Corinth on their way to northern Greece, Macedonia, and on their way back from northern Greece. And this would be before Paul and Timothy proceeded back to Jerusalem with their monetary gift to the Jewish Christians during the current famine (cf. 2 Corinthians 8,9).

²⁷ τοῦτο οὖν βουλόμενος μήτι ἄρα τῇ ἐλαφρίᾳ ἐχρησάμην; ἢ ἃ βουλευόμεαι κατὰ σάρκα βουλευόμεαι, ἵνα ἢ παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ – It would seem that the false apostles are accusing Paul of being duplicitous in his commitment to the Corinthian Christians, while they are claiming to be wholeheartedly committed to them, perhaps because Paul had made it known to the Corinthians that he would visit them, but was unable to do so for good reasons. And the Corinthians, in turn, were buying the argument of the pseudo-apostles that Paul was wishy-washy out of selfish motives. Thus, Paul is saying that people are naturally wishy-washy because of their moral depravity, but he is definitely not being so as he fulfills his apostolic responsibilities.

But what was so persuasive about the false apostles? In addition, the phrase κατὰ σάρκα (= according to the flesh) refers to the manner with which people act on the basis of their own moral depravity that has at its core rebellion against God and complete self-aggrandizement, even when the people include biblical terminology and concepts. In other words, the pseudo-apostles are accusing Paul of being unbiblical and worldly even while referring to the biblical message of Jesus as the Messiah when they themselves are the ones who are being unbiblical and worldly while referring to the biblical message.

Paul and Timothy are saying that it is true that a revealing characteristic of man's moral depravity is to claim to be committed to

people and then break that commitment for completely selfish reasons. It is to abandon truth for the sake of one's own selfish agenda and avoidance of suffering.

Cf. 2 Corinthians 10 & 11 where Paul not only describes in more depth the situation with the pseudo-apostles but also lists the amount of suffering that he has endured for the sake of the NT message. Paul's goal is not to preserve himself but to preserve the truth, even if it means rejection by others at the cost of his own life.

²⁸ πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν ὁ πρὸς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἔστιν ναὶ καὶ οὐ – Regardless of Paul's and Timothy's motives, the real issue is the truthfulness of the message that they proclaim that has its stamp of approval by God. Cf. Philippians 1 where Paul applauds the people who are selfishly ambitious but are presenting accurately and with a healthy dose of grace the information about Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, once again, Paul and Timothy refer and appeal to God and His perspective on this issue as to who are the true apostolic workers and what is the genuine apostolic message. They are certain that God approves of them and not the pseudo-apostles.

²⁹ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ γὰρ υἱὸς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς – Interesting syntax here. Paul is defending his apostleship and that he, not the pseudo-apostles, belongs to God. However, the one who really belongs to God, the most important person who belongs to God, is Jesus the Messiah, and it is to him that Paul and Timothy want to direct the attention of the Corinthians. Thus, we can infer that as much as the false apostles are pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, they are subtly directing the Corinthians' attention to them and not to Jesus.

³⁰ ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν δι' ἡμῶν κηρυχθεὶς, δι' ἐμοῦ καὶ Σιλουανοῦ καὶ Τιμοθέου, οὐκ ἐγένετο ναὶ καὶ οὐ ἀλλὰ ναὶ ἐν αὐτῷ γέγονεν – The most important person in all of human history is Jesus the Messiah, not Paul and certainly not the false apostles. Therefore, the real issue here is the Corinthians' belief in Jesus as the Messiah, who has become such on the basis of God's doing. So even though Paul is an authoritative spokesman for the Messiah and consequently has to put himself forward to some degree in order to communicate the apostolic message to people, he must and does regulate the force with which he proclaims this message so as to fulfill his responsibility as a spokesman while not making himself appear more important than Jesus. This obviously is a difficult balance to achieve, but Paul constantly works at it because of how important it is. The key as he is saying here is that everything should point to God, but it certainly takes a wise person (like Paul) to know how to point people to God with as much force and encouragement as possible and then stop short of causing people to focus on him. This would be the same as urging people to believe the truth of God without violating their individuality and personal accountability before God.

³¹ ὅσαι γὰρ ἐπαγγελίαι θεοῦ, ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ – Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God has promised eternal life to those who relate themselves to Abraham by having the same kind of belief that he had. The ultimate and certain fulfillment of this promise in a morally depraved human being's life is through Jesus as Messiah and advocate, because he is the focal point of all created history. Jesus is the only tool available according to God's plans and purposes for God to fulfill His promises to human beings who do not deserve them.

³² διὸ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀμὴν τῷ θεῷ πρὸς δόξαν δι' ἡμῶν – God alone is to get the glory for rescuing people through Jesus from His eternal condemnation and destruction. One of the ways that He will get the glory is that people will pronounce Amen to God, i.e., that He is faithful and they believe and base their lives on His faithful mercy, and that they do this on the basis of Jesus as their Messiah and advocate. Therefore, while Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy have been an important means by which the Corinthians give God the glory by pronouncing Amen to Him, because they proclaimed the message of Jesus as the Messiah to them, nevertheless the mutual bragging that Paul, Timothy, and the Corinthians do with respect to one another is far less than the bragging that they do about God. Again, Paul and Timothy are encouraging the Corinthians to look ultimately to God and then to Jesus the Messiah, not to them. And yet, Paul is an apostle to whom they must look for the proper information about God and Jesus, and they must not look to the pseudo-apostles.

The real question that the Corinthians have to answer is, who has the correct message about the Messiah and Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah in the light of what God is doing? Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy or the false apostles?

³³ ὁ δὲ βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ χρίσας ἡμᾶς θεός – Paul's and Timothy's claim is that it is God and God alone who should be credited with establishing the apostles as apostles and the Corinthian Christians as Christians, including anointing, i.e., setting apart for a unique purpose, the apostles for their special role of being the authoritative spokesmen for Jesus, the ultimate Anointed One (Χριστὸν), so that their speaking about biblical issues should be received by other immoral human beings as though it were Jesus himself speaking.

³⁴ ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς τὸν ἄρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν – God is the one who has commissioned, through His inward work by the Holy Spirit, the apostles to carry out their authoritative responsibilities. This inward work also constitutes the down payment, i.e., God's evidence, of His fulfilling His promise of granting eternal life to the apostles and the other apostolic workers like Timothy and Silvanus. Eternal life, ultimately, is what they are counting on also, not being viewed as wildly successful human beings in this world. Paul is willing to give up all fame and honor in the world in order to gain eternal life and mercy from God.

³⁵ Ἐγὼ δὲ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ὅτι φειδόμενος ὑμῶν οὐκέτι ἦλθον εἰς Κόρινθον – Now Paul is presenting the Corinthians with the real reason why he did not come to Corinth, as opposed to the reason the pseudo-apostles are giving, i.e., that Paul was neglectful of them. Instead, Paul did not desire to be overbearing toward the Corinthians. It was for this reason, not out of being wishy-washy that he did not come to Corinth when he had said that he would.

³⁶ οὐχ ὅτι κυριεύομεν ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως ἀλλὰ συνεργοὶ ἐσμεν τῆς χαρᾶς ὑμῶν τῇ γὰρ πίστει ἐστήκατε – Even though Paul is an authoritative apostle, Timothy's and his relationship to the Corinthians' Christianity is as guides, not as authoritarian tyrants. They are very aware of the personal nature of belief, that it must be something a human being does as much as possible based upon the inner work of God along with intellectual interaction with the biblical truth. It should not be because of the influence,

personality, or some such cause from another human being, even from an apostle. Therefore, the basis of the Corinthians' Christianity is their own belief, not their submission to an authoritarian human being. As a result, the apostles walked a difficult line, the line of being authoritative without being either authoritarian or uncaring with respect to people's belief. Paul and Timothy want the Corinthians to enjoy the hope of salvation that they have acquired by virtue of their own belief and not the coercion of other human beings.

³⁷ Ἐκρίνα γὰρ ἔμαυτῶ τοῦτο τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν – Paul is willing to own the decision not to visit them, but he considers his reason a good one, too. It was not to cause them any more discomfort than was absolutely necessary and wise in their present situation, which he goes on to explain to some degree.

³⁸ εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼ λυπῶ ὑμᾶς, καὶ τίς ὁ εὐφραίνων με εἰ μὴ ὁ λυπούμενος ἐξ ἑμοῦ – Paul admits that his writing the truth to them in a previous letter has brought some discomfort and sorrow into their lives, in spite of the fact that he was not personally there in Corinth. Nevertheless, the individual who is at the center of this issue can change his mind and bring joy to Paul's heart and mind even without Paul's being there.

³⁹ καὶ ἔγραψα τοῦτο αὐτό, ἵνα μὴ ἐλθὼν λύπην σχῶ ἀφ' ὧν ἔδει με χαίρειν, πεποιθὸς ἐπὶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἢ ἐμὴ χαρὰ πάντων ὑμῶν ἐστίν – The whole Christian community in that area was complicit in originally mishandling the situation involving this one person and in, therefore, making Paul sad. His hope was that, after he wrote them and urged them to correct the situation, they would all once again live in accordance with the truth and be the cause of joy instead of sorrow within him. As a result, Paul could come visit them and be happy because this mishandled situation would have been taken care of by everyone. Thus, they could move on in their growth in understanding and living well the good news of God's mercy through Jesus the Messiah.

⁴⁰ ἐκ γὰρ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας ἔγραψα ὑμῖν διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων, οὐχ ἵνα λυπηθῆτε ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε ἦν ἔχω περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς – Paul was anguished over their situation—to the point of tears when he first wrote them about it. His response of truth could have been interpreted by them as being unloving. Indeed, it made them grieve, probably partly because he sounded harsh. But Paul wants to assure them that he was being entirely loving toward them. Cf. John the Baptist in Luke 3 to the crowds, "You offspring of vipers..." John was harsh towards people whom he considered for the moment to be unbelievers. Paul was being lovingly truthful in his previous letter towards people whom he considered to be authentic believers.

⁴¹ εἰ δέ τις λελύπηκεν, οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ, πάντας ὑμᾶς – Probably, the pseudo-apostles are helping to convince the Corinthians that Paul is the source of their sadness because of both his heavy-handedness in his letter and neglect by not coming to them when he had promised that the would. However, Paul's point is that they need to look to the individual who caused this problem, not to him, for the source of their sorrow. He is not what is burdening them. He is simply the messenger of truth, and their burden comes from this man's immorality colliding with the truth, which should be the case anytime the biblical message collides with immorality. We should not blame God and the Bible for what is making us sad about somebody's behavior, but should blame the person's actions simply in the light of the truth of God in the Bible.

⁴² ἱκανὸν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ἢ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων – This is why Paul did not visit Corinth again at this time, because he did not want to add to the weight of the whole community on this man for his repentance and making a change in his life. Paul considered that what they had done toward him was sufficient to help him move away from what was disturbing Paul and them.

⁴³ ὅστε τὸναντίον μᾶλλον ὑμᾶς χαρίσασθαι καὶ παρακαλέσαι, μὴ πως τῇ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ καταποθῆ ὁ τοιοῦτος – Paul's apparent heavy-handedness has turned into actual heavy-handedness on the part of the Corinthians. Just as Paul backed off by not visiting Corinth, he is encouraging them to back off and do only what is necessary to allow this man to come to grips with his immorality properly, repent, and make a change in his life.

⁴⁴ διὸ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην – Paul's ultimate goal is for the Corinthians to remain committed to one another in the midst of their genuine belief, regardless of how much sorrow he has experienced and the truth has caused in this present situation.

⁴⁵ εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοι ἐστε – Even though Paul's intentions are not authoritarian, it is still true that any human being's response to him and his presentation of truth demonstrates the authenticity of this person's Christianity, because the person is recognizing his authority as an apostle and the biblical truth which he is presenting.

⁴⁶ ᾧ δέ τι χαρίζεσθε, κἀγὼ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ὁ κεχάρισμαι, εἰ τι κεχάρισμαι, δι' ὑμᾶς ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ – Forgiveness of others by Christians is ultimately in the light of the existence and role of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, as our advocate at the judgment when we will obtain God's eternal mercy through him. In addition, Paul as an apostle factors in the Corinthians' authentic belief, that it will result in their forgiveness by God through the Messiah, which makes it all the more imperative that he be forgiving of this man and of them. Thus, there is a symbiotic relationship between all Christians' forgiveness of one another in the light of their forgiveness by God through Jesus as their advocate.

⁴⁷ ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ: οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν – There is a definite adversary to truth and God's purposes within the world. This single person as the Bible describes him is Satan, an angelic being who has been granted by God a fair amount of influence in earthly affairs, especially it would seem at the level of political leadership within governments. The goal of Satan (his name means adversary) is to drive a wedge between Christians, while using the truth, especially the truth about immorality, to cause Christians to act in an overbearing way toward one another, thus alienating them from each other. Paul's goal is to avoid falling into this trap and encourages the Corinthian Christians to love one another genuinely on the basis of their understanding of the good news of God's mercy through the Messiah Jesus.

⁴⁸ Ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θύρας μοι ἀνεωγμένης ἐν κυρίῳ – In the midst of handling this situation at Corinth from western Asia (the area on the coast of modern western Turkey where Troas was located), Paul continued to travel for the purpose of proclaiming the NT message, so that others could hear and become authentic believers.

⁴⁹ οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἄνεσιν τῷ πνεύματί μου τῷ μὴ εὐρεῖν με Τίτον τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, ἀλλὰ ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς ἐξῆλθον εἰς Μακεδονίαν – Paul was looking for Titus to meet him in Troas and report on the Corinthian’s situation (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:13ff.). However, when Titus did not show up and even though there was plenty of opportunity to proclaim the NT message in Troas, Paul’s deep concern for the Corinthians motivated him to press on to northern Greece. This sounds shocking to our modern Christian sensibilities that an apostle would pass up a clear and God-given opportunity to see other people come to authentic belief and gain salvation from God’s eternal condemnation just because his co-worker had not met up with him to report on how a difficult situation was being handled in a different location. Couldn’t Paul trust God for handling it through Titus? After all, he had trusted God for his own physical life (cf. 1:9). But Paul believed that he had a *bona fide* choice to make between staying in Troas and getting closer to Corinth for the sake of continuing to help them with their issues. Clearly, he really wanted to get things squared away in Corinth and therefore headed west and closer to this city, probably hoping to meet up with Titus on his way east.

⁵⁰ Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ τὴν ὁσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεροῦντι δι’ ἡμῶν ἐν παντί τόπῳ – In Paul’s day, a Roman general who conquered new lands and peoples would bring some of these people as slaves to Rome for display in a victory parade in his honor. Paul uses this imagery to make the point that even though he left behind the obvious opportunity to proclaim the biblical message in Troas, he knew that God was still his Conqueror and thus leading him as His slave in His victory parade wherever Paul and his apostolic entourage went. Therefore, even though Paul and Timothy were not going to smell like apostolic workers and be “successful” presenters of the biblical message of the Messiah in Troas because they had left there, they would smell like apostolic workers and be “successful” presenters of the biblical message in Macedonia where they traveled after leaving Troas. In other words, their “mistake” of leaving Troas and missing out on the opportunity there to evangelize would not ultimately be a mistake. Wherever they were, they were providing people with the opportunity to know the Messiah and his purpose of providing people with God’s eternal mercy.

⁵¹ ὅτι Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν τῷ θεῷ ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις – As God leads Paul, Timothy, and other apostolic workers with Paul on their journeys, as though they are marching in front of Him in His victory parade, they act as the traditional censers in these parades by being an aroma of the biblical message while they proclaim this message. The effect of this aroma is demonstrated among the two kinds of people in this world—those who are being rescued from God’s condemnation by embracing the message and those who will be destroyed by God eternally because of their rejection of the message.

⁵² οἷς μὲν ὁσμὴ ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον, οἷς δὲ ὁσμὴ ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν – As an apostle, Paul, along with his apostolic workers, with their aroma of Jesus, affect non-believers who lack a changed inwardness by pushing them even more toward eternal condemnation if they continue to disbelieve, and they affect believers with God-given authentic biblical inwardness by pushing them even more toward eternal salvation and life.

⁵³ καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἰκανός – Paul’s and Timothy’s question is with the false apostles in mind. Who really qualifies to be an apostle and have a genuine negative or positive effect on other morally depraved human beings that is coming entirely from a position of accurate truth and authority?

⁵⁴ οὐ γὰρ ἐσμὲν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν – The Corinthians were experiencing two different kinds of apostles—those who sold their message for monetary gain and those who provided it freely. Only the latter, i.e., Paul, Timothy, et al., were “from God” and could say that their message was “because of the Messiah” (ἐν Χριστῷ) and His teaching them. Was it the case that small, religious societies in the Roman Empire paid their teachers and officers, so that Paul is viewed as a charlatan because he does not demand to be paid, which comes from his view of God’s grace—that it cannot be obtained through a person’s making himself worthy of it? Certainly it was true of the sophists that they were paid for their wisdom and instruction. Thus, it may have been engrained in the culture that the only ideas worth hearing are those from reputable spokesmen who get paid. This is not much different from today.

⁵⁵ ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἐαυτοῦς συνιστάνειν; ἢ μὴ χρῆζομεν ὡς τινες συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν – There is nothing like a written reference to promote a person in his relationship with others. The false apostles must be questioning Paul’s and Timothy’s credentials. Do the Corinthians have adequate physical evidence for Paul’s apostleship, i.e., actual letters of recommendation from another greater authority, such as the Sanhedrin (?) in Jerusalem, other “churches,” or even themselves (as though the apostles need the approval of others to justify their apostleship)? While justification for believing the NT message partly comes from the status of the apostles as actual eyewitnesses, this justification also comes from the message itself. Does it correspond to self-evident knowledge and knowledge from good evidence that all human beings have or could obtain? In addition, Paul does not feel the necessity to emphasize his apostolic credentials at the expense of the other self-evident criteria that people demonstrate in the midst of their believing the apostolic message. A bit of a circular argument, but it cannot be avoided when we are talking about a transcendent Creator and His work of causing people to believe the truth, so that both the subjective element and the objective element of authentic belief play a necessary role in proving the truth of the message and the authority of Jesus the Messiah and his apostles.

⁵⁶ ἢ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν (ὑμῶν), γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων – Paul and Timothy consider the Corinthian Christians to be their letter of recommendation by virtue of the fact that God has changed their hearts and made them authentic believers, which they truly hope to be the case!! This change can be seen by others as the Corinthians continue to believe and obey the NT message that Paul and Timothy have presented to them.

“Your hearts” makes more sense in the light of the context, that it is the Corinthians’ belief and obedience that is all the “recommendation” that Paul and Timothy need to verify the truth of their message.

⁵⁷ ὅτι ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν – Paul and Timothy served the Corinthians by presenting them with the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, and God made them believers so that they can say that they are “from the Messiah” (cf. Acts 18:1ff.). Their belief and Paul’s and Timothy’s caring for them is all the recommendation that they need from and to them. Paul is an actual apostle, and the Corinthian Christians have the promise of eternal life. If the Corinthians want to deny either one of these, they do so at their own peril.

