

2 Corinthians

2:1. “for my own sake.” The Greek construction makes this the reading most preferred. (Cp. Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament; The International Critical Commentary). It is easier to read, but not really to the point to say, “I made up my mind.” The Greek gives a reason, represented in the ASV as “for myself,” and in the NASB as “for my own sake.” Paul is not just saying he determined (literally: “judged”) what to do, but rather, that he determined his course of action based on what was good for him. This is, no doubt, another effort to spare the Corinthians. Meyer calls it “and ingenious, affectionate turn” “the truth of which there is no doubt.” The Corinthians were already feeling badly about their sin, and had repented (2 Cor. 7:8-10) and it would have really hurt them for Paul to say he did not visit because of the sorrow it would cause. He did not lie when he said he judged that it was for his sake he did not come, for it is never easy to reprove and correct people. But it really was for the sake of the Corinthians, as is clear from the context.

2:14. 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 refers to a Roman event known as the “Triumph,” which we sometimes refer to as the Triumphal Procession. The Roman Triumphal Procession was a parade honoring the victory of a Roman general and his army. In the days before photographs and mass communication, it was important to find ways to enroll the people of Rome into the events of the Empire. The Triumph brought some of the pageantry of the conquest into the streets of Rome for everyone to see. First we will describe the Triumph, then show how it relates to the biblical text and Christian life.

When considering exactly what a Triumph was like, we must remember that the written accounts, and the visual depictions on bas-reliefs, vases, cups, etc., of Roman Triumphal Processions were generally produced as political propaganda to aggrandize Rome and its power, and not as accurate historical accounts. Also, we have no complete descriptions of a Triumph. We have many descriptions and depictions of parts of them, and they can be used to build a general picture of what a whole Triumph involved. Also, there were something like 500 Triumphs that are recorded in the ancient Roman records, supposedly going all the way back to a victory of Romulus, the founder of Rome. With so many instances, obviously there were differences between them. Besides, as with most parades, there is a tendency toward greater grandeur, pomp, and expense, so some change was unavoidable. Thus, what follows is only a typical description of what a Triumph was like. In spite of their differences, however, the Triumph was a parade with both immediate and historical significance, and every Triumph was designed to connect this victory with victories that had come before, thus pointing out the stability and continuity of Rome. Therefore, there was enough continuity between them that we can speak of things “typical” to a Triumph.

A Triumph was only given when certain conditions were met in the war. Although these too changed a little over time, the basics remained the same. The war had to be fought on foreign soil. The war had to be a significant victory for Rome in which at least 5000 enemy soldiers were killed and territory was added to the state. The conquering general had to be of the rank of “dictator,” “consul,” or “praetor.” The victory had to end the war so decisively that the Roman army could come home. If these

conditions were met, the Senate of Rome would vote to decide whether the commander would be given a Triumph.

Leading the Triumph were the Roman senators and magistrates, who met the parade as it entered the streets of Rome. Next trumpeters and musicians came, announcing to all the victory, and the celebration. After them came the captives, led in chains and destined for the slave market or the arena. Apparently in different Triumphs these captives were treated differently. In some they were clothed, while in others they were paraded naked down the streets. Also, sometimes they followed the spoils instead of coming before them.

After the captives came the spoils of war. Carts had “trophies,” on them, which is the technical term for a post or a post with cross-pieces on which were hung shields and armor worn by enemy soldiers. These “trophies” showed the people of Rome how well armed the enemy was. The captured treasure was displayed, including gold, silver, and other valuables. In some cases, such as when Jerusalem was captured and the Menorah from the Temple was in the Triumph, placards or signs described what the treasure was. Some of this treasure was later distributed to the returning troops as thanks for their bravery and sacrifice. Along with the treasure there were paintings and “floats” with portrayals of the cities, defenses, and fortresses of the enemy, all designed to help the people of Rome see how valiant the Roman army was.

Following the spoil, dressed in the black of mourning, came the captured foreign king, his family, extended family, and even the nurses and teachers of his children, showing the total conquest of his kingdom and social system.

After the spoils came members of the victorious army without weapons, but carrying laurel branches symbolizing victory. Unlike modern armies, in which the soldier swears allegiance to his country, Roman soldiers swore allegiance to their general. Therefore to prevent any possible coup, it was against Roman law for a general to bring his armed troops inside the city of Rome, and it was why the Emperor had his own armed troops, the Praetorian Guard, inside the city. Of the troops in the Triumph, individuals who had done great feats wore special crowns for the occasion. For example, a soldier who was first over the wall (and lived to tell about it) might have a gold crown cast to look like city walls, with crenellation on top. Later that crest would be carved in stone and be placed over the main door of his house as a permanent civil recognition. The soldiers would often be singing, and sometimes songs would be about some of the faults of the general—the thought being that he was just “one of the men” and care must be taken not to elevate him too highly. Sometimes some, or all, the troops followed the conquering general instead of going before him.