⁵⁸ ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξίν λιθίναις ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξίν καρδίαις σαρκίνοις – The two phrases “not with ink” and “not on stone tablets” probably refer to two different kinds of “letters of recommendation” that false apostles are using to verify their apostleship. The first letter is one written on papyrus with ink from some group or Christian community who claim that they can legitimate the false apostles’ authority, but Paul is not explicit as to who is this group. The second letter is the false apostles’ themselves claiming that their obedience to the divinely written ten commandments on stone tablets as part of the Mosaic Covenant (a part for the whole) legitimates their authority in contrast to Paul who has told the Gentile Christians in Corinth that they are not obligated to follow this covenant (cf. Romans, Galatians). Paul will go on to refer primarily to this second letter so to speak by using the example of Moses and his shining face to contrast God’s effect externally and internally with respect to Timothy’s and his laying a claim to being true apostles.

In addition, the two phrases “with the Spirit of the living God” and “on organic tablets of human hearts” to refer to the same kind of letter which is a proper “letter of recommendation” for an apostle, i.e., God’s internal work in the Corinthian Christians, and Paul will go on to talk about the same internal work of the Spirit of God in Timothy and him to substantiate his own claim to being a true apostle.

Thus, God has written the NT message on the Corinthians’ hearts through the work of His Spirit, i.e., His activity within the creation (cf. Jeremiah 31:33 – But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people). This is eternally more important than any physical letter of recommendation to or from human beings and is entirely sufficient for Paul and Timothy in comparison to what the false apostles are saying. It also ought to be sufficient to the Corinthian Christians, if they truly grasp the NT message that Paul and Timothy have presented to them so as not to be led astray by the false apostles. Therefore, anyone who focuses on the Mosaic Covenant as a necessary condition or basis for obtaining God’s mercy is wrong in their claim to have a letter of recommendation from God. In contrast, Paul is claiming that what God has done inside the Corinthian Christians by changing their hearts and causing them to be authentic believers in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah is recommendation enough for Timothy and him. This also makes them a letter of recommendation “from the Messiah,” because they recognize that Jesus as the Messiah is the proper basis for their mercy from God, not obedience to the Jewish Covenant given to the nation of Israel by God.

⁵⁹ Πειθίθησιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν – Still speaking only of the apostolic workers and their authority from God, Paul’s and Timothy’s confidence is really in the light of the Messiah’s appearance and existence and is directed toward God ultimately and not any human being who could declare them adequately qualified to be apostles.

⁶⁰ οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ’ ἑαυτῶν ἰκανοὶ ἐσμεν λογίσασθαί ὅτι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy look to the author of the story, God, for any sense of confidence that they might have in fulfilling Paul’s responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles. Confidence in themselves or any other human being, as is the case with the false apostles, is infinitely less significant than confidence in God.

⁶¹ ὃς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἄποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζοοποιεῖ – The false apostles believe that they are qualified to be apostles on the basis of some written letter of reference, whether an actual letter of reference written with ink and papyrus or their claiming that they are bona fide obeyers of the Mosaic Covenant. Paul’s and Timothy’s comment is that relying strictly on anything written as the false apostles are doing, even the ten commandments of the Old Covenant, will bring only eternal condemnation, because it misses the point of God’s qualifying true apostles for their task and eternal life on the basis of *the inner work of His Spirit*. It is within the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 that God says that He really will fulfill His promise to make of Abraham’s descendants a great nation by changing their hearts.

This issue boils down to whether people find the legitimacy of their Christianity in something which human beings have written (or even done) which is external to both the Bible and themselves or in themselves which God has done by means of His Spirit. Our tendency as human beings is to believe that the only proper way to acquire legitimate and justified authority and rights is by means of written authorization from a respected group of leaders. This is the thinking behind drivers licenses and passports. The government authorizes me to drive a car or enter into another country as a citizen of this country after meeting certain requirements and criteria. But Paul is pointing to only that which God has done within him which gives him legitimacy as an apostle of Jesus the Messiah, and this is in line with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

⁶² εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις – Paul and Timothy switch from referencing both written letters from human leaders and the ten commandments of the Mosaic Covenant to referencing only the written letters, so to speak, on the stone tablets of the Mosaic Covenant. The similarity is that they both are external to a person’s heart and inwardness, thus providing no help in and of themselves for qualifying someone to be an apostle or teacher of the apostolic message. Therefore, strict reliance on them without taking into account what God is doing inside people according to His Spirit and grace will not lead to an accurate assessment of a person’s spirituality. Indeed, strict reliance on external matters leads to

“death,” by which Paul probably means eternal death ultimately because of his contrasting this with the work of the Spirit by which people gain eternal life through Jesus’ death and advocacy (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:10).

⁶³ ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως διὰ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ τὴν καταργουμένην – cf. Exodus 34:29-35. Paul and Timothy now reference the event of God’s giving the Mosaic Covenant (for the second time; cf. Exodus 19,20) and how much fanfare and demonstration of God’s greatness accompanied it. It included the skin of Moses’ face acquiring a bright shine whenever he met face to face with God’s theophany on the top of Mt. Sinai. Paul admits this was truly glorious, even though the impressive display of God’s glory on Moses’ face would fade over time, which probably indicated that something more than the external aspects of the covenant was going to be necessary in order for a person to share in God’s glory through forgiveness and eternal life. Simply making Moses’ face shine was impressive, but not as impressive nor specific to the issue of eternal forgiveness as making his heart be different and working within him to motivate him towards believing God and leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

⁶⁴ πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἢ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ – Paul and Timothy will now make several statements to contrast the greatness of the New Covenant and the inward work of the Holy Spirit with the greatness of the Mosaic Covenant and its external displays of God’s glory (or any other external display of God’s glory, and therefore any external criterion produced by human beings, such as a letter of recommendation), if all one does is look at the externally written commandments on the stone tablets in contrast to the inward internal writing of the Torah by the Spirit of God (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34), not that God did not work internally in some of the Israelites, including Moses, under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant in Old Testament times. In addition, even the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 30 promises that God will change the hearts of the nation of Israel. Therefore, both this promise and the New Covenant passage of Jeremiah 31 must be implying that the Jews’ properly and inwardly keeping the Mosaic Covenant will be in connection with the Messiah and his appearance, i.e., his second appearance when he sets up the millennial kingdom in Israel.

Also, Paul is implying that not even Moses relied on external criteria for his authority instead of on the internal work of God within him. It is the latter that made Moses’ service of people more glorious and awesome in comparison to the bright and glorious shine of His face after being in the presence of God.

⁶⁵ εἰ γὰρ τῇ διακονίᾳ τῆς κατακρίσεως δόξα, πολλῶ μᾶλλον περισσεύει ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξῃ – Paul and Timothy refer to the the Mosaic Covenant where God indicated its greatness that was relative to the rest of what He was doing within His eternal plans and purposes by virtue of the fact that Moses’ face did not retain its shine after he had been in the presence of God. Yet Paul and Timothy grant that external obedience to the Mosaic Covenant does demonstrate some level of glory because, after all, it is God’s covenant with Israel. However, external obedience alone results in condemnation from God, not His mercy. Therefore, serving and obeying God which results from God’s inward work through His Spirit is even more glorious because of its effect of a person’s acquiring a good standing of being justified before God and forgiven by Him—through the Messiah (implied) (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).

And this is in the midst of the fact that there actually is no external shine on the faces of Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers. Yet, Paul and Timothy inwardly demonstrate a greater awesomeness than Moses did externally, because the New Covenant with its promise of inwardness and provision for eternal mercy through the Messiah’s sacrifice and offering (cf. Hebrews) is more awesome than the Mosaic Covenant.

⁶⁶ καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδοξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης – Paul is saying that God’s glory which was manifest on Moses’ face is nothing in comparison to the glory and awesomeness which He manifests through working within Timothy and him as apostolic co-workers who proclaim the message of Jesus as the Messiah, belief in which results in eternal mercy and life for both them and their listeners. A face made shining by God is definitely glorious, but not as glorious as a heart which has been changed by Him and ends up believing in Jesus as the Messiah, which is the basis for a person being saved and obtaining eternal life..

⁶⁷ εἰ γὰρ τὸ καταργούμενον διὰ δόξης, πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ – The key elements between externalities and inwardalities is that they both were sanctioned by the transcendent Creator for the sake of properly worshiping Him. However, while the former look good in the present realm, they do not in and of themselves qualify a person for eternal life. Instead, the latter are invisible in the present realm and yet do qualify a person for eternal mercy and life. The former are temporary, e.g., the shine on Moses’ face, while the latter are permanent and eternal (similar to the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices of bulls and goats vs. Jesus’ Melchizedekian priesthood and his sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 7-10)).

⁶⁸ ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα – Paul and Timothy can act boldly in their presentation of the NT message because of the certainty of the eternal permanence of not only the message but also God’s making the effects eternal of what they do. They, through Jesus’ role as crucified Messiah and the Spirit’s inward work, will acquire eternal life in comparison to the temporary shine of Moses’ face and the temporary glory that it brought him in the presence of the people of Israel.

⁶⁹ καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου – This almost seems presumptuous on Paul’s and Timothy’s part, but they compare themselves and Paul’s apostolic authority to Moses, who had to hide something that faded, while Paul and Timothy reveal something that is permanent. Exodus 34:30 says that Aaron and others were afraid to approach Moses because of the shine on his face. Therefore, the most likely reason for why he covered his face was so that they would no longer be afraid and he could converse with them up close. It was not because he did not want to know that the shine faded over time, and he was embarrassed by this so that he needed to hide it.

How does Paul know that the shine faded? Probably from reasoning through the effects of God’s presence externally vs. the

effects of God's presence internally. Once Moses left God's theophanic presence, the cause of the shine on his face was gone, and would it not seem reasonable that Moses' face would eventually return to its normal state?

⁷⁰ ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν – Even though Moses' hid the glory of God which was being manifested on his face, there was still another problem for why the Israelites were not being affected positively by God's glory—their hard hearts. Their own innate rebellion and hardened minds and hearts toward God were keeping God's glory hidden from them, and Paul has been implying that this problem can be solved by only God Himself through the inner work of His Spirit. Thus, the Israelites of Moses' day were abject rebels against God inwardly. So they may have been afraid of the shine on Moses' face, but they were not properly afraid of God.

⁷¹ ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει, μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται – Paul exploits Moses' keeping the veil over his face to hide God's glory to talk about the Israelites' remaining in a state of being hidden from God's glory properly throughout their history up to his own day. In effect, they hid themselves from God's glory through the hardness of their hearts (cf. 3:15) and are doing so now when they refuse to embrace Jesus as the Messiah in a proper manner, i.e., by seeing him as the very basis for obtaining God's eternal mercy instead of trying to use their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as either the basis or a necessary condition for doing so. Paul says that this is clear too from the fact that belief in Jesus, i.e., someone's being in the Messiah, would indicate a soft and changed heart that only the Spirit of God can bring about.

⁷² ἀλλ' ἔως σήμερον ἡνίκα ἂν ἀναγνώσκῃται Μωϋσῆς, κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται – Paul then moves from the veil over Moses' face to the veil over the hearts of the nation of Israel. The Jews are still mostly hard-hearted with respect to the truth, because they fail to recognize the limited importance of the Mosaic Covenant in comparison to Jesus the Messiah, along with what God had been teaching in the OT regarding the Spirit of God and changing their hearts.

⁷³ ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα (Exodus 34:34, LXX – ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσπορεύετο Μωϋσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ, περιηρείτο τὸ κάλυμμα ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι) – Paul and Timothy paraphrase Exodus 34:34 to the effect that just as Moses removed the veil over his face whenever he met with God and listened to Him, so should any Jew remove the veil from his heart he meets with God to listen to Him and His truth. The question, though, is how can a Jew do this? Paul answers the question in the next verse.

⁷⁴ ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία – Paul is saying that it is God and His Spirit who removes the veil from any Jew's heart, i.e., circumcises his heart (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:1-10; Romans 2:28,29), so that he can hear what God says and embrace it with authentic belief. Thus, the Spirit frees the Jew from his veiled heart which prevents him from being “in the Messiah” (cf. 3:14).

⁷⁵ ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτρίζομενοι – Paul switches from the idea of the veiled heart of the Jew back to the veiled face of Moses in order to say that he and all other believers such as the Corinthians have chosen to remove the veils from their faces so to speak (by the inner work of the Spirit of God). This has allowed them to meet with God, listen to what He says of the Messiah, believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and thereby reflect in their lives the glory and awesomeness of God as they believe and align their behavior with the moral commandments of God—instead of relying on their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as either the basis or a necessary condition for eternal life.

Louw & Nida suggest the meaning “reflect” for κατοπτρίζω, which makes more sense in the light of the reference to Moses' experience.

⁷⁶ τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος – Christians are in the process of being transformed in a sense from strict rebels against God into morally perfect beings that involves a temporary glory for them of believing the truth of God in the midst of their current moral depravity and will eventually result in a permanent glory of being morally perfect in the eternal Kingdom of God. Their moral perfection will be “the same image” of the glory of God and His inherent moral perfection. And this transformation is all God's work, i.e., the Spirit's work, which is His work that is the most important within the creation with respect to what happens internally to sinful people.

⁷⁷ διὰ τοῦτο, ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν, οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν – God in His grace gave Paul and Timothy both His mercy and the responsibility to proclaim the NT message to the Gentiles through Paul's being assigned the role of apostle to the Gentiles. Paul has described and referred to a significant amount of suffering which Timothy and he have experienced because of their performing their responsibility as apostles among people who have been hostile to their message. But nothing that human beings do discourages Paul and Timothy from being confident about either their own eternal salvation or their actions of serving people on behalf of God. They simply keep going despite the obstacles and hardships.

⁷⁸ ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνῃς – What are “the things that one hides out of sense of embarrassment?” In this context, they must pertain to the false apostles and be similar to Moses' hiding the fading of the shine on his face. And Paul says that they renounce these things, meaning that they repudiate them while not hiding them? Therefore, they would be things that appear to be glorious in connection with the false apostles but which also do not maintain their glory. They are external only and not germane to the issue of authentic belief. And the false apostles would promote them because they are not willing to understand completely the depth of their own depravity and the necessity of the Spirit of God's work within them. Thus, they hide this too, which is the cause of everything else they are doing wrong.

In contrast, Paul and Timothy are saying that they are openly and thoroughly against their depravity and their complete inability to please God, as well as against referring to anything external that does not retain its “shine” so to speak as that which is at the center of God's purposes for manifesting Himself through people to the world.

Paul also says that the false apostles would be embarrassed to reveal their depravity and the fading luster of their external qualities, because they are relying on them to motivate others to remain focused on God. But like Moses' fading shine, they are

not intended to cause people to remain focused on God. The contrasting dynamic is God's grace and Spirit. People need His grace and the fulfillment of His promise of salvation and eternal life through something other than the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., through the New Covenant of the Spirit and the permanent, eternal mercy which is obtained through the crucified Messiah who intercedes on behalf of people.

⁷⁹ ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ – Whatever the false teachers are hiding and leaving out of their message as they demonstrate the natural, immoral part of their humanity by proclaiming falsehood (the profound evil condition of man), Paul and Timothy are all about the truth in regard to God, themselves, and their audience. From other passages it is clear that Paul is completely willing to disclose his sin, that of originally trying to destroy the Christian movement. This is just how anti-God he was. He also discloses the absolute necessity of the grace of God in solving the problem of people's sin, all of which is appropriate to fill out the entirety of people's understanding of God. A message which leaves any one of these things out is actually not being respectful of people's minds which God has designed to take in the whole truth regarding how He grants mercy to sinners.

Paul is also implying that any attempt to encourage people to worship God by using only external elements such as outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant or any other religious system that is based on the Bible (or not) is simply an attempt to trick people into following one's own religion rather than being faithful to the biblical truth. This attempt is also just a distortion of the truth.

⁸⁰ εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις ἐστὶν κεκαλυμμένον – In spite of Paul's and Timothy's making all the important information regarding God's mercy as clear as possible to people, they are aware of the fact that some people will reject this information and refuse to seek God's mercy as He wants them to. And Paul also knows that if people do reject their message of Jesus as the Messiah, it is because it has been concealed ultimately by God from them and from their fully grasping it. And the purpose of God's keeping them from truly seeing its value so as to embrace it is so that He may justly and rightly destroy them.

⁸¹ ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ ἀγῶσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ – Even though God is writing the story of human history and ultimately is the one who causes the truth of the gospel to be concealed from people, nevertheless Paul says that the created adversary of God, Satan, plays a significant role in the inability of people to see clearly and embrace the truth. Thus, the combination of God's sovereignty, people's rebellion against God, and the influences of the adversary in the world prevents them from appreciating the salvific and eternal value of the NT message of Jesus as Messiah, who is the very icon and image of God, i.e., God within the created reality as His proxy and ruler over the creation from within it (cf. Colossians 1:15). Jesus is both the Son of God according to the Davidic Covenant as David, Solomon, and the other kings of Israel were, but he is also God in the creation, the human being who is God written into the story of creation, which no other Davidic king could claim. So Jesus is not only the Davidic king who can be called by the title of God as God's proxy on the throne of Israel (cf. Psalm 45), but he is also God who can be called God as the person within the story who fully represents the Father in moral quality and conduct like no other human being.

⁸² οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν – This is Paul's sly way of claiming that the false teachers are promoting more themselves than Jesus to the Corinthians. But Paul and Timothy are truly the Corinthian Christian's slaves in that they have been doing everything they can to enhance the Corinthians' understanding and belief in God and His grace along with Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, Paul and Timothy promote only Jesus, and if there is any reference to themselves, it is because Paul is an apostle, which is easily explained by his story.

But Paul always has to walk a very fine line between exercising his rightful authority as an apostle and promoting his apostleship so much that he sounds demanding and reliant on external matters like the false teachers. He promotes his apostleship, but only to the extent that he still promotes Jesus the crucified Messiah more than his apostleship. The false apostles are doing the opposite, promoting Jesus, but promoting their "apostleship" more.

⁸³ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν ἐκ σκότους φῶς ἴλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Again, Paul wants to state explicitly that whatever he is as an authoritative spokesman for Jesus and a slave of the Corinthians is solely because of God and His inner work within him through His Spirit. He backs up this statement by citing Genesis 1 and Isaiah 9 where God is said to produce light miraculously where there was formerly darkness. Paul's heart, before he became a genuine believer in Jesus as the Messiah, was the very definition of darkness, both morally and in terms of what he was believing intellectually. He was committed to evil, to rebelling against God, and to an understanding of reality which was false. But just as God at the beginning of the creation miraculously made light shine where there had been only darkness, so also He miraculously caused Paul to see the truth of the gospel and embrace it. God then went on to cause Paul to proclaim the truth in the midst of the culturally, intellectual, moral, and religious darkness of the 1st century Roman Empire. By inference, when any person listens to Paul's presentation of the biblical message, it will be God who miraculously changes the person's inwardness so that he grasps an understanding of God's glorifying Himself by using Jesus as the Messiah and ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God. The glory of God on Jesus' face so to speak is permanent and unfading, unlike the shine of God's glory on Moses' face. Staring at Jesus' face and God's glory on it is what the apostolic message of the gospel encourages people to do, knowing that Jesus never covers up his face. He always fully revealed his messiahship and role as the icon of God within the creation, and Paul always fully reveals the facts about Jesus, too.

⁸⁴ ἔχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν ὀστροκίνοις σκεύεσιν, ἵνα ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ἧ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐξ ἡμῶν – Next, Paul refers to God's miraculous light production in Timothy's and his hearts to state its effect on them as they face multiple difficulties in their lives as apostolic co-workers. Thus, the light shining in and out of Paul's and Timothy's hearts (cf. v. 6),

which is their enlightened understanding of the NT message as they proclaim it, miraculously resides in their beings by God's power and grace, but their bodies are destructible clay pots and shaped by God as their potter. This also means that God, not they, causes their proclaiming the gospel as well as their enduring and persevering in their faith through all the different kinds of suffering they experience.

Paul indicates elsewhere in his letters as well as here that God has designed reality such that the apostles are slated for rougher and more oppressive treatment by the world than his believing readers, even though his readers endure very harsh circumstances (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Thus, those who come closest to understanding, believing, and being able to articulate the apostolic message of the NT will probably find themselves at the greatest risk of being treated by the world as it happened to treat Jesus and the apostles and will have to rely on God's inner work to strengthen them to persevere in their authentic belief and to do whatever work God has assigned them in this world.

⁸⁵ ἐν παντί θλιβόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι, ἀπορούμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐξαπορούμενοι – Paul and Timothy, because they are constantly experiencing the innate hostility of the world towards truth, are also constantly being squeezed by this hostility in such a way that they are encouraged by the world to give up their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. In other words, this pressure is not on their physical bodies primarily, but on their faith. However, the world can never crush their belief, even if it crushes their bodies, because of God's faithfulness to ensure that they continue to believe.

Paul and Timothy also are occasionally uncertain about their future and exactly what it holds for them as Christians and apostolic workers, but they never despair of the future as if something they might encounter will destroy their faith, because they know that God has ordained and is faithful to cause their belief to persevere in all circumstances in the future.

⁸⁶ διωκόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπομενοι, καταβαλλόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι – Paul and Timothy also experience consistent persecution from unbelievers, and this persecution makes them feel as though the loving God has abandoned them. However, they know that He has not. Their persecution is simply part of His sovereign plan for them as apostolic workers. In addition, the persecution that Paul and Timothy experience is nothing short of their being pushed down hard physically, emotionally, and psychologically so that they “fall to the ground,” a fall that could destroy them in these three ways. However, God's faithfulness makes sure that their belief is never destroyed, no matter how much people try to make their belief and apostolic theology and message go away.

⁸⁷ πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ – In spite of all the difficult circumstances that Paul and Timothy encounter, the one thing that never leaves them is the message of the crucified Messiah and His resurrection to fulfill His role as Messiah and eternal advocate. This message reminds them of their own moral depravity and inability to do anything good in and of themselves. God must and does work miraculously by His grace within them. In this way, Jesus' death exists within them as they constantly repudiate their sinfulness and inherent evil, and Jesus' own eternal life also exists and reveals itself within them as God causes their faith to live, even if their bodies die. Therefore, God faithfully continues to fulfill His promises to Paul and Timothy while they faithfully endure whatever hardship and suffering God graciously sends their way.

⁸⁸ αἰεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν – This is basically a summary statement of 4:7-10, that God miraculously brings life and light out of the death and darkness of persecution and hardship which Paul and Timothy experience. Their view of life is that God's purpose for them specifically as apostolic workers is to take them through suffering in the midst of their own moral depravity, a kind of death and darkness, in order that the eternal existence of Jesus as the Messiah that came through His death remains the key element in their thinking and message, as well as in their physical beings that are destined for physical death. It seems that they are hardly given a break by God so that they do not rely on themselves but on God only for fulfilling their responsibility as apostolic workers who are required by God to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles.

⁸⁹ ὥστε ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν – The result of Paul's and Timothy's going through hardship is that the Corinthians get to hear a message that is based upon the concept of eternal life, so that they believe it for the sake of their own eternal salvations. Thus, while apostolic suffering and inherent moral depravity, “death,” occurs in Paul's and Timothy's experiences, genuine, biblical inwardness that will lead to eternal life, “life,” occurs in the Corinthian Christians as part of the process of the message of Jesus going from God through Jesus through Paul and Timothy to the Corinthian Christians. Of course, Paul is not claiming that the Corinthians are not experiencing hardship as a result of their faith, but he is defending his apostleship in the light of the influence of the false apostles on the Corinthians, hoping to show by the example of his faith persevering through all the suffering God has brought into his life just how genuine is his calling as an apostle.

⁹⁰ Ἐχοντες δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἔλάλησα, καὶ ἡμεῖς πιστεύομεν, διὸ καὶ λαλοῦμεν – cf. Psalm 116:10 – I believed when I said, “I am greatly afflicted” (דָּרַךְ יְהוָה בְּיָדֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּיָדֵי מִצְרַיִם). The LXX verse is Psalm 115:1 – Hallelujah. I believed; therefore I spoke. And I have been greatly brought low (αλληλοῦσα. ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα: ἐγὼ δὲ ἐταπεινώθην σφόδρα). Just as the psalmist was delighted that he continued to believe Yahweh for His promises and to speak to Yahweh in the midst of suffering, so Paul and Timothy have believed the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah and speak to people about it in the midst of their own suffering. If suffering, belief, and speaking to and about Yahweh are good enough for the psalmist, Paul and Timothy consider them to be good enough for them. By citing the psalmist's experience of suffering, believing, and speaking, they hope to defend further their divine calling to be authoritative spokesmen for the Messiah Jesus.

Paul also claims that for the psalmist, Timothy, and him, the cause of their believing and speaking is God, i.e., the Spirit of God who works within sinners to accomplish these results. Here, Paul calls Him the Spirit of belief, because He is the Spirit of God who causes belief—and therefore speaking also for Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers. So once again, God is the ultimate

source of their belief and their speaking, which is in contrast to the perspective and teaching of the false apostles, that they are not so incurably evil that they can believe and obey God in and of themselves.

⁹¹ εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ ἐγείρας τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς σὺν Ἰησοῦ ἐγερεῖ καὶ παραστήσει σὺν ὑμῖν – Paul and Timothy state that the intellectual basis for their continuing to believe God for His truth in the midst of their painful suffering is that fact that, just as God raised the Messiah Jesus from the dead, God has promised to raise them up from the earth or from the grave, whichever happens to be the case, when Jesus returns. In addition, the fact that God will present Paul and Timothy to Himself at the judgment along with the Corinthian Christians as those who will all be granted eternal mercy keeps motivating them to proclaim the biblical message—in spite of the suffering that comes from doing so. This “judgment” will be the first resurrection of Revelation 20 when God will transform all authentic believers alive or who have already died into immortal and morally perfect beings who will help Jesus in his millennial kingdom.

Thus, once again Paul and Timothy indicate the important connection between them as apostolic workers and the Corinthians, implying that the connection between the false apostles and the Corinthians is baseless and worthless.

⁹² τὰ γὰρ πάντα δι’ ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσασα διὰ τῶν πλειόνων τὴν εὐχαριστίαν περισσεύσῃ εἰς τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy can honestly say that everything negative that they are experiencing has its purpose in the Corinthians’ existence as authentic believers as a consequence of God’s grace. God has independently and sovereignly worked in many of the Corinthians to cause them to be inwardly biblical and believers in the Messiah. As a result, they will all be extremely grateful for the mercy and eternal life that God has granted them. In turn, this massive amount of gratitude will demonstrate God’s awesomeness, which is exactly what God wants and is His purpose for the creation’s even being a reality.

⁹³ Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαينوῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα – Paul and Timothy are saying that a grasp of all this theology that they have been expressing along with the Corinthians’ living out the theology is extremely encouraging to them. While they watch their physical bodies get older in preparation for dying, including in the midst of persecution that sometimes is physical and only enhances their awareness of their mortality, they know that God faithfully and lovingly works within them daily to cause them to believe right up to the end of their lives, which manifests the necessary requirement of their changed hearts for their qualifying for eternal life at the judgment.

⁹⁴ τὸ γὰρ παραυτίκα ἴελαφρόν τῆς θλίψεως ὁ ἡμῶν καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρους δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν – Paul and Timothy are able to put their apostolic suffering in perspective. It basically is nothing in comparison to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. And eternal life really cannot even have an accurate and precise measurement of its value put on it. In essence the very idea of eternal mercy, life, and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God is ineffable. While Paul can articulate fairly accurately his suffering in this life, he cannot articulate very well the experience of eternal life and moral perfection in the next life.

⁹⁵ μὴ σκοποῦντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα· τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια – Paul and Timothy know that they are going to die, but they are not discouraged by it or anything seemingly negative in the present realm, including the high level of suffering which they are experiencing as apostolic workers. They certainly see their suffering, and everything negative in the present realm that they personally encounter, but these things are so inconsequential in comparison to God’s returning Jesus the Messiah to earth to set up his kingdom in Israel and eventually to bring about the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, Paul and Timothy do not yet see eternal life. However, what they cannot see now is exactly what is most important and worthwhile to them. They pay the most attention to the future Kingdom of God, because everything in the present realm is merely leading up to it and relativized by it.

⁹⁶ Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνου καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομηὴ ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – Paul and Timothy, because of Paul’s calling as an apostle and authoritative and accurate spokesman of the message of Jesus as the Messiah, know exactly what is going to happen to them as genuine believers in Jesus.

Paul and Timothy are apostolically convinced that whenever their earthly, temporary bodies die or are killed by those hostile to the biblical message, they will acquire a permanent and eternal body in the Kingdom of God.

By speaking of their eternal bodies as that which will not be hand-made, Paul and Timothy are also alluding to the fact that the false apostles, whom they will discuss in more detail in chapter 11, focus on the temple in Jerusalem as the basis of their relationship with God, instead of on the Messiah Jesus and the “building” in the heavens so to speak that they will enjoy, new morally perfect bodies that God will build through His mercy. Thus, “in the heavens” refers to the nature of their new bodies which will be both immortal and morally perfect. In addition, “made by human hands” refers to the nature of their current bodies which are both mortal and immoral. Paul and Timothy are currently subject to physical death and still plagued by their moral depravity, in spite of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within them who has fortunately enslaved their commitments to God and morality (cf. Romans 6).

⁹⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθα ἐπιποθοῦντες – Paul and Timothy are hurting in the midst of the persecution and suffering that comes their way because of their being apostolic workers. They are also innately mortal and evil, and both these aspects and elements of their existential humanity results in pain while they encounter the hostility of the world towards God and the biblical message. Indeed, it really may be more their own sinfulness which is causing their groaning with repentance than persecution from unbelievers.

The positive side of this pain is that it leads them to long greatly and unceasingly for eternal life, for both an environment and an actual new body that are free from any negative elements of their current existence. They liken their understanding of this as feeling naked now and wanting to be clothed later—in eternity. The psychological and emotional discomfort of their inherent evil nature, along with their physical and emotional pain from persecution, are a kind of nakedness that their minds and hearts want to

escape. The only kind of clothing that will make them feel as though they are no longer naked is that of permanency and moral perfection, both of which they will experience in eternity in the Kingdom of God over which Jesus will rule.

⁹⁸ εἴ γε καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι [MT - ἐνδυσάμενοι] οὐ γυμνοὶ εὐρεθησόμεθα – Paul and Timothy could be offering a warning to themselves regarding perseverance of faith, without which even they will not obtain eternal life. Thus, the translation, would be, “assuming, of course, that we shall not be found naked after having taken off.” However, the context displays their confidence in God’s granting their eternal life and mercy, thus indicating that the MT with ἐνδυσάμενοι is correct as translated above. Paul and Timothy are confident that they will have something to show of which they will not be ashamed, i.e., not be naked, with respect to their lives as apostolic workers. Moral perfection in the eternal Kingdom of God is what they will show, and certainly there is neither guilt nor shame in it. Thus, an immortal and morally perfect state of being will feel like being fully clothed in comparison to the nakedness of their sinfulness and the effects they experience from unbelievers’ persecution.

⁹⁹ καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκῆνι στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ’ ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ’ ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς – Through the internal work of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Timothy have had their fundamental desires changed, from being content enough with nakedness, i.e., their inherent evil and mortality whereby they reject God and the biblical message, to being satisfied only with being clothed, i.e., becoming moral perfect and immortal in the Kingdom of God. This verse summarizes the previous verses.

¹⁰⁰ ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεός, ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος – Because God is behind the journey that Paul and Timothy are on, they can be confident that He will make sure that they complete the journey of arriving at their goal of eternal life, especially because they know that God’s Spirit is causing them to remain on the right path and that His Spirit is a bona fide down payment for their obtaining the final piece of merchandise, God’s eternal mercy and life. Thus, God alone is the one who has created Paul and Timothy to be those who long for moral perfection and the eternal Kingdom of God, having changed them by the Holy Spirit during the course of their existences on earth. Thus, they can call the Holy Spirit and His work within them a kind of down payment from God to them of what God will eventually “pay” them in whole and in perpetuity, eternal life.

¹⁰¹ Θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε καὶ εἰδότες ὅτι ἔνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἔκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου – Here Paul and Timothy state explicitly what they were implying in the previous verse, that because God is behind their existences as sinful human beings who are being rescued from His eternal condemnation, they are confident... (that they will survive God’s judgment and receive mercy). They have done a lot of traveling. They know what it is like to be away from home, indeed, far away from home relatively speaking in first century Roman Empire. Therefore, when they say that they are “away from the Lord,” they mean that they are still quite a distance from their final destiny of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. In the meantime, they are at home, which is to say that they exist in the present realm and in their mortal bodies that are innately evil.

¹⁰² διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν, οὐ διὰ εἴδους – This could sound like a “blind” faith. However, Paul and Timothy are saying that God has promised eternal life to authentic believers, and it has not yet happened to or for them. Nevertheless, Paul’s and Timothy’s belief is based upon the solid evidence presented by God throughout OT and NT history. And, certainly, Paul more than any other human being, including the other twelve apostles, has experienced such personal interactions with Jesus during the fourteen year period when he was relearning his biblical theology before setting out on his apostolic trips that he is absolutely convinced that the eternal Kingdom of God, which is not yet visible, will become visible when Jesus returns and first sets up the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel.

¹⁰³ θαρροῦμεν δὲ καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐκδημησάμενοι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημησάμενοι πρὸς τὸν κύριον – Thus, Paul and Timothy repeat the fact that they have confidence regarding transitioning from the present realm to the eternal realm, and this confidence comes from what God is doing within them, and this has resulted in their desire for this transition to be their fundamental desire. Because eternal life comes to only those who not only desire it more than anything but also demonstrate this desire through their commitment to love and morality, Paul and Timothy are both confident and resolved to desire it, to the extent that they would rather be immortal and morally perfect with Jesus in his kingdom than in their current circumstances on earth, even while fulfilling their apostolic responsibilities of proclaiming the NT message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah—as fulfilling as this is for Paul.

¹⁰⁴ διὸ καὶ φιλοτιμούμεθα, εἴτε ἐνδημοῦντες εἴτε ἐκδημοῦντες, εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι – Paul and Timothy obviously correctly connect the existence of their fundamental desire for eternal life with a desire to pursue moral obedience to God as long as they participate in the present realm. Therefore, whether they take the perspective that they are “at home” in their current, physical body, or they are “away” from the Lord, their desire is to obey God, because this demonstrates their having been set apart by the Spirit of God within their inner being.

¹⁰⁵ τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἵνα κομίσῃται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ᾧ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον – Because Paul includes the word “all” here, he means the apostles and all other Christians. The judgment seat of the Messiah is the final judgment of the two resurrections of Revelation 20 where Jesus as the Messiah will basically intervene on behalf of authentic believers and appeal to the Father for mercy on their behalf, while condemning unbelievers to eternal destruction.

Thus, Paul and Timothy provide a teleological basis for their pursuing obedience to God in the present realm. This basis is to reach the goal of surviving the final judgment. If a person does what is good, i.e., is a persevering believer in the truth of the NT message who demonstrates this belief with pursuing morality, he will receive what is “due” to him, eternal life, even though he does not deserve it. It is simply graced to him by God. If a person does what is evil, i.e., remains a rebel against God all his life, he will receive what he is due, eternal condemnation, and he will actually deserve it. This will occur at God’s judgment seat so to speak where the Messiah will provide his personal advocacy, and he will appeal for God’s eternal mercy for those who lived with

persevering faith in the present realm. In Revelation 20, we learn that mercy comes with the first resurrection at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, while condemnation comes with the second resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom.

As a result, we see that Paul and Timothy use business language, that normally includes working and earning a wage as part of its meaning, to communicate the truth of God's grace, which does not include earning eternal life. This demonstrates the inherent difficulty of biblical interpretation.

¹⁰⁶ εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν – Because Paul and Timothy have a firm intellectual grasp of the eternal consequences of these two different kinds of lives that will become apparent at the judgment, they seek to persuade people of these and the value of belief in Jesus as the Messiah and advocate at the judgment. This is part of their apostolic drive and motivation. People will encounter either mercy or condemnation at the judgment, either life that never ends or complete destruction, and Paul and Timothy feel the responsibility to inform them of not only these two possibilities, but also the means to escape eternal destruction, by believing that Jesus will be their mediator at the judgment.

¹⁰⁷ θεῶ δὲ πεφανερώμεθα· ἐλπίζω δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθα – This is what counts most to Paul and Timothy, that they are fulfilling their responsibility to God and that He knows it. Yet, Paul would want the Corinthians to recognize his purpose and actions in obedience to God, because it will work out to their benefit by their obtaining God's mercy and eternal life if they listen to him instead of to the false apostles.

¹⁰⁸ οὐ πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἀφορμὴν διδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ἔχητε πρὸς τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχόμενους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ – Ultimately, no strictly human act of recommendation works for Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers. Only God's recommendation does, e.g., through the miracles that they perform to affirm their authority and the subjective resonance that their message of Jesus as the Messiah causes. This may seem counterintuitive to us as human beings, even Christians, who in our age are used to hearing and seeing the justification and rationalization of a level of obligation and deference that we are encouraged to give speakers such that they deserve to be heard by us. For example, someone who has graduated from seminary and received ordination from a seminary, who has acquired a particular degree as a result of his studies, e.g., Ph.D., who has written books, etc., etc. But Paul is saying that the only people who deserve to be heard are the apostles and only on the basis of their having been given this responsibility by God as well as the fact that their message will resonate with a heart that has been changed by God's Spirit.

The pseudo-apostles like to brag about the effect they are having by producing prolific external performance of the Mosaic Covenant by many people, while all Paul and Timothy can offer as an ongoing sign of the success of their efforts is the message itself of Jesus as the Messiah and the very people who will brag about Paul and Timothy because they have recognized the truth of their message. This does not exactly fit with the world's definition and requirement for objective evidence, but it is nevertheless rational because of the dynamic that exists between the transcendent Creator and the reality of the story which He is telling in this created existence.

¹⁰⁹ εἶτε γὰρ ἐξέστημεν, θεῶ· εἶτε σωφρονοῦμεν, ὑμῖν – Here is what the Corinthians can brag about with respect to how Paul and Timothy “appear” outwardly in comparison to the outward appearance of the false apostles' obedience of the Mosaic Covenant. They appear either crazy or smart—all because of the Messiah and his death and resurrection to qualify to be people's king and priest. That is something really to brag about.

Paul and Timothy are realistic about the response that people will give them in the world. If they appear crazy to people with their message of a crucified and resurrected Messiah, and people reject this message because they appear crazy, then they are glad to look crazy for God's sake. It is part of the role that God has assigned them as apostolic workers. On the other hand, if they appear to be the smartest people in the world to believers, then this is what God has also planned as part of the process of collecting morally depraved human beings for His eternal kingdom by changing them inwardly through the work of His Spirit and convincing them of the absolute, rational truth of the gospel.

¹¹⁰ ἢ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς, κρίναντας τοῦτο, ὅτι εἷς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἄρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον – Paul and Timothy love Jesus for having demonstrated the need that they have as morally depraved men for his advocacy at the judgment. Jesus showed them through his death on the cross just how much they are incapable of acquiring God's mercy on their own. This is their death, that itself results in their abandoning being led by their own morally depraved selfishness and instead choosing to follow the Messiah, i.e., choosing to live a life pleasing to God in service of the Messiah and the news about him. Indeed, Jesus' death shows that all people everywhere throughout history deserve to die eternally, thus being an encouragement to all people to embrace the fact of their sinfulness and die to it by repudiating it so that they can be saved by Jesus and God's mercy as they believe in the former and appeal for the latter.

¹¹¹ καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἵνα οἱ ζῶντες μηκέτι ἑαυτοῖς ζῶσιν ἀλλὰ τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντι καὶ ἐγεθέντι – It is one thing to live for God through one's own self-efforts. It is another to live for a crucified Messiah who has demonstrated through his death that all self-efforts on the part of evil human beings deserve God's eternal condemnation. As a result, those people who have repudiated their sinfulness and inability to please God and now are alive so to speak to the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and God's eternal mercy through him will also commit themselves to behaving in such a way that they show that they are serving Jesus, who was morally perfect and who calls his followers to pursue being loving and moral in their own lives.

¹¹² ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν – Because of their apostolic understanding of God, Paul and Timothy do not bother with a person's external credentials for their being authentic Christians as the false apostles do in connection with the Mosaic Covenant, even though Jesus as the Messiah acquired his credentials through the physical act of dying on the cross after God verified his messiahship through his miracles and his teaching. However, after Jesus' resurrection, he became a different being through the Father's giving him an immortal body to replace the mortal one that he had when he was crucified. Likewise, the authenticity of a person's belief

is inward, not outward. Yet, his outward commitment to the things of God plays a vital role in his demonstrating his true belief. But all of this is in contrast to the false apostles who are so focused on people's outward actions that conform to the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, believing that these actions are what qualify a person for God's promise of eternal life.

¹¹³ ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαία παρήλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινὰ – Just as Jesus became a new, immortal creation after his resurrection, God has recreated a important element of those human beings who are authentic believers—their hearts and minds. Their old fundamental rebellion and enslavement to their moral depravity has been changed into an enslavement to the things of God and a fundamental desire for eternal life, mercy, and moral perfection at the level of their hearts and minds. This is what authenticates their belief.

¹¹⁴ τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς – Probably in contrast to the false apostles who always want to point to something they have done according to the Mosaic Covenant in and of themselves to qualify for eternal life, Paul reminds the Corinthians that God is the One who brings about what He desires in regard to His plans and purposes. And Paul is probably implying that of course it is God's sovereign grace which has resulted in Timothy's and his being changed from the status as God's enemies to the status as His friends. Thus, God Himself is the ultimate credential for anyone who wants something to point to outside himself as that which proves that he is a Christian, because God is the final source of this. Paul and Timothy can confidently say that God is the One and the only One who has brought about forgiveness for them. In addition, they can say with equal confidence that God has officially commissioned Paul, and therefore Timothy as his associate, to carry out the responsibility of being the sole apostle to the Gentiles.

¹¹⁵ ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς – Paul's and Timothy's specific responsibility as apostolic workers is to announce in every Gentile setting the fact that God has turned His enemies into His friends through the mercy acquiring actions of Jesus as the crucified Messiah. And this Paul and Timothy do with the authority and accuracy given to apostles, which God has entrusted into their care.

¹¹⁶ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ – Still speaking of only themselves, Paul and Timothy want people to respond positively to the apostolic message which they present, because it is actually God Himself who is appealing through them to sinners to be saved and escape His condemnation and destruction. And all this is on the basis of the messianic work of Jesus, which Paul describes in the next verse.

¹¹⁷ τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἀμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ – God caused Jesus to go through the experience of the punishment for disobedience of dying that he did not deserve in order that Jesus could successfully appeal to Him for mercy on behalf of morally depraved human beings at the judgment. Here, it makes sense that Paul and Timothy are referring to all believers as the “we” who “are justified before God by means of [Jesus].” Thus, Jesus becomes the solution to man's biggest problem, finding the means to escape God's wrath and condemnation and acquire His forgiveness with eternal life instead.

¹¹⁸ συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν μὴ εἰς κενὸν τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ δεῖξασθαι ὑμᾶς – Paul's and Timothy's job is to be examples of God's gracious stance towards sinful human beings who deserve only His condemnation and destruction by encouraging them to embrace the message of the Messiah regarding God's kindness and mercy, and to do so with all sincerity and perseverance so as to obtain eternal life. Thus, they work with Jesus as his apostolic workers and ambassadors, so that their goals are the same as those of Jesus and God.

Paul and Timothy, however, are concerned about the Corinthian Christians' faith because they seem to be so influenced by the false apostles who basically deny the fact that is God's grace alone that causes a person inwardly to meet the necessary condition of a changed heart first and then belief and moral obedience which follow afterwards. If the Corinthians buy into the message that their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is the primary condition and it also makes them worthy of God's blessing, even His mercy, then they risk abandoning the truth and missing out on God's blessings.

¹¹⁹ λέγει γὰρ καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι – LXX, καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι – In Isaiah 49, God encourages His servant, “Israel,” who seems more like one individual, that He will use him to raise up the nation of Israel and be a source of truth to the Gentiles. God also says that He will “keep” this servant and give him as a covenant to the people because He has helped him in the “day of salvation.” This day was probably the day Jesus went to the cross and needed the Father's/Yahweh's help in order to do so. And God helped him!!

Paul and Timothy see their job as the same as God's, to encourage those who belong to God's servant, Jesus, who himself belonged to the nation of Israel (cf. Isaiah 49:3-6), to regard each day as their day of salvation whereby they need God's help, resulting in their persevering in belief in the truth of the NT message from God. Therefore, as God listened to Jesus and helped him to endure his crucifixion, God listens to bona fide followers of Jesus and helps them endure such things as the error of the false apostles and any suffering they endure like that of Paul's and Timothy's in 6:4-10. This goes along with Paul's saying that God is renewing them day by day in their inner being (4:16).

¹²⁰ ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας – See note above. Every moment of the Corinthians' (and our) existences on earth is a good moment to cry out to God for help to believe Him for His grace and Jesus as our Messiah who will bring God's eternal mercy and life to them/us through his advocacy.

¹²¹ μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, ἵνα μὴ μοιμηθῇ ἡ διακονία – In the face of criticism from false apostles, Paul and Timothy can honestly say that there is nothing about what they are doing that can be criticized, because they are merely following God's and Jesus' instructions to be true apostolic workers while crying out to God for help in their belief and obedience just as Jesus did. Thus, they work hard to do what is right before God and the Messiah, and in their consciences they believe this is exactly what they are doing.

¹²² ἀλλ' ἐν παντί συνιστάντες ἑαυτοὺς ὡς θεοῦ διάκονοι ἐν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ, ἐν θλίψεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν στενοχωρίαις – Instead of giving God or anyone else reason to criticize them as they depend upon the grace of God, Paul's and Timothy's main concern is to fulfill the responsibility that God has given specifically Paul as the unique apostle to the Gentiles, realizing that their circumstances have been and will be various and, at times, extremely difficult—as they go on to describe in the rest of this verse and the following verses. But it will be all by God's grace that they endure any and every circumstance in which God places them. Anything negative refers to something that could potentially crush their faith in God as loving and faithful to them as His adopted sons.

¹²³ ἐν πληγαῖς, ἐν φυλακαῖς, ἐν ἀκαταστασίαις, ἐν κόποις, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις, ἐν νηστείαις – Obviously, these are all rather negative experiences.

¹²⁴ ἐν ἀγνόητι, ἐν γνώσει, ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ, ἐν χρηστότητι, ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ – These are all positive—single-minded commitment to God, His salvation by His grace, and their task of proclaiming the message of Jesus, having the true and correct knowledge of the gospel, being given the strength by God's Spirit to suffer through difficult circumstances without giving up either their faith or their sense of responsibility to speak the gospel to the Gentiles, acting kindly towards all people as representatives of God's kindness towards them, having the inward work of the Spirit of God as that which sustains their faith and motivation, and loving others not as a mere act in order to get their approval but out of genuine care and concern based upon God's love for them.

¹²⁵ ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας, ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ διὰ τῶν ὄπλων τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῶν δεξιῶν καὶ ἀριστερῶν – These also are all positive and not that much different from what Paul said in the previous verse—acting in their lives on the basis of the biblical truth, acting as a result of God's power through His Spirit to pursue doing the right thing, and fighting off error with the weapons of the truth of their own forgiveness and mercy from God that comes from who He is as gracious and loving.

¹²⁶ διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀτιμίας, διὰ δυσφημίας καὶ εὐφημίας ὡς πλάνοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς – These are the effects of encountering both believers and non-believers who respond differently on the basis of what kind of heart they have—either one committed to God or one not committed to Him. There are two kinds of people in this world. Those who think the biblical message is basically nonsense, and those who embrace it as the most valuable information and, therefore, the truth. Compare Paul's description of Timothy and himself in 5:13.

¹²⁷ ὡς ἀγνοούμενοι καὶ ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν, ὡς παιδευόμενοι καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι – The first part of this verse continues the description of responses from the two kinds of people in this world as in the previous verse. Plus, Paul says that Timothy and he are constantly being trained by God to continue to know and believe the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, and, regardless of their natural process of heading towards physical death or how intent people are in getting rid of them by killing them, they will not die until God has sovereignly planned for them to do so—not a minute earlier and not a minute later.

¹²⁸ ὡς λυπούμενοι ἀεὶ δὲ χαίροντες, ὡς πτωχοὶ πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτίζοντες, ὡς μηδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες – Paul and Timothy experienced a tremendous amount of loss in their lives as well as sheer poverty at times. They feel like men who have been stripped of everything. However, none of this dissuaded them from grasping and believing the NT message. If anything, these experiences strengthened their resolve to be patient for the eternal Kingdom of God, because they knew that it would be there that they would be permanently rich and the owner of all the wealth, especially moral perfection, with which God planned to shower on them as authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

¹²⁹ τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέφωγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, Κορίνθιοι, ἡ καρδιά ἡμῶν πεπλάτνυται – Paul and Timothy have been completely forthright with the Corinthians. There is no pretense in their efforts and life, as they are implying that there is in regard to the false apostles, who, by definition, must be living a kind of hypocrisy because of their erroneous view of the Mosaic Covenant and God's grace. Paul's point in this letter and in describing his own life is that it really is only the grace of God that has made him an apostle and continues to cause him to operate in a genuine apostolic manner towards all those whom God has given him to proclaim the gospel.

¹³⁰ οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν, στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχθοις ὑμῶν – Paul and Timothy are saying that there are no restrictions on what they are sharing with the Corinthians, while the opposite is not true. The Corinthians are putting restrictions on what they are willing to share with Paul and Timothy because of what they are experiencing within their own guts, i.e., concern about not living up to the standards of the false teachers and of even themselves because of how much they have bought into the message of performing for God to obtain, indeed make themselves worthy of, His blessings through the Mosaic Covenant.

¹³¹ τὴν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν, ὡς τέκνοις λέγω, πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς – If there is an even exchange of information about God and experiences, then the Corinthians will see that they should be on the same page as Paul and Timothy (but mainly Paul as the one truly called to be the apostle to the Gentiles; notice the first person singular “I”) believing the NT message and experiencing both the approval and disapproval of other people while depending solely on God's grace through the Messiah to obtain His blessings. Ironically, this allows people to be completely open and honest about who they are as sinners in need of God's grace because of their complete inability to do anything to save themselves from God's condemnation and as those rejected by the world in need of God's inner strength to persevere in their belief during their suffering.

¹³² μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνομίας, ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος – Paul uses the metaphor of a yoke on the shoulders of two oxen who are plowing together. If one oxen is stronger than the other, then it will pull the plow away from a making a straight furrow. Cf. Deuteronomy 22:10, You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Paul wants the Corinthian Christians to yoke themselves to someone who will cause their furrow to be straight and in line with the truth and not veer off into the error of promoting the Mosaic Covenant at the expense of the centrality of Jesus and

God's grace.

In this context, it is the false apostles who are the unbelievers whom Paul and Timothy are exhorting the Corinthians to avoid hitching their yoke to. The NT message and one that promotes the "lawlessness" and "darkness" of following the Mosaic Covenant in order to earn God's blessing are like oil and water. They cannot mix together in any biblically appropriate way so as to lead people properly towards God's promise of eternal mercy and life.

¹³³ τίς δὲ συμφώνησις Ἰησοῦ πρὸς Βελιάρ, ἢ τίς μερίς πιστῶ μετὰ ἀπίστου – Cf. Psalm 18:4,5 and the use of Belial to refer to wickedness and evil. Paul is asking what agreement does Jesus as the Messiah have with the evil of the false apostles who are completely missing the significance and importance of God's grace through him in contrast to attempting to obtain God's blessings through a person's following of the Mosaic Covenant.

This is the same as asking what is the agreement between belief and unbelief, which is obviously none! So Paul is urging the Corinthian Christians to stay away from the false apostles.

¹³⁴ τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναφ̄ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος, καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι λαός – The erroneous message of the pseudo-apostles, even if it is all about the Bible, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant, is as much idolatry as that of the pagans who reject the Bible and God outright.

Exodus 29:45, LXX, καὶ ἐπικληθήσομαι ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός; Leviticus 26:12, LXX, καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῶν θεός, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μοι λαός. This is to say that, even though God dwelt in the OT temple, He also dwelt among the people of Israel. In addition, just as OT Israel were God's people and were supposed to keep themselves separate from falsehood and immorality, Paul and Timothy are saying that so should the Corinthians be with respect to the false apostles, especially because God is dwelling and working among and in the Corinthians. cf. Deuteronomy 23:14, "Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you."

¹³⁵ διὸ ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν καὶ ἀφορίσθητε, λέγει κύριος, καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε, καὶ ἐισδέξομαι ὑμᾶς – Isaiah 52:11, Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD (LXX, ἀπόστητε ἀπόστητε ἐξέλθατε ἐκεῖθεν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε, ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῆς ἀφορίσθητε, οἱ φέροντες τὰ σκεύη κυρίου). In Isaiah 52, God is exhorting the Jews, those who have the responsibility to hold and use the sacred instruments of worship in the temple (the Levites), to keep themselves separate from all other people who are not willing to obey Him. Paul and Timothy are saying that the Corinthians should do likewise in relationship to the false apostles. Cf. Ezekiel 20:34, "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you (καὶ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς) from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out." Just as God promised to separate the Jews as authentic believers from all other peoples and unbelievers, so God through Paul is separating the Corinthian Christians from the false apostles and all other unbelievers.

¹³⁶ καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῖν εἰς πατέρα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μοι εἰς υἱὸς καὶ θυγατέρας, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ – 2 Samuel 7:14, LXX, ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν. Isaiah 43:6, "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth (LXX, ἄγε τοὺς υἱοὺς μου ἀπὸ γῆς πόρρωθεν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας μου ἀπ' ἄκρων τῆς γῆς)." II Samuel 7:8, "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts (LXX, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ), 'I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.'" cf. Hosea 1:10, "Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and in the place where it is said to them, 'You are not My people,' it will be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God.'" Thus, just as God has chosen David's descendant, Jesus, to be His Son and ruler over the Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God, and just as He has chosen the Jews to be His people who will eventually fully embrace the truth of the NT message and follow Jesus as their king in the temporal Kingdom of Israel, so God has chosen the Corinthian Christians, even Gentiles, to be His people and rule with Jesus over the eternal Kingdom of God. Paul is implying that this is in contrast to the false apostles and anyone who would follow them. They cannot call God their Father as though they are the adopted children of God.

¹³⁷ Ταῦτας οὖν ἔχοντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας, ἀγαπητοί, καθαρῶς ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιοσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ – Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight his individual love for the Corinthian Christians, and by doing so, includes them in the "we" of those who possess all the promises of God pertaining to His being the Father of those who reject error and embrace truth as stated in the previous three quotes from the OT at the end of chapter 6. Paul also encourages the Corinthian Christians and himself to live their lives in a moral manner that is separate from that of people who are committed to error and evil, including the pseudo-apostles who say that they are followers of Jesus as the Messiah, but who clearly are not because of how they treat the Corinthians and how they present the Mosaic Covenant by emphasizing it above the New Covenant of the Messiah.

Thus, the "polluting of flesh and spirit" comes from pursuing the biblical message, in this case the Mosaic Covenant, with a false and self-centered perspective of how to please God, i.e., by outwardly following the commandments in order to make oneself worthy of God's blessings, just as much as from pursuing abject immorality of any pagan kind. The purity of relying of God's sovereign grace and believing that Jesus alone is the basis for one's salvation and receiving God's blessing is imperative in a sinner's life in order to be pleasing to God and to receive His promises as He stated to Israel in the previously quoted three verses from the OT at the end of chapter 6.

So Paul urges the Corinthian Christians along with Timothy and himself to finish their lives this way in the fear of God, i.e., in the context and sphere of fearing God's condemnation if they were to attempt to obtain salvation by any other methodology than

God's independent grace, mercy, and Jesus as their crucified advocate. This is how important it is to get this part of one's theology correct and to live it persistently while being confronted with all sorts of other ideas that could derail one's biblical understanding of God.

¹³⁸ χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς οὐδένα ἠδικήσαμεν, οὐδένα ἐφθείραμεν, οὐδένα ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν – Paul and Timothy have done nothing wrong toward the Corinthians, unlike the false apostles, who are using them for their own self-promotion and self-aggrandizement. As a result, Paul and Timothy urge these Christians to open their hearts and minds to them as authentic apostles (with Timothy as an authentic apostolic co-worker of Paul). Because of the influence of the false apostles, the Corinthian Christians had closed their minds and hearts to Paul and his authoritative message of Jesus as the Messiah. Paul has been arguing his defense as a true apostle and hoping that it is sufficient to convince these Christians to change their loyalty back to him, and therefore to Jesus. He will say in a moment, though, that he is actually convinced of this because of Titus' report about the Corinthians.

¹³⁹ πρὸς κατὰ κρίσιν οὐ λέγω προεῖρηκα γὰρ ὅτι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν ἐστε εἰς τὸ συναποθανεῖν καὶ συζῆν – Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight that these thoughts are coming mainly from him as the uniquely appointed apostle to the Gentiles. His whole purpose is to encourage the Corinthians in their genuine belief, not to condemn them for their false belief. This is because he is convinced that they are “in their hearts” so to speak, which is to say that they share hearts that have been changed by God in order to be committed to God and Jesus as the Messiah as the basis for their salvation. As a result, Paul is also convinced that eventually they will die together in their faith to obtain the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus and thereby live together in this kingdom for all eternity.

¹⁴⁰ πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς, πολλή μοι καύχησις ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν πεπλήρωμαι τῇ παρακλήσει, ὑπερπερισσεύομαι ἢ τῇ χαρῇ ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν – Paul further states that he is convinced that his readers are authentic believers in the Messiah which has allowed him to brag about their genuine faith to others. Thus he is full of encouragement and persuaded of their belief which allows him to rejoice in their eternal destiny in the midst of all of Timothy's and his experiences that are causing suffering in their lives. In other words, the Corinthians' being Christians helps make Paul's suffering bearable, probably because it allows him to feel good about all the work which he put into them to educate them in the faith.

¹⁴¹ Καὶ γὰρ ἐλθόντων ἡμῶν εἰς Μακεδονίαν οὐδεμίαν ἔσχηκεν ἄνεσιν ἢ σὰρξ ἡμῶν ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι ἔξωθεν μάχαι, ἔσωθεν φόβοι – These battles and fears which Paul and Timothy experienced in northern Greece, Macedonia, probably were first because of their Christianity (the “battles without” that were probably caused by persecution from unbelievers) and second because of their concern for how much the false apostles were affecting the Corinthian Christians (the “fears within” that the Corinthians were succumbing to the pressure of the false apostles).

¹⁴² ἀλλ' ὁ παρακαλῶν τοὺς ταπεινοὺς παρεκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ Τίτου – God's timing in Paul's and Timothy's lives was such that He caused Titus to meet up with them, which in itself was very encouraging to them, to see the friendly face of someone else who was committed to the gospel as much as they were. And Paul states that any true encouragement for those who are suffering in the midst of their faith comes from God, and He will indeed bring encouragement in some form so that believers can persevere in their faith and not give up on God's love, grace, and mercy for the sake of their eternal salvations.

¹⁴³ οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει ἢ παρεκλήθη ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἀναγγέλλων ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἐπιτόθησιν, τὸν ὑμῶν ὄδυρμόν, τὸν ὑμῶν ζῆλον ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ ὥστε με μάλλον χαρῆναι – While it was great for Paul and Timothy to be encouraged simply by meeting up with Titus, another true believer, it was even more encouraging for them to hear from Titus about the authenticity of the Corinthians' belief which manifested itself in how much they were thinking of Paul and longing to see or hear from him with respect to the true truth of his apostolic message while also genuinely mourning over their sin which he will speak about more in a moment—all of which we can assume is in contrast to the false message of the pseudo-apostles. This naturally led Paul to rejoice even more in the midst of his suffering because it further confirmed God's work within the Corinthians and the worthwhile effects of his hard work among them of educating them in the gospel.

¹⁴⁴ ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἐλύπησα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, οὐ μεταμέλομαι· εἰ καὶ μετεμελόμην, βλέπω γὰρ ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἐκείνη εἰ καὶ πρὸς ὄραν ἐλύπησεν ὑμᾶς – Continuing with the first person singular “I,” Paul takes full responsibility for what he and his associates wrote in the previous letter that caused the Corinthians to grieve. This would have been actually 3 Corinthians, a letter which we have lost. But the sorrow and grief of the Corinthians was worth it in Paul's opinion.

¹⁴⁵ νῦν χαίρω, οὐχ ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν ἐλυπήθητε γὰρ κατὰ θεόν, ἵνα ἐν μηδενὶ ζημιωθῆτε ἐξ ἡμῶν – While Paul regrets having caused the Corinthians to experience the pain of grief for what he said in the previous letter where he confronted their “sin,” he is glad that the ultimate effect was their dealing with their immorality before God. According to Titus, they actually repented of their sin, and Paul identifies their repentance as having been caused by God. Thus, Paul can see that God used Timothy and him as instruments of repentance in the Corinthians' lives for the purpose of their not experiencing the loss of their salvations. This was a theoretical possibility only in the sense that failure to repent of sin would have indicated a false faith on their part from the beginning. In other words, God's sovereign grace assures that people whom He has chosen and in whom He has worked by His Spirit to change their hearts will repent and persevere in their belief until the end of their lives.

When people face into their immorality, even though there is sadness, even grief, nevertheless, because of the apostolic message, the result is the prevention of loss of salvation, which would occur if their belief were not genuine. And genuine belief and repentance occur because God causes it by His grace for those whom He has chosen to receive eternal salvation.

¹⁴⁶ ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀμεταμέλητον ἐργάζεται· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται – Two kinds of sadness when a person realizes that he has done something wrong and immoral. One kind is in the midst of God's

working within a person during his life and producing authentic repentance that leads eventually to eternal salvation. The other kind lacks God's inward work and while the sadness itself appears genuine, it results in eternal condemnation instead of salvation. Therefore, unless a person is a complete sociopath, he can and will feel bad about his immorality, sin, and its effects in his life and the lives of others. And his sorrow and grief may even look like Christian sorrow and grief. But without God's inward work through His Spirit, this person's sorrow and grief is only in the light of its effects in this world and not in regard to its possible effects pertaining to eternal life and God's condemnation.

¹⁴⁷ ἰδοὺ γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ κατὰ θεὸν λυπηθῆναι πόσῃν κατειργάσατο ὑμῖν σπουδῇ, ἀλλὰ ἀπολογία, ἀλλὰ ἀγανάκτησιν, ἀλλὰ φόβον, ἀλλὰ ἐπιπόθησιν, ἀλλὰ ζῆλον, ἀλλὰ ἐκδίκησιν ἐν παντὶ συνεστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς ἀγνοῦς εἶναι τῷ πράγματι – Paul is truly excited to see what God has done in their lives through the sorrow which He has caused in relation to their sin which Paul exposed in his previous letter. It has resulted in all the elements which a Christian should experience in response to their sin. First, there is “earnestness,” i.e., an intense conviction to deal with the sin before God in a manner that is pleasing to Him and in line with having a heart that is oriented towards Him and committed to Him.

Second, there is “vindication,” i.e., not a getting defensive which could be the meaning of the word, but a willingness to defend the genuineness of one's belief by performing what is true repentance before God that recognizes how wrong one's sin is and the need for God's forgiveness and mercy if someone is going to escape His eternal condemnation.

Third, there is “indignation” or “anger,” i.e., a valid self-reproaching and irritation at being a sinner who longs to be different and morally perfect, which of course will be the case in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Fourth, there is “fear,” i.e., a sober realization that without God's eternal mercy, a person will experience His wrath and destruction, which would be the most unpleasant experience possible for a human being. Thus, this is not a paralyzing fear, which certainly fear can be, but a motivating fear to rush into the loving arms of God and appeal to Him for mercy and look forward to it for all eternity through Jesus' advocacy.

Fifth, there is “longing,” which must be a deep and persistent desire to be free of sin and made morally perfect in the eternal Kingdom of God. This is like the beatitude of hungering and thirsting for righteousness that is an important characteristic of an authentic believer.

Sixth, there is “zeal,” which is similar to the previous element, i.e., a strong motivation to deal genuinely with one's sin before God for the sake of obtaining His forgiveness and eventually eternal life and moral perfection. But it also probably involves the strongest of desires to avoid this and any other sin again in one's life—if this were at all possible. While it is not, nevertheless, we can pursue avoiding it as much as God's grace permits in the present realm.

Seventh, there is “avenging” of oneself, which is doing whatever one can to make things right if one's sin has harmed or hurt another person. Perhaps this is just saying, “I'm sorry.” Or it is more, depending upon what the other person says would help to make things right.

By engaging in all these elements of authentic Christianity and repentance, all the hardship that the Corinthians are going through from several sources (the false apostles, Paul's letter that has exposed their sin, God's inward work of pushing them into repentance, etc.) is unveiling the authenticity of their belief, as it is intended to do by God. And Paul here is definitely making it sound as though they had willfully and intentionally abandoned the apostolic message for a while, which would constitute sin in their lives of which they needed to repent.

¹⁴⁸ ἄρα εἰ καὶ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, οὐχ ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος οὐδὲ ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος ἀλλ' ἕνεκεν τοῦ φανερωθῆναι τὴν σπουδῇ ὑμῶν τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul's ultimate purpose, and, therefore, anyone's purpose in pointing out the evil actions of a Christian to a Christian, is to lead to this Christian's seeing his own authentic belief and enthusiasm for the apostolic message before God who will grant him eternal mercy. For Paul, it also involved his wanting to see sorrow and repentance from the entire Corinthians Christian community to the degree that they were all complicit in allowing this sin to go unchecked and ignored.

¹⁴⁹ διὰ τοῦτο παρακεκλήμεθα. Ἐπὶ ὅδῃ τῇ παρακλήσει ἡμῶν περισσοτέρως μᾶλλον ἐχάρημεν ἐπὶ τῇ χαρᾷ Τίτου, ὅτι ἀναπέπαιναν τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul and Timothy found great encouragement in Titus' report about the Corinthians when they all met up in Macedonia, in northern Greece. And they rejoiced even more that Titus himself found such refreshment in his own spirit from the genuineness of the Corinthians' faith and the way they treated him.

When Christians really connect in regard to the gospel of God's grace, mercy, and promise of eternal life in the midst of life's hardships and suffering, there is nothing better for a person's soul and spirit. It is truly refreshing, invigorating, encouraging, and satisfying. You can just take a deep breath and say, “Yes, God is good.”

¹⁵⁰ ὅτι εἶ τι αὐτῷ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κεκαύχημαι, οὐ κατησχύνθη, ἀλλ' ὡς ἵπαντα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ἐλαλήσαμεν ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν ἢ ἐπὶ Τίτου ἀλήθεια ἐγενήθη – Paul and Timothy had bragged to Titus about the Corinthians' belief, because they had experienced it more recently than Titus (cf. 8:6 – Titus had begun the process of the Corinthians' collecting a donation for the Judean Christians). Fortunately, Titus found the Corinthians to be genuine in their belief when he arrived to engage with them in the issues that were going on amongst them in Corinth and in the midst of the effect of Paul's previous letter where he had confronted their sin (the “just as we spoke all things to you because of the truth”).

¹⁵¹ καὶ τὰ σπλάγγνα αὐτοῦ περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς ἔστιν ἀναμνησκομένου τὴν πάντων ὑμῶν ὑπακοήν, ὡς μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐδέξασθε αὐτόν – Titus grew in his appreciation for and desire to be with the Corinthian Christians as he observed their response to Paul's letter and the gospel, that it was truly genuine.

It was not that Titus himself caused them to be afraid and tremble, but he was representing God and the truth of the NT and apostolic message which they had first heard from Paul. This is what engendered fear in the Corinthians and which was so heartwarming for Titus. Cf. Philippians 2:12,13 – “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence

only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

¹⁵² χαίρω ὅτι ἐν παντί θαρρῶ ἐν ὑμῖν – Paul is very happy that, to the extent a human being can know another person’s inwardness, he knows that the Corinthians are authentic believers and followers of the apostolic message. Thus, all the defense of his apostleship which he has presented in this letter is in the light of the things in chapter 7 where he has expressed that he is convinced of the authenticity of their faith. Consequently, this has been a softer defense than that in Galatians, because Paul has confirmation of the Corinthians’ zeal for the gospel in the light of the possible influence from the false apostles.

¹⁵³ γνορίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν. ἀδελφοί, τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Μακεδονίας – Paul and Timothy (notice the switch to the first person plural) are saying that, ultimately, God’s grace caused the Macedonian Christians of the cities in northern Greece to do what they did and perform their own gracious acts toward others, which they go on to explain in the next verses.

¹⁵⁴ ὅτι ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἢ περισσεῖα τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν καὶ ἢ κατὰ βάθους πτωχεῖα αὐτῶν ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν – God’s grace caused the Macedonians to demonstrate and authenticate their having been inwardly changed by God in the midst of suffering. Indeed, this is the purpose of suffering in a Christian’s life, to authenticate his being changed through the work of the Holy Spirit and his fundamental desire for God’s eternal mercy and eternal life. But it is only God’s grace that causes this whole process to take place and succeed.

Paul and Timothy got to experience God’s grace working within the Macedonian Christians when they saw that they not only rejoiced in the NT message of eternal life, but also, in spite of their own economic poverty, chose to be generous to other Christians who were in need—so that these two things together revealed the wealth of their single-minded commitment to God’s project of eternal life and mercy for His chosen people. In other words, their economic poverty was no hindrance to their being rich in their resolve to remain committed to the gospel and God.

¹⁵⁵ ὅτι κατὰ δύναμιν, μαρτυρῶ, καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν, αὐθαίρετοι – This last word, αὐθαίρετοι, literally means self-choosing, i.e., of one’s own accord without coercion from anyone else. In the midst of great suffering and economic poverty, rather than becoming paralyzed in their ability to do what was good and right, the Macedonian groups of Christians remained capable of making independent and moral choices that benefited others who were in need.

¹⁵⁶ μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους – Not that they had to ask Paul’s and Timothy’s permission, but they truly desired to help their fellow believers (probably the Jewish believers in Jerusalem; cf. Romans 15:25-27) even though it would put a strain on their own financial situation. They begged Paul and Timothy for the opportunity of serving the Jewish Christians, i.e., for the privilege of being gracious to them.

¹⁵⁷ καὶ οὐ καθὼς ἠλπίζαμεν ἀλλὰ ἑαυτοὺς ἔδωκαν πρῶτον τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy were surprised by the Macedonian Christians’ great generosity. They had hoped that they would embrace the apostolic message and give themselves to God in authentic faith as a result of God’s choosing to work within them and change their inwardness. But what they also experienced was their wonderful love toward Paul and Timothy and other needy Christians in exceedingly great quantity. It sounds as though Paul and Timothy made mention of the great need among these other Christians, and the Macedonian believers jumped at the opportunity to respond to this need. And all this happened in the light of what God desires for how His people act.

¹⁵⁸ εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι ἡμᾶς Τίτον, ἵνα καθὼς προενήρξατο οὕτως καὶ ἐπιτελέσῃ εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην – So Paul has sent Titus back to the Corinthians with this letter and with the goal of receiving the collection of financial aid from them to pass on to Paul. Certainly, Titus had originally hoped that the Corinthian Christians would also contribute to the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and they had agreed, but without following through yet (cf. v. 10 – a year ago). Now, he had all that much more reason to persuade the Corinthians to complete their commitment, because of being able to report on the exceeding generosity of the Macedonian Christians.

¹⁵⁹ ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἐν παντὶ περισσεύετε. πίστει, καὶ λόγῳ, καὶ γνώσει, καὶ πάσῃ σπουδῇ, καὶ τῇ ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀγάπῃ, ἵνα καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε – Paul and Timothy have seen the Corinthians excel in belief, speech, knowledge, and enthusiasm for the NT message, and they have seen them excel in authentic Christian love that comes from the apostolic message and Paul’s and his companions’ demonstration of it toward them. Thus, they urge that they be just as enthusiastic about demonstrating their faith by completing their commitment to help the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

The word σπουδῇ is used three times in this chapter to refer to the Corinthians’ enthusiasm for the gospel (8:7), the Macedonians’ enthusiasm to provide the Jerusalem Jews with a financial gift (8:8), and Titus’ enthusiasm to care for the Corinthians (8:16).

Another word that seems synonymous, προθυμία, i.e., willingness, is used four times in this context (8:11,12,19; 9:2).

¹⁶⁰ οὐ κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν λέγω, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἐτέρων σπουδῆς καὶ τὸ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον δοκιμάζων – Paul has no intention of actually commanding the Corinthians to comply with his request, but he has no problem citing the example of other followers of God (especially Jesus!! – cf. v. 9) to try to motivate them—to do the same thing *of their own accord too*. It would make sense that Paul would use the first person singular here to emphasize that he ultimately is the apostle in contrast to Timothy and Titus. And Paul is being very careful not to be coercive, but instead to respect the freedom and individuality of the Corinthian Christians as they consider their responsibility with respect to the financial gift which they originally choose to make. He truly wants it to be of their own free will and out of their understanding of the gospel and the grace of God.

¹⁶¹ γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι’ ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχεῖα πλουτήσητε – The greatest example that Paul can cite is that of Jesus’ graciously giving, out of his wealth as the icon of God and ruler of the creation, his life for morally depraved human beings, in order to make them rich with eternal forgiveness,

salvation and life. In this example, then, poverty is first Jesus' death on the cross, the complete absence of physical life, and wealth is his status and role as the Son of God and king of the eternal Kingdom of God. Then, wealth for the Corinthian Christians is receiving God's blessing of eternal life and mercy.

So at least the Corinthians are not experiencing the same kind of poverty as Jesus, i.e., death, in their giving of their financial wealth to the Jerusalem Christians. However, neither does their wealth include being God in the creation and ruler of the universe. They are simply saved from God's eternal condemnation and destruction for the sake of eternal life, which is certainly wealth enough for any morally depraved human being.

Most commentators interpret the transition from wealth to poverty of Jesus to be his leaving heaven as the 2nd person of the Trinity and becoming a man on earth.

¹⁶² καὶ γνώμην ἐν τούτῳ δίδωμι – Paul has no intention to strong arm the Corinthians into doing what is good and right. Yet, there is always the example of Jesus, and Paul offers his thoughts as an apostle on this whole issue.

¹⁶³ τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει, οἵτινες οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλαιν προενηύξασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι – The Corinthians and Titus had agreed together a year ago to help the Jerusalem Christians. While Paul is not commanding them to follow through on their commitment, he is saying that doing so, i.e., doing good towards others and fulfilling one's commitment to them, is better for them than not doing so, especially when they had originally decided and were eager to make this gift a year ago.

He also points to the desire that arose within them to act in this loving way. In other words, their actions were not going to occur simply because they were choosing to act, but also because there was a genuine desire and earnestness within them to do something that would be incredibly loving and generous towards their fellow believers. And they should still listen to this desire as itself a good thing within them brought about by the grace of God through His Spirit and His work within them.

¹⁶⁴ νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε, ὅπως καθάπερ ἡ προθυμία τοῦ θέλαιν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐπιτελέσαι ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν – Even though Paul is merely giving his opinion (v. 10), nevertheless he can still use the imperative mood to urge them to follow through on their year old desire to help the Jerusalem Christians. Why? Because this is better than not doing so (cf. v. 10), especially because their desire was in line with what God desires for all Christians, to love one another by meeting each other's needs.

¹⁶⁵ εἰ γὰρ ἡ προθυμία πρόκειται, καθὸ ἐὰν ἔχη εὐπρόσδεκτος, οὐ καθὸ οὐκ ἔχει – Ultimately, inwardness is more important than the outward manifestation of doing what is good, i.e., of the Corinthians' giving the financial gift itself, regardless of how large or small is the gift. Nevertheless, it is also true according to Paul's argument in these verses that if a Christian has an eager desire to meet another Christian's need, then he should follow through on this desire as part of what constitutes righteousness and proper obedience to God. Cf. the story of the widow and her two mites in Luke 21:1-4 where the greatness of her gift was really in her inwardness, not in the two coins that she gave. Nevertheless, authentic inwardness permits someone to give from poverty, not just from wealth. Indeed, to give when the world would assess someone's situation as preventing them from giving is the result of authentic inwardness, which actually is like Jesus' situation, who gave out of the wealth of his status and role (cf. v. 9). Thus, Christians give whatever they can like Jesus—out of their status and role as saved morally depraved human beings.

¹⁶⁶ οὐ γὰρ ἵνα ἄλλοις ἄνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἰσότητος – Here is an interesting point that Paul is making. He is saying that one of the goals of God's grace *within the Christian community* is to motivate Christians to meet the needs of other Christians, not so that the latter will not suffer while the former suffer, but so that both may have their needs met to the extent possible by the sharing of resources.

Thus, the "equality" in this verse refers ultimately to Christians' recognizing that they have equal status before God and therefore an equal right to be loved by one another, even if their financial resources never happen to be equal within the body of Christ.

¹⁶⁷ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ τὸ ὑμῶν περισσεύμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, ἵνα καὶ τὸ ἐκείνων περισσεύμα γένηται εἰς τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα, ὅπως γένηται ἰσότης – Two different abundances or one? Physical and then spiritual resulting in equality of hearts and status; or, physical and then physical, resulting in equality of physical needs being met? While at first the second option makes more sense to me, I am thinking more and more that the first option is actually correct. Paul is saying that the financial "abundance" (even though it is not much) of the Corinthian Christians exists for the financial need of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, while the original abundance of the gospel message among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem exists for the spiritual need of the Corinthians that will result in their eternal salvation because they have embraced this message.

Paul says the same kind of thing in Romans 15:25-27 after having collected all the gifts to the Jerusalem Christians from the Christian communities in both northern and southern Greece, **15:25** "However, I am going to Jerusalem to serve the set apart ones, **15:26** because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a certain contribution to the poor among the set apart ones in Jerusalem. **15:27** They were well pleased, and they are indebted to them, because, if they contributed to the Gentiles from their spiritual things, then the Gentiles are obligated to serve them by means of material things."

¹⁶⁸ καθὼς γέγραπται ὁ τὸ πολὺ οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν, καὶ ὁ τὸ ὀλίγον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν – cf. Exodus 16:18, οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν ὁ τὸ πολὺ, καὶ ὁ τὸ ἔλαττον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν. Except for the word order, these are the same. When the Israelites gathered the manna off the ground, regardless of how much each collected, the amount fit their physical needs according to God's measurements. Paul is saying that the equality of status for the sake of eternal salvation exists for all Christians in the midst of their loving one another by providing for each other's needs, whether financial needs as the Corinthian Christians are doing towards the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem or spiritual needs as the Jewish Christians are doing towards the Corinthian Christians by basically having provided the gospel through Paul. Therefore, as a result of either the financial or spiritual needs being met in the midst of having being the people of God and embracing the gospel, all the Christians have the one most important need met of eternal mercy and life from God on an equal basis.

¹⁶⁹ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ τῷ δόντι τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδὴν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ Τίτου – Again, it is God's grace who has even motivated Titus by working inwardly in him to be eager to help the Corinthians follow through on their commitment to send a

gift to the Judean Christians. Thus, the earnestness that the Corinthian Christians originally had to meet the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem is the same earnestness that Titus has to encourage the Corinthian Christians to follow through on this original desire. God, therefore, is making everyone eager to help all those who are involved in this mutual love which Christians are showing one another. This is part of the working of His grace in individuals that affects the group at large.

¹⁷⁰ ὅτι τὴν μὲν παράκλησιν ἐδέξατο, σπουδαιότερος δὲ ὑπάρχων αὐθαίρετος ἐξήλθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς – The word “God’s” is not in the text. But the context, especially v. 16, indicates that it is God who has inwardly persuaded Titus to help the Corinthians follow through on making their gift to the Jerusalem Jews. Nevertheless, Paul is pointing out that an important and vital part of the dynamic that exists between God’s transcendent causation and the existential reality of human choices is the human being’s embracing God’s transcendently caused motivation. Could Titus have not embraced it? Absolutely not. But it is still important from a relational and moral accountability standpoint that he do so. αὐθαίρετος (=on the basis of one’s own free and independent agency, literally his self-choosing) is the same word that Paul used of the Macedonians’ decision to be generous (v. 3). Thus, there is the importance of human beings’ making good decisions apart from being compelled to do so by other human beings, while they also are being caused to make these good decisions by God and His sovereign control of all reality!!!

¹⁷¹ συνεπέψαμεν δὲ μετ’ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀδελφὸν οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν – Paul goes back to the first person plural to say that there was another Christian who had become well-respected among all the Christian groups in the region of western Asia Minor and who was being sent by Paul and Timothy to accompany Titus to Corinth to urge them to follow through on their eager desire to provide the financial gift to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

¹⁷² οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν συνέκδημος ἡμῶν σὺν τῇ χάριτι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυρίου δόξαν καὶ προθυμίαν ἡμῶν – The Christian groups in Macedonia handpicked this man to be Paul’s, Timothy’s, and Titus’ traveling companion. They did so in order that this man could glorify Jesus by helping with the administration of the financial gift from the Macedonian groups to the Jerusalem Jewish Christians and with the enhancing of Paul’s and his apostolic workers’ interest and eagerness in serving God. There is also probably the issue of maintaining financial propriety by including even one more well trusted individual to help Paul, Timothy, and Titus in the transportation of the money.

¹⁷³ στελλόμενοι τοῦτο, μή τις ἡμᾶς μωμήσῃται ἐν τῇ ἀδρότῃ ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν – Paul and Timothy figured that the more respected people they had traveling with them with the large gift from the Macedonian Christians, the less likely others would be tempted to accuse them falsely of financial malfeasance.

Handling money matters well, openly, and honestly within the community of believers is of utmost importance to Paul for the sake of the truth of the gospel.

¹⁷⁴ προνοοῦμεν γὰρ καλὰ οὐ μόνον ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπων – Even though, ultimately, it is only God who matters in terms of who knows whether or not Paul is doing what is right, he realizes that appearance of good as opposed to appearance of evil is still a good thing. Yes, God is determinatively in control of human actions, relationships, and opinions formed by what people see going on around them, but it still makes sense for us to care about helping people with respect to what they think about the truth on the basis of what they see and experience when relating to us.

And the additional help is wise not only for eliminating any suspicions from people, but also for pleasing God, i.e., that more people have the opportunity to be obedient to Him.

¹⁷⁵ συνεπέψαμεν δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν ὃν ἐδοκιμάσαμεν ἐν πολλοῖς πολλαῖς σπουδαίον ὄντα, νυνὶ δὲ πολὺ σπουδαιότερον πεποιθήσει πολλῇ τῇ εἰς ὑμᾶς – This is a second person appointed by Paul and the others to accompany Titus to Corinth. Like the first person, this one has demonstrated great faithfulness to the NT message and morality, as well as understanding of it. Therefore, he too will add to the confidence that people can have that nothing immoral is going to happen with respect to the large financial gift that the Corinthians will be giving to Titus and the two men to take to Paul who with them will then transport it to Jerusalem.

Besides, this second person has become very encouraged by Titus’ visit to Paul and Timothy in Macedonia in regard to the genuineness of the Corinthians’ belief and therefore the increased likelihood that they will actually follow through on making their gift to the Jerusalem Jews. Thus, he himself is eager to participate in urging them to do so.

¹⁷⁶ εἴτε ὑπὲρ Τίτου, κοινωνὸς ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός· εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, δόξα Χριστοῦ – Titus’ participation in Paul’s carrying out his responsibility of proclaiming the NT message speaks for itself. The other two men are envoys of the Christian groups throughout Macedonia who are the very glory and brilliance of the Messiah. Paul means that by the miracle of the grace of God, there truly are people in this world who are genuine followers of the Messiah, thus representing him and thereby being a source of glory to him by their existence.

In this way, Paul assures the Corinthians that Titus is an authentic apostolic companion and co-worker of his. The same is true of Paul’s and Titus’ Christian brothers who are accompanying Titus to Corinth. All of them can be trusted implicitly with not only the gospel but also a large amount of money which they will be conveying to Paul and then on to Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁷ τὴν οὖν ἔνδειξιν τῆς ἀγάπης ὑμῶν καὶ ἡμῶν καυχῆσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐνδεικνόμενοι εἰς πρόσωπον τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν – Without trying to coerce the Corinthians, Paul is nevertheless pulling out all the stops and setting the Corinthians on a stage in front of Titus, the two men who are accompanying him, and the Christian groups from which they come as he exhorts them to follow through on their original commitment to help the Jerusalem believers financially. He wants their love for their fellow needy believers to be genuine and his bragging about them not to be empty and in vain.

¹⁷⁸ περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἀγίους ἱερισμόν μοι ἐστὶν τὸ γράφειν ὑμῖν – Paul continues using the first person singular and encourages the Corinthian Christians by way of appealing to them on the basis of what he is really hoping is the case with respect to their being motivated to follow through on their gift, that he actually does not have to say anything to them about it. And yet in his own careful apostolic way, he is.

¹⁷⁹ οἶδα γὰρ τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν ἣν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καυχῶμαι Μακεδόσιν, ὅτι Ἀχαΐα παρεσκευάσται ἀπὸ πέρυσι, καὶ τὸ τῶν ὑμῶν ζήλος ἠρέθισεν τοὺς πλείονας – By reminding the Corinthian Christians’ of there year old “enthusiasm” for sending a financial gift to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, Paul kindly comments that he thinks that it is actually unnecessary for him write to them about this issue and exhort them to follow through on their commitment. Indeed, their willingness has motivated the Macedonian Christians to send a gift also. So all the more reason for the Corinthians to do the same because they have been a good example just with their commitment to do so.

¹⁸⁰ ἔπεμψα δὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς, ἵνα μὴ τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κενωθῆ ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ, ἵνα καθὼς ἔλεγον παρεσκευασμένοι ἦτε – Even though Paul has just commented that it is unnecessary for him to write about the Corinthians’ getting their gift ready, he nevertheless tells them that he is sending Titus and the other two brothers to collect the Corinthians’ donation. And this is so that Timothy’s and his bragging about their eagerness to be so generous to the Judean Christians is not an empty one and so that when he shows up, they have already collected the gift from each of those in the Corinthian Christian community.

¹⁸¹ μὴ πως ἐὰν ἔλθωσιν σὺν ἐμοὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ εὐρωσιν ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους κατασχυνθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα μὴ ᾔλεγω ὑμεῖς, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ – Apparently there is the likelihood that some of the regular Macedonian Christians will accompany Paul and Timothy to Corinth, and he does not want the Corinthians to be embarrassed by not having their gift all ready to present to Paul to take to Jerusalem. Paul and Timothy have spoken so highly to the Macedonian Christians of the Corinthians’ willingness to be generous in their gift, that it would be a rather embarrassing situation if it turned out otherwise when they all arrived in Corinth.

¹⁸² ἀναγκαιὸν οὖν ἠγησάμην παρακαλέσαι τοὺς ἀδελφούς, ἵνα προέλθωσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ προκαταρτίσωσιν τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν, ταύτην ἐτοίμην εἶναι οὕτως ὡς εὐλογίαν ὅκαὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν – While Paul does not feel that it is necessary to exhort the Corinthians to follow through on their commitment, he does feel it necessary to send Titus and the other brothers ahead of Timothy and him to make sure the Corinthians have prepared their gift for Paul to take to Jerusalem. In this way, he is more certain that the Corinthians will give out of their own God-given sense of generosity than reluctantly if Paul himself were to show up to collect the gift. He does not want them to give out of a sense of obligation strictly to his apostolic authority. He truly wants to be of their own desire simply to be loving and generous.

¹⁸³ τοῦτο δέ, ὁ σπειρῶν φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει, καὶ ὁ σπειρῶν ἐπ’ εὐλογίας ἐπ’ εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει – Proverbs 11:24 – There is the one who sows, and he adds all the more. And there is the one who refrains from uprightness. It will result only in his being in need.

Proverbs 22:9 – He who shows mercy will be blessed, because he gives from his bread to the poor.

Referring to principles expressed in Proverbs 11:24 and 22:9 to the effect that a wise person of authentic belief is willing to be generous to people in need for the sake of demonstrating his fundamental desire for eternal life, Paul uses this principle here for the Corinthians. It would be easy to use this verse to teach Christians that generous financial giving (even to a church) will result in God’s increasing their financial wealth, but this is neither what Proverbs 11:24/22:9 nor what Paul means here. Because he is tying the Corinthians’ willingness and eagerness to give financially to their God-given change of heart, he is also tying their pursuit of morality to the eternal outcome of their lives.

¹⁸⁴ ἕκαστος καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ, μὴ ἐκ λύπης ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης· ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός – To the extent possible for a morally depraved human being who also has a changed heart, each Corinthian should be generous toward the Jerusalem Christians freely and willingly, not grieving over the loss of what he is giving and thereby doing so grudgingly. His sole motivation should not be simply because he feels compelled to give. Willingness to let go of earthly wealth in order to demonstrate that one ultimately desires eternal life is what pleases God.

¹⁸⁵ δυνατεῖ δὲ ὁ θεὸς πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεῦσαι εἰς ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν παντὶ πάντοτε πᾶσαν αὐτάρκειαν ἔχοντες περισσεύητε εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν – Just as Paul said in 8:1, the ultimate cause of any human being’s good choices is God’s grace. And, indeed, God can and does freely cause as much of His grace as is necessary to work in a person to motivate him to make good and moral choices that correspond to the person’s commitment to obtaining His eternal mercy and life. It is just that His grace does not make a person morally perfect in the present realm.

¹⁸⁶ καθὼς γέγραπται· ἔσκόρπισεν, ἔδωκεν τοῖς πένησιν, ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – cf. Psalm 112:9, מְנַחֵם לְפָנָיו ; מְנַחֵם לְפָנָיו ; מְנַחֵם לְפָנָיו ; ἔσκόρπισεν, ἔδωκεν τοῖς πένησιν ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος. The psalmist is speaking of both the generous morality of the true follower of Yahweh and his existence lasting into eternity—all as a result of God’s abundant grace to this human being. This godly man and follower of Yahweh has distributed and given his wealth to the poor [pl.] who are possibly being oppressed by those who are committed to evil, and thus his (not the poor person’s) righteousness and good works towards the poor will endure into the age of the age, i.e., eternally. This means that the one who is fundamentally committed to God will obtain eternal life.

Therefore, although the Macedonians (and some of the Corinthians to a degree) lack great wealth to make a financial gift to the needy Jews in Jerusalem, nevertheless, Paul is convinced that God will work graciously in all them as His ultimate people destined for eternal life to motivate them to make some gift to them.

¹⁸⁷ ὁ δὲ ἐπιχορηγῶν σπόρον τῷ σπειρόντι καὶ ἄρτον εἰς βρώσιν χορηγήσει καὶ πληθυνεῖ τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν καὶ αὐξήσει τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης ὑμῶν – Paul continues with the agricultural metaphor of a farmer’s obtaining seed from a generous source in order that he may sow the seed generously and reap a great harvest from his efforts.

Thus, God provides both the seed and the bread of food that results from the harvest. Paul says that God will multiply the seed for the Christian and the results from his righteousness.

By His grace, God will supply enough motivation for the Corinthians to make their financial gift to the Jerusalem Christians, and He will increase the effect by causing others to thank God for His grace in the Corinthians and for their generosity.

¹⁸⁸ ἐν παντί πλουτιζόμενοι εἰς πᾶσαν ἀπλότητα. ἥτις κατεργάζεται δι' ἡμῶν εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ – In this immediate context, God is making the Corinthians wealthy with respect to their single-minded commitment to do what is right and generous in every situation, and this is producing thanksgiving to God in others through Paul's and Timothy's sharing this information. So the “seed” that God provides is single-minded commitment that results in the “bread for food” of giving generously to the Jerusalem Christians, so that the results from their “righteousness” will be many people giving thanks to God for His grace towards the Christians who have been so generous and for these Christians' generosity that has met the needs of other Christians. The “bread for food” of the Corinthians has been distributed to the poor in Jerusalem and produced also a great sense of gratitude to God in all Christians who learn of their generosity.

¹⁸⁹ ὅτι ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης οὐ μόνον ἐστὶν προσαναπληροῦσα τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν ἁγίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ περισσεύουσα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τῷ θεῷ – The effect of the Corinthians' choice is twofold—it is not only meeting certain Christians' physical needs, but it is also bringing praise and thanksgiving to God as people recognize that He and His grace are causing people to be so generous as part of His inner work of properly moving people towards their ultimate goal of eternal mercy and life.

¹⁹⁰ διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης δοξάζοντες τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας – Again, the theological and human interrelationship between the Corinthians' choice to be generous and the meeting of the financial needs of the Jerusalem Christians. By virtue of the Corinthians' demonstrating that they are genuine believers in God, other Christians who hear about this will give praise and admiration to God for their submitting to the truth of the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah. They will also praise God for the Corinthians' dedication and commitment to participate with them and all others who have also made a financial gift to the Jerusalem Christians.

¹⁹¹ καὶ αὐτῶν δεήσει ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐπιποθούντων ὑμᾶς διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφ' ὑμῖν – The Macedonian and other Christians, who have given to the Jewish Christians and who hear about the Corinthian Christians' doing the same thing, will long to be in the eternal Kingdom of God with them, i.e., with those who are presently experiencing the extraordinarily great grace and mercy of God. Thus, they pray for them that they may persevere in their faith and meet them in eternity.

Thus, they all understand properly the principle that God's active work of grace in people throughout their lives as Christians is what ultimately causes and motivates people to do what is right and is proof of the unity which God has created among them all. God holds all Christians together by His having changed their hearts and continuing to work within them. Then, when people reveal God's inward work through their righteous, moral, and loving actions, everyone praises God and rejoices that they will all meet each other in the eternal Kingdom of God, thus leading even to prayer for each other to persevere in belief and arrive at their goal together.

¹⁹² χάρις τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ – Paul is grateful for God's gift of the Messiah, inner grace, eternal mercy, and salvation, and it is all this that motivates even him to act generously and mercifully toward others, as exemplified by this letter.

¹⁹³ αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς – Paul identifies himself as the main spokesman in this letter. A little later in v. 10, he will mention that people are criticizing him for being weak when present with the Corinthians and heavy-handed in his letters. Paul puts it here in these terms—that he is humble in their presence and yet bold in his letters. He also is claiming to be encouraging and persuasive toward them with genuine gentleness and kindness that comes from his association with Jesus as the Messiah, i.e., on the basis of God's grace and mercy toward him in choosing to grant him a changed heart and the responsibility of being the one and only apostle to the Gentiles. Paul is always walking a fine line between being authoritarian and uncaring while also being authoritative as an apostle.

¹⁹⁴ δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρὼν θαρρήσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμησαι ἐπὶ τινὰς τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας – The Corinthians already consider Paul to be quite intimidating when he writes his letters in contrast to a meekness that he displays in their presence. In this situation, some of them have become convinced by the false apostles that he is an “apostle” who is only out for himself, because Timothy and he are not encouraging these Gentiles to obey the Mosaic Covenant and be Jewish in the midst of their following the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. Therefore, Paul does not want to have to change the way he typically is in their presence and take on a boldness that could look intimidating to others, in order to try to convince them that he is a true apostle.

¹⁹⁵ ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατεύομεθα – Paul admits that, for Timothy and him, there is an inherent participation in the world of unbelief and rebellion toward God simply by being a human being within the created reality. However, their battle with the false apostles and with the Corinthians who have become convinced by them is definitely not an act of rebellion toward God. It is right in line with the truth of the biblical message.

¹⁹⁶ τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικά ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων – Paul is indicating that people can derive their authority for arguing what is true from two sources, either strictly from the created reality and their own inherent moral depravity or from God who has either commissioned someone to be His spokesman as a prophet or an apostle or moved a person to be in the process of deriving as best he can the truth from the divinely appointed prophets and apostles. Paul is saying the latter case is true of Timothy, his co-workers, and him.

Paul likens people's erroneous worldviews to which they are committed to fortresses and bastions, the walls of which that they will protect to the death to prevent from being breached by the truth. They will use their whole being to fight off the truth in order

to hold on to their lies. However, Paul, Timothy, and the others employ not only his authority as an apostle but also the biblical truth that he has learned and taught to them to breach other people's defenses against the truth.

¹⁹⁷ λογισμούς καθαίρουντες καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαίρομενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ – In their moral depravity and rebellion against God, people think that they are being very clever by devising arguments in their heads that they believe represent absolute truth when they are, perhaps, part truth but also part lies, thus making them lies altogether. And they use these fallacious arguments and sophistries to battle against God's truth in order to justify their rebellion against Him. Even if people are not willing to admit their lies, Paul and Timothy still destroy these falsehoods with truth.

Continuing with the military metaphor, Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers with the responsibility to obey the Messiah who commissioned specifically Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles fight against, conquer, and capture falsehood, thus demonstrating that it is weaker intellectually and rationally than God's truth.

¹⁹⁸ καὶ ἐν ἐτοιμίῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή – Paul, as an apostle, along with Timothy as an apostolic worker, stand ready to see all rebellion against God punished and avenged by God at the final judgment when also the Corinthians' obedience will be brought to its completion and they humbly receive eternal salvation and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God through God's grace and mercy.

¹⁹⁹ τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς – This is the crux of the issue regarding truth and falsehood. Truth is about whether or not the inwardness of human beings has been changed such that they face into their moral depravity and humbly appeal to God for His mercy. However, because no one but God can see a person's actual inwardness, the measurement of it by other people is impossible, making an evaluation of even an apostle's success in his serving God impossible. Falsehood is about human beings' dressing up their external actions in order to appear good, while failing to face completely into their inner moral depravity. But external actions and their effect on others' external actions make it easy to evaluate someone's success, which is what the false apostles are claiming that can do with Paul. He simply does not look as successful as they are in getting people, i.e., Gentiles, to follow God, especially because they have the whole Mosaic Covenant to use as a measuring stick, which, by definition, is unavailable to Paul. The Gentiles are not obligated at all the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, it cannot be used as a measure of spirituality or religious success for Paul's effect on them.

Paul wants the Corinthians to compare their sense that they are followers of the Messiah to his also being a follower along with Timothy. They are just as convinced as the Corinthians that they are genuine disciples of Jesus.

²⁰⁰ ἐάν τε γὰρ περισσότερόν τι καυχῆσώμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἢς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι – This whole letter is on long defense of Paul's apostolic role and his unique authority to proclaim the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah with 100% accuracy and completeness. Timothy who accompanies him has chosen to share this responsibility with him as his student of the truth. It may appear as though he is bragging, but he has tried to defend himself with as little bragging as possible with the intention of encouraging his readers to embrace the truth for the sake of their eternal salvation. Therefore, if he has to keep on writing ideas to persuade the Corinthians of the truth, he will not be ashamed of doing so.

²⁰¹ ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν – Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight that he, personally, has never intended to be intimidating in his co-authored letters. Probably, the false apostles have used this kind of strategy in their dealings with the Corinthians. Paul is simply attempting to present truth in the most forceful way without being authoritarian, manipulative, and coercive.

²⁰² ὅτι αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησὶν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος – The honest truth that someone in the Corinthians group has expressed is that Paul's letters are much more impressive and potentially impactful than his physical appearance and oratory skills. Paul was not a person whom anyone looked forward to listening to, because he was such a poor speaker, which was especially noticeable in a Greek culture that had focused on oratory through their philosophers, especially the sophists who sold their speaking skills and knowledge in order to teach others. Cf. Luke 18:9 and Romans 14:3 for other uses of ἐξουθενέω = to view or treat with contempt.

²⁰³ τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος, ὅτι οἰοί ἐσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες, τοιοῦτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ – Paul's defense for Timothy's (and by implicaton, any other co-author of a letter to the Corinthians, e.g., Sosthenes) and his unimpressive letters is the truth of their actions in the presence of the Corinthians, i.e., by how they demonstrate love towards them—caring for them and not demanding that they support them or acknowledge how great they are. Paul's and Timothy's sole interest is in the Corinthians' following the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

²⁰⁴ οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς οὐ συνιάσιν – Paul and Timothy continue their non-intimidating defense of Paul's responsibility as the one, unique apostle to the Gentiles. The pseudo-apostles tout and promote themselves as authoritative spokesmen for God and the Messiah and basically demand that people affirm them as such. Paul and Timothy are not going to get into a worldly "success" competition with them by looking at outward effects, including possessing letters of recommendation from purportedly authoritative recommenders, letters that are supposed to constitute the proper credentials for being an apostle of Jesus the Messiah.

But Paul and Timothy do claim that the false apostles' only real measuring stick is themselves, which the false apostles would be glad to admit is true, but which also demonstrates that they lack an understanding of the biblical message that ultimately focuses on people's inwardness that cannot be humanly measured. Another way to say this is that by using obvious, external elements of the created reality to measure their success, the false apostles are not grasping the truth of God's reality.

²⁰⁵ ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμεθα ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρον, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν – Apparently, the false apostles are claiming that they have influenced people beyond where they have even traveled. Paul and Timothy refuse to do this.

²⁰⁶ οὐ γὰρ ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς, ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul and Timothy refuse to measure the success of their work by claiming that people have become Christians through them because of the labors of others. Indeed, they remind the Corinthians that they were the first people to present the message of Jesus as the Messiah to them.

²⁰⁷ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχόμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσεῖαν – In contrast to the pseudo-apostles, Paul and Timothy consider it appropriate to talk about only the influence that they have had directly. The false apostles cannot help themselves but claim credit for influencing people where they have never been.

Paul's and Timothy's expectation is that God will mature the Corinthians in their understanding of the NT message, which in turn could be said to make Paul and Timothy more successful in what they have done after God assigned specifically to Paul the work of proclaiming the NT message to the Gentiles, which may take them beyond the geographical location of the Corinthians as they grow and become more established and secure in their belief in the NT message.

²⁰⁸ εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι – Again, Paul's and Timothy's desire is never to brag about God's work in another place as though they have some sort of claim to it. Instead, they expect that the maturation of the Corinthians in their understanding of the NT message will then enable them to focus their attention on other regions beyond them. This will be in line with their desire to “boast” about only what they have done and not take credit for what others have done.

²⁰⁹ ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος, ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω – Cf. Jeremiah 9:24, ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, συνίεν καὶ γινώσκειν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος ποιῶν ἔλεος καὶ κριμα καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐν τούτοις τὸ θέλημά μου, λέγει κύριος – Paul and Timothy are implying that the only basis for any human bragging is in what God has accomplished with respect to His ultimate project of securing for Himself forgiven immoral human beings who will live in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, Paul and Timothy are claiming that their approach to “bragging” about their influence in other people's lives is in line with the Bible that encourages people to brag about only what God has done. Because Paul knows that he is a genuine apostle and, therefore, that God will definitely use him in the process of converting Gentiles, Timothy and he can “brag” about seeing others become Christians in the midst of their proclaiming the NT message. However, they are actually only bragging about God, who is the one who performs the inward miracle in people. Thus, it makes no sense to brag about the influence that others, especially non-apostles, are having on people, because it is impossible to know if the influence is truly biblically genuine. It is impossible to look inside a person's heart and see exactly what is going on there and whether or not God has performed the miraculous circumcision of the heart that is necessary for a person to have genuine belief.

²¹⁰ οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστῶν, ἐκεῖνός ἐστι δόκιμος, ἀλλ' ὃν ὁ Κύριος συνίστησιν – Ultimately, it is God's stamp of approval that counts in terms of who has authority to speak on His behalf and who does not. But how does one know whom God has chosen to give this authority? We know from John 12-17 that Jesus declares that it is only the apostles (and biblical authors, by extrapolation), who have the divine authority to speak on behalf of Jesus and with the same level of authority and accuracy. But how can the rest of us tell who is an apostle? Only by their stating their association with Jesus personally and by examining what they say to make sure it is completely coherent with what other apostles say about the biblical message. In other words, it is both an objective and a subjective process.

²¹¹ ὄφελον ἀνείχεσθέ μου μικρὸν τῇ ἀφροσύνῃ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέχεσθέ μου – Now Paul switches to the first person singular, because he wants to talk about his own individual experience as an apostle, and what this means to the Corinthians. He is saying that he may seem a little eccentric to the Corinthians, but he hopes that they will bear with him in his craziness on behalf of the NT message, even as he drones on and on about this message in order to “brag” about himself while also appropriately criticizing the false apostles.

²¹² ζηλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζηλω ἡρμოსάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἀγνήν παραστήσαι τῷ Χριστῷ – Just as God expressed His jealousy for the Israelites in the OT, Paul feels the same way toward the Corinthians and to whom they are going to grant authority—to the false apostles or him, especially because Paul was the first to present the NT message to them.

Thinking of the Corinthians as a bride, Paul had engaged them to be married to Jesus at the judgment so that they would be his subjects in the eternal Kingdom of God. Indeed, by their single-minded adherence to the truth of the biblical message, they would show up at the judgment as “pure virgins,” unadulterated intellectually and uncorrupted spiritually by falsehood and lies.

²¹³ φοβοῦμαι δὲ μὴ πως, ὡς ὁ ὄφις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὐάν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ, φθαρῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν – Paul considers the Corinthians' attraction to the false apostles to be of equal error to Satan's deception of Eve and convincing her to draw away from obeying God in the Garden of Eden. The Corinthians' buying into the message of the false apostles is making them lose their intellectual and spiritual virginity.

²¹⁴ εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε – Not a commendation, but a gentle rebuke. The Corinthians are putting up with false teachers rather than challenging and refuting them. Their “putting up with [the false message] well enough” is to their shame and detriment. They are not holding on to what Paul and Timothy have taught them. If they can go astray so easily, those who were personally taught by the foremost theologian of all time besides Jesus, what hope do the rest of us have for not distorting the biblical message? Cf. 11:20

²¹⁵ λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκένας τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων – Sarcasm. The false apostles are portraying themselves as really, really good and important. Paul is no less good and important. It makes sense that Paul switches to the first person singular “I” to indicate that really it is only he who is an apostle and not Timothy. He has referred to him when he has used the first person plural “we,” but this was only to show that they are on the same apostolic page as he is with respect to their theology, even if he is not actually an apostle.

²¹⁶ εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῇ γνώσει, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ φανερώσαντες ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς – The false apostles are pointing out that Paul is not a very good speaker, which outwardly makes him less influential than them because of their eloquence. And the Corinthians are buying this argument!! Paul admits that he is a poor speaker, but he also points out that Timothy and he truly understand the biblical message and have demonstrated the resultant humility by not having put any physical demands on the Corinthians of supporting them and preserving their “organization.” Cf. the implicit and explicit pressure of modern churches to maintain their presence and their institutions. Cf. v. 7.

²¹⁷ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐποίησα ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δορεῖν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν – The false apostles have given the impression that their legitimacy is partly based upon the fact that they need and require that people support them financially. This may be a cultural idea, too. For example, there were the Sophists in Greek culture who did charge for their instruction and considered it a legitimate and worthwhile endeavor. Similarly, the false apostles have institutionalized their activity and made it the object of financial support in order to indicate publicly that they are authorized apostles of Jesus the Messiah. In contrast, Paul has never made anyone feel that the only way that he can be an authorized apostle is if people make sure that he survives financially. “Today, Sunday, I am walking into a church building, i.e., a pagan temple,” to paraphrase Soren Kierkegaard.

²¹⁸ ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν – Indeed, Paul was fine financially based merely upon the gifts that he was receiving from other Christian communities. And these gifts enabled him to present the NT message to the Corinthians free of charge. Sarcasically, he calls these gifts from other groups things that he stole from them.

²¹⁹ καὶ παρὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑστερηθεὶς οὐ κατενάγκισα οὐθενός· τὸ γὰρ ὑστέρημά μου προσανεπλήρωσαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἐμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω – Even when Paul was in need in Corinth, he did not turn to the Corinthians and require them to help him. He did not even suggest it. He was not even going to hint that they should support him financially—regardless of how worthwhile his endeavor was as the apostle to the Gentiles. And he is going to continue in this same fashion with respect to them.

²²⁰ ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας – Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, and as long as God gives him strength and breath, he will continue to travel beyond where he has already been and proclaim the NT message, thus allowing him to “boast” beyond Achaia and the region of Corinth.

²²¹ διὰ τί, ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν – The false apostles have accused Paul of not caring about the Corinthians because he failed to show up when they expected him (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:15ff.). But Paul loves them dearly, even though he does not demand to be paid by them, which they are now interpreting as a lack of love and care for them as they listen to the false apostles. In other words, the false apostles are saying that if Paul truly cared for the Corinthian Christians, he would ask them for money.

²²² ὁ δὲ ποιῶ, καὶ ποιήσω, ἵνα ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν τῶν θελούντων ἀφορμῆν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς – As long as the pseudo-apostles are trying to claim equal authority with the true apostles by demanding to be paid by the Corinthians (and probably others), Paul will continue his efforts as he thinks it wise and loving to do so, and he will refuse to demand anyone’s support in order not to give any hint that he is like the false apostles and to communicate that the gospel message is one of *free* grace. Thus, in the final analysis, Paul is demonstrating the concept of God’s grace. Even though he deserves to be paid for his work (cf. 1 Corinthians 9 & 10), and so would the false apostles if they were genuinely pursuing the apostolic message, Paul wants to show that the latter are actually pursuing a very worldly strategy by their intimidation and demanding to be paid by the Corinthians. He would never think of doing such a thing.

²²³ οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ – These other men are claiming to be Jesus’ apostles, which probably means that they actually spent time with Jesus, perhaps during the three years that he was on earth and proclaimed his messiahship, which also allows them to claim that they heard personally what Jesus said so that they understand his message. They probably are also stating that their claims of having spent time with Jesus can be verified by folks back in Jerusalem and in Israel, i.e., through their letters of recommendation. Paul can claim only that he had hated Jesus, was a major persecutor of Christians, changed only because of a miracle of God, and was taught by Jesus when no one else was around to verify that he was learning directly from Jesus. Therefore, the false apostles do look more legitimate than Paul.

²²⁴ καὶ οὐ θαῦμα· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός – Even the adversary in the world (the aggregate of human hostility?), these men’s ultimate leader, tries to appear good, even though he is wholly evil in order to deceive people into thinking that he is good and should be followed instead of their following God.

²²⁵ οὐ μέγα οὖν εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης· ὃν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν – It is no huge surprise to Paul to discover that Satan’s servants are trying to deceive people the same way that he does, by appearing to be good and noble and moral. Therefore, it makes sense to Paul that these false apostles look as good as they do, even by advocating complete “morality” according to the Mosaic Covenant, and nothing is more “moral” than this covenant. In addition, the outcome of their lives will correspond to their evil and deception. It will be eternal condemnation and destruction from God.

²²⁶ πάλιν λέγω, μή τις με δόξη ἄφρονα εἶναι· εἰ δὲ μή γε, κἄν ὡς ἄφρονα δεξασθῆ με, ἵνα κἀγὼ μικρόν τι καυχῆσωμαι – Some people think that Paul is a bit crazy for not receiving financial support from the Corinthians, because this is just SOP in

their culture for work done by a laborer. And Paul is definitely a laborer for the NT message. But Paul is fine if they want to think that he is a bit crazy, and he asks if they will allow him to boast in the crazy way that follows in the next verses—again, sarcasm.

²²⁷ ὁ λαλῶ, οὐ κατὰ κύριον λαλῶ ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως – Paul readily admits that what he is about to say is not what he ever planned to say as an apostle of the NT message, because it is going to sound as though he is emphasizing outwardness rather than inwardness. But, under the circumstances, his speaking “foolishly” like this with respect to the truth makes sense in the light of the false apostles’ claiming that their outward actions are the very measure of the authenticity of their apostleship.

²²⁸ ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ σάρκα, κἀγὼ καυχῆσομαι – Just as the pseudo-apostles brag about their outwardness, their outward accomplishments, Paul is going to also—even though quite reluctantly and with far different outward actions than they are.

²²⁹ ἠδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες – Paul is being sarcastic, but with the intention of waking up the Corinthians from their spiritual and intellectual slumber so that they grasp the truth of reality as they had when Paul and Timothy first presented the NT message to them.

²³⁰ ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει – The Corinthians are willing to follow and believe the false apostles who are mistreating them by strong-arming them into strict submission.

²³¹ κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡσθενήκαμεν – Paul has not come close to being as intimidating as the false apostles, resulting in his feeling like an utter weakling in comparison to the them. This is something that he is (sarcastically) ashamed of. The Corinthians sound like a the wife in a dysfunctional marriage who feels compelled to stay in the marriage mainly because her husband beats her. What a joke.

²³² ἐν ᾧ δ' ἂν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ κἀγὼ – As long as Paul is going to “brag” about outward realities, he can match the pseudo-apostles point for point, and even beyond.

²³³ Ἑβραῖοί εἰσιν; κἀγὼ. Ἰσραηλιταί εἰσιν; κἀγὼ. σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσιν; κἀγὼ – The false apostles brag about being full-blooded descendants of Abraham, of being Jews. Certainly, Paul is just as Jewish.

²³⁴ διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγὼ, ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις – The false apostles claim to be serving Jesus the Messiah, probably because they were with him while he was alive and, therefore, can teach what he taught. But Paul can point to the natural effect of being someone who proclaims the NT message in the world, i.e., of being rejected by the world with the same level of intensity as was Jesus—way beyond any kind of negative reaction to the message of the false apostles and that they have experienced.

²³⁵ ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων πεντάκις τεσσαράκοντα παρά μίαν ἔλαβον – Here is a key indication of the truth of Paul’s message and his authority as an apostle of the Jewish Messiah—the response of the Jews. Rather than their being receptive, they have violently objected to Paul and his message. Can the false apostles claim this?

²³⁶ τρίς ἐρραβδίσθη, ἀπαξ ἐλιθάσθη, τρίς ἐναυάγησα, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα – Paul’s apostolic authority has resulted in not only violent and negative reactions from human beings, but also violent and negative reactions from the creation.

²³⁷ ὁδοπορίας πολλάκις, κινδύνοις ποταμῶν, κινδύνοις ληστῶν, κινδύνοις ἐκ γένους, κινδύνοις ἐξ ἔθνων, κινδύνοις ἐν πόλει, κινδύνοις ἐν ἡρμιά, κινδύνοις ἐν θαλάσσει, κινδύνοις ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις – Paul’s seeking to fulfill his apostolic responsibilities has led to just plain suffering in the course of doing so, while the false apostles have the right to avoid all these if they so choose.

²³⁸ κόπῳ καὶ μόθῳ, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις πολλάκις, ἐν λιμῷ καὶ δίψει, ἐν νηστείαις πολλάκις, ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι – ditto.

²³⁹ χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτός ἢ ἐπίστασίς μοι ἢ καθ' ἡμέραν, ἢ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν – Paul’s apostolic responsibility of being an authoritative spokesman for Jesus to the Gentiles constantly leads him to care lovingly for the spiritual condition of the people to whom he has presented the NT message, and to do so in a truly loving way—not by asking people for money!

²⁴⁰ τίς ἀσθενεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενῶ; τίς σκανδαλίζεται καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ πυροῦμαι – When people are weak in their faith, Paul feels with them and is concerned about them. When people seem to be abandoning the faith, Paul feels bad about the eternal consequences if they continue and moves to encourage them to continue in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. But he of course always tries to do so as an authoritative apostles without being either authoritarian or uncaring.

²⁴¹ εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι – While it may seem appropriate to the pseudo-apostles to brag about things external that appear successful in other people’s eyes as a way to substantiate their apostleship, Paul, because of his understanding of God’s grace and forgiveness, knows that it is better to brag about the failure that he has experienced through rejection and persecution by other people.

²⁴² ὁ θεὸς ἰ καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι – Paul feels compelled to appeal to God at this point, even though this does not really contribute to his argument that could convince the Corinthians that he is correct, because the false apostles could make the same appeal. However, Paul uses this as a launching pad to tell of what God brought about in his life that was clearly an indication of the hostility of the world towards the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, which, in and of itself, was truly in line with what the Bible says about the sentiment of the world towards God.

²⁴³ ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν πόλιν Δαμασκηνῶν πιάσαι με –

²⁴⁴ καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχάλασθη διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ – While the false apostles can claim to be supported financially by whole groups of people, Paul can claim to have been rejected by an entire city! Therefore, who is the genuine apostle of the Messiah? Paul! Really? On what basis? Examining the nature of the message and the nature of Paul’s behavior along with the nature of the two kinds of responses to them—positive and negative.

²⁴⁵ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὀπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου – Paul does not like to use boastful tactics similar to the false apostles, but he cannot help himself in this situation, because God has revealed things to him that He has not to others.

²⁴⁶ οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ – Paul does not know exactly how this happened, only that he experienced an aspect of reality that God wanted to reveal to him—in the third heaven (?).

²⁴⁷ καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε ἄχωρίς τοῦ σώματος ἢ οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν –

²⁴⁸ ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι – Paul was snatched away by God from the present earthly realm to another reality where he heard things spoken that he did not understand because of the different, i.e., eternal (?) language being used. Is this “paradise” the parallel universe of the eternal realm? God took Paul out of the story of this realm and transferred him into the story of the parallel realm (?).

²⁴⁹ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιοῦτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις – Is Paul really not talking about himself, or is this a way of humbly saying that authentic belief leads a person to value weaknesses, especially moral weaknesses, in the present realm, as opposed to strengths, because, in the final analysis, it is on the basis of our moral weaknesses and not any of our strengths that God independently provides us with His grace and mercy.

²⁵⁰ ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων, ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ φείδομαι δέ, μὴ τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ – Paul’s boasts are genuine, because he always speaks the truth. Yet, he refrains from bragging about things that he cannot demonstrate and, therefore, that he cannot prove visually or orally to people, because he wants to be sure that what he says truly can be backed up by fact.

²⁵¹ καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων, διὸ ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίσῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι – God gave Paul, who understands biblical theology better than anyone in history except Jesus, a constant reminder in the form of pain (?) that the present realm and he are characterized by adversarial hostility towards God, so that Paul owes every good thing that will come from this existence, especially his own eternal salvation, to God alone and not to himself. Notice that he says twice, “in order that I might not have an undue sense of my self-importance.” Paul knows that he is not only important as the one and only apostle to the Gentiles, but also a morally depraved human being, who will tend to feel that he deserves God’s and others’ accolades.

²⁵² ὑπὲρ τούτου τρίς τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ –

²⁵³ καὶ εἰρήκην μοι ἀρκεῖ σοι ἢ χάρις μου, ἢ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται ἥδιστα οὐδὲν μᾶλλον καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ – God taught Paul that even he ultimately needed only His grace and mercy in the present realm and not any liberation from pain and suffering.

Paul would rather be humbled and reminded every day through his pain that God is working in him supernaturally because of his apostolic association with the Messiah, the king and high-priest of authentic believers, than be rid of the pain and risk succumbing to pride and immorality that could potentially lead him to abandon his belief in Jesus. This attitude and its perseverance in a morally deaprvaded human being obviously requires God’s grace.

²⁵⁴ διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεισιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς ἢ καὶ στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι – Paul’s description of himself here sounds almost perverse. Is not a person who relishes pain a masochist, is not this person a bit sick in the head? Nevertheless, Paul is describing healthy, biblical masochism that takes into account God’s sovereignty and man’s depravity, both of which figure prominently in a person’s acquiring eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Paul knows that when he is struggling to endure the hardships of life by persevering in his belief in the Jewish Messiah, then he is also doing the most important hard work for the most important human goal, which also means that the only way that he is doing this hard work is by means of God’s sovereignty initiative taking place within him and causing him to do so. This is the very definition of biblical strength!

²⁵⁵ γέγονα ἄφρων, ὑμεῖς με ἠναγκάσατε. ἐγὼ γὰρ ὄφειλον ὑφ’ ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων εἰ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμι – Paul very sarcastically blames the Corinthians and their allowing themselves to be influenced improperly by the false apostles for his having to brag about his apostleship. Instead, the Corinthians should have recognize just how important he is as the apostle to the Gentiles, even though he is an undeserving morally depraved human being just like them, indeed, someone who persecuted Christians and threw them into jail, something he is probably still embarrassed about, and which leads him to call himself a “nobody.”

²⁵⁶ τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατεργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν – God demonstrated through Paul the authenticity of his apostleship, that should have been very obvious to the Corinthians.

²⁵⁷ τί γὰρ ἔστιν ὃ ἠσσοθήτε ὑπὲρ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐκκλησίας, εἰ μὴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν· χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην – The false apostles must be saying that Paul did not really care about the Corinthians because he did not charge them for his services to them. However, Paul genuinely did not want to burden them financially. Sarcastically, he asks them to forgive him for thus “mistreating” them, i.e., for mistreating them the way the false apostles have been.

²⁵⁸ ἰδοὺ τρίτον τοῦτο ἐτοίμος ἔχω ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ οὐ καταναρκήσω· οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς, οὐ γὰρ ὀφείλει τὰ τέκνα τοῖς γονεῦσιν θησαυρίζειν ἀλλὰ οἱ γονεῖς τοῖς τέκνοις – Paul uses the naturally understood concept of parents’ providing for their children, rather than the other way around. Paul considers himself the Corinthians’ Christian parent, not laborer. Thus, he does not demand the Corinthians to pay him. He does not want their money. He wants them to be authentic Christians. This is in spite of the fact that the laborer is worthy of his wages (cf. 1 Corinthians 9).

²⁵⁹ ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶ, ἥσσαν ἀγαπῶμαι – Paul is willing to give up his life for the sake of the authenticity of the Corinthians’ belief and never receive anything financial

from them. Does not this demonstrate that he loves the Corinthians more than the false apostles do? As a result, does it make sense that they love him less than they love the false apostles, which they have improperly done by their paying them for their work?

²⁶⁰ ἔστω δέ, ἐγὼ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς· ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχων πανούργος δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον – The false apostles are intimating that Paul is a wily deceiver, because he does not charge for his labor as an apostle. It must be for them that the only good apostle is an apostle who expects and even demands that his wages to be paid—*quid pro quo* materially. It is not that it is completely wrong for an apostle to be thought worthy of his work, as Paul has explained in 1 Corinthians 9, but the gospel of God's grace is too gracious to demand that people pay for it, or even to hint that a person "should" be paid for his work as a Christian laborer.

²⁶¹ μὴ τινα ὧν ἀπέσταλκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δι' αὐτοῦ ἐπλεονέκτησα ὑμᾶς – Probably unlike the false apostles, Paul has not required that his co-workers such as Timothy, Titus, and others collect payment of their and his services to the Corinthians.

²⁶² παρεκάλεσα Τίτον καὶ συναπέστειλα τὸν ἀδελφόν μῆτι ἐπλεονέκτησεν ὑμᾶς Τίτος; οὐ τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι περιεπατήσαμεν; οὐ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἴχνησιν – Paul wants to know if Titus and he have acted the same way toward the Corinthians, i.e., in an undemanding way. This is clearly a rhetorical question. Certainly, neither Paul nor his apostolic workers have even hinted being paid for their work.

²⁶³ πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα. κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἀγαπητοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς – Paul switches back to the first person plural "we" to include Timothy in this apostolic message to the Corinthians. He is saying that his ultimate goal is not to defend himself before the Corinthians, but to speak honestly and truthfully in God's presence because of his apostolic association with Jesus, the Messiah. As far as earthly goals are concerned, Paul aims his efforts toward the spiritual improvement of the Corinthians, i.e., their being more grounded in their understanding and belief in the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah.

Therefore, while this whole letter actually is Paul's and Timothy's defense of Paul's responsibility of being the only apostle to the Gentiles, he does not want it to be such—ONLY. He wants the Corinthians to view it as his speaking in front of God and stating truths that are intended to further the message of Jesus as the Messiah in their lives. Thus, he knows that he is walking a fine line, one that the gospel demands if it is to be communicated properly and accurately.

²⁶⁴ φοβοῦμαι γὰρ μὴ πως ἔλθὼν οὐχ οἴους θέλω εὔρω ὑμᾶς κἀγὼ εὐρεθῶ ὑμῖν οἶον οὐ θέλετε μὴ πως ἔρις, ζήλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, καταλαλιαί, ψιθυρισμοί, φυσιώσεις, ἀκαταστασίαι – Paul is concerned that the false apostles have so captured the Corinthians' hearts that they will end up in conflict with Paul when he comes, that they will be convinced that he should be different and like the false apostles, while he believes that they should be different and like authentic believers who appreciate the apostolic message of God's grace that Jesus himself brought. Thus, Paul implies that error results in pride, conflicts, and confusion, while truth results in genuine love and care for one another as fellow believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

²⁶⁵ μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντος μου ταπεινώσῃ με ὁ θεός μου πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ πενήσω πολλοὺς τῶν προσημαρτηκότων καὶ μὴ μετανοησάντων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελγείᾳ ἣ ἔπραξαν – The false apostles' legalistic message of earning God's favor through obedience to the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant must be providing room for the Corinthians to continue with various acts of evil rather than repenting of them in the light of the true message of God's grace. In other, unbelieving Judaism,, whether Christian or not, is not a good help against man's immorality—certainly not like the authentic, Christian message.

²⁶⁶ Τρίτον τοῦτο ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται ἅν ῥήμα – cf. Deuteronomy 19:15, רַב־דָּבָר יִקְרָא וְיִקְרָא אֶת־הַשֵּׁנִי לְפָנָיו וְיִשְׁמַע לְשׁוֹנֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם (LXX – ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ ἐπὶ στόματος τριῶν μαρτύρων σταθήσεται ἅν ῥήμα). Paul considers his third visit to correlate with the Mosaic Covenant's requirement that there be two or three witnesses to corroborate the facts of a situation. His third visit will mean that he has his facts straight about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians. Either they are for the NT message, or they are against it. He will be able to tell when he visits them again.

²⁶⁷ προείρηκα καὶ προλέγω, ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεῦτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν ἵ, τοῖς προσημαρτηκόσιν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν, ὅτι ἐὰν ἔλθῃ εἰς τὸ πάλιν οὐ φείσομαι – Whenever Paul shows up again in Corinth, he will treat his apostolic responsibility with all seriousness and identify immorality where he sees it. The biblical message is all about rescuing human beings from God's eternal condemnation that results from their moral depravity and rebellion against God, which means that it would be inconsistent to condone or even overlook immoral behavior in anyone who claims to want this rescue to occur for them.

²⁶⁸ ἐπεὶ δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος Χριστοῦ, ὃς εἰς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἀσθενεῖ ἀλλὰ δυνατεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν – Even the false apostles must be encouraging the Corinthians to seek out proof the Messiah in Paul, and he is saying that the proof will be in his identifying their immorality just as Jesus would, especially in the midst of God's powerfully working within them to move them toward truth and salvation—hopefully.

²⁶⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐσταυρώθη ἕξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῆ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἀσθενούμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσομεν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς – Jesus' death was because of the moral weakness of the Corinthians and their need for God's mercy. However, the transcendent Creator powerfully raised Jesus from the dead. Paul and Timothy experience the same moral weakness along with the same power of God, because they know that God is going to work powerfully in others such as the Corinthians to change their inwardness when they hear the apostolic message in order to rescue them from His eternal condemnation.

²⁷⁰ ἑαυτοὺς πειράζετε εἰ ἐστὲ ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἑαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε. ἢ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκετε ἑαυτοὺς, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν; εἰ μῆτι ἀδόκιμοί ἐστε – Paul wants the Corinthians to take spiritual inventory and look for the signs of Jesus the Messiah's being a part of who they are as human beings—their understanding at a deep level their inherent moral depravity, their belief in Jesus, their following him, their desire for eternal mercy strictly on the basis of God's grace, etc.

²⁷¹ ἐλπίζω δὲ ὅτι γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἀδόκιμοι – If the Corinthians understand accurately the signs of an authentic believer, they will recognize that Paul and Timothy are genuine in their belief.

²⁷² εὐχόμεθα δὲ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν μὴ ποιῆσαι ὑμᾶς κακὸν μηδὲν. οὐχ ἵνα ἡμεῖς δόκιμοι φανῶμεν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ὑμεῖς τὸ καλὸν ποιῆτε, ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἀδόκιμοι ὄμεν – Paul's concern for the Corinthians is not that they help his reputation, but that they do what is right with respect to the biblical message, even if Timothy and he are flat out liars, unbelievers, and suffer eternal condemnation as a result. The issue for the Corinthians is not that they follow Paul, but that they follow God who has presented His message through Jesus as the Messiah.

²⁷³ οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθά τι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας – Nevertheless, Paul and Timothy know that they are compelled to act in obedience to the biblical and truthful message, because God has commissioned solely Paul with the responsibility of being the apostle to the Gentiles.

²⁷⁴ χαίρομεν γὰρ ὅταν ἡμεῖς ἀσθενῶμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ δυνατοὶ ᾗτε· τοῦτο καὶ εὐχόμεθα, τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν – Paul and Timothy are not concerned about looking good in the world's eyes, but they are concerned about the strength of the Corinthians' (and other believers') belief for the sake of their maturing and becoming more resolved so that they persevere in their belief to the end of their lives and acquire eternal mercy and life.

²⁷⁵ διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα ἀπὸν γράφω, ἵνα παρὼν μὴ ἀποτόμως χρήσωμαι κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἣν ὁ κύριος ἔδωκέν μοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν – Paul wants to do all the heavy lifting in regard to correcting their belief and encouraging them to avoid the false teachers now while writing to them, so that he does not have to exercise his authority fully as an apostle when he comes to visit them for the third time. Paul considers it wiser to do this from afar than close up, which also would be in direct contrast to the strategy and methodology of the false apostles.

²⁷⁶ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, χαίρετε, καταρτιζέσθε, παρακαλεῖσθε, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, εἰρηνεύετε, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν – Paul concludes the letter by encouraging the Corinthians to choose to exhibit the marks of authentic belief—joy in regard to God's mercy, constantly restoring themselves to the truth from any error that may creep into their minds and lives, being encouraged by God's faithfulness, having a uniform view of reality that corresponds to the apostolic message, living within the wholeness of God's involvement within them that will result in complete shalom in the eternal Kingdom of God. The reason that this will all occur and the result from its occurring is the same—God's love and intents of shalom toward them.

²⁷⁷ ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν ἀγίῳ φιλήματι ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες – Paul wants their greetings toward one another to be kind and gracious, while also the believers where he is located greet them too.

²⁷⁸ ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul's final desire is that both the grace of God that comes as a result of Jesus' role as the Messiah and the participation in their lives of the work of God within the creation be constant in their lives.