Following the troops was the conquering general. He wore dress traditionally associated with the statue of *Jupiter Capitolinus* and the ancient Roman monarchy, which was the purple and gold toga, a laurel crown, and red boots. He held laurel branches and perhaps a staff representing civil authority, and rode in a chariot usually drawn by 4 beautiful horses. The chariot had ceremonial status, and would be kept for years, just like in modern times revered memorial pieces are kept for years. For example, the chariot the Augustus Caesar rode in was used by Nero some 50 years later. The general was accompanied by his immediate and extended family. Smaller children might ride in the chariot with him, while older boys might ride on the horses pulling the chariot. The idea was to convey that the victory was a victory for Rome itself, and supported the whole

social order of Rome and its families. The general who was honored with a Triumph was then referred to as *vir triumphalis* (“a man honored with Triumph”) for the rest of his life.

After the commander and the last troops came oxen (usually white), which would be sacrificed in dedication to Jupiter at the Temple of Jupiter, which was the endpoint of the procession (often the oxen were in a different order besides last). The meat from the oxen was then distributed to the people of Rome. Sometimes the meat was distributed directly to the people, while at other times the streets of Rome were filled with tables and there was a more formal public dinner with everyone invited. In each case, the point was to help everyone recognize that the victory was a victory for Rome, the Roman people, and the Roman way of life.

At some point after the feast there would be the culminating event, a public spectacle. This would usually be in the arena. Although exactly what happened varied, events that were standard included gladiator events, animal hunts (where the floor of the coliseum was decorated as much as possible to look like the area just conquered and the animals were native to that place), reenactments of battles that had occurred, and the execution of prisoners taken in the war, often in inventive ways, such as having them eaten by wild animals.

Triumphs always took the same route. In that sense, there was with each Triumph the idea that Rome was building on what had been built before. The Triumph started at the “Field of Mars” (*Campus Martius* [pronounced: Mar-shus]) on the west bank of the Tiber River, and traveled a long, circuitous route through the city, passing through every Triumphal archway from previous generals, and past the temples erected in dedication to previous victories. The Triumph passed by the Forum Valarium, the Forum Romanum, and the Circus Maximus. The final destination was always the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. All along the route, the streets were packed with excited, shouting people. Also, incense filled the air along the whole route of the Triumph because incense was burned on the altars of temples in Rome (Plutarch; Dio Cassius). The smell of this incense is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

It is this “Triumph,” or Triumphal Procession, that 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 is referring to, and thankfully many modern versions read “triumphal procession,” which makes the verse much clearer (ESV, NET, NIV, NRSV). The King James Version gives us the wrong impression when it says, “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” This makes it sound like Christians win every battle—we always triumph. In a practical sense, we do not. There are many times in life when we lose a battle, just like the Roman army lost battles in the enemy country. Terrible things happen to us (cp. 2 Cor. 1:8; 4:8-10; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; 1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:12). Also, many Christians are killed or die of unnatural causes (Acts 7:60; 12:2). Although God is always working for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28 NIV), bad things often happen to good Christians. We must not try to “explain” 2 Corinthians 2:14 by somehow “recasting” the evil that happens to us as “good” and as a “triumph.” While it is always true that God will reward Christians for doing the right thing, even if it means being tortured and killed, that is not the triumph God is referring to in this verse.

Properly interpreted, 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 is speaking of the Triumphal Procession that occurs at the end of the war. Battles may be lost, but the war has been won by Jesus Christ. Although the actual fight between good and evil is not over, our eventual victory is so assured that God uses the analogy of the Triumph to demonstrate

that it is just a matter of time before the victory is total and final. The analogy of the Triumph shows us that the outcome of the war is not in doubt. Jesus Christ is the conquering general of the highest rank (his name is above every name), who has soundly defeated his enemies and won a victory on foreign soil (earth; now controlled by the Adversary). Because the war is “won,” he leads his “Christian army” in a Triumph. We can march along in life, knowing that we will win by resurrection, even if we are killed in this life.

It is valuable to notice that starting in verse 14, and going through 16, God makes a shift in His use of the Triumph analogy. In the first part of verse 14 we are the conquering troops, being led in the Triumph. However, in the middle of verse 14 we become the smell of the incense that is burning on the altars of Rome. That analogy is powerful because although the same incense burned on the altars, the smell of it meant different things to different people. To the conquering army it was the sweet smell of victory and meant home, safety, and friends. To the captives in chains, it meant death in the arena (or slavery; a living death). In the same way, Christians, by our life and testimony, are the smell of “life” to other Christians, but the smell of “death” to those who do not believe.

It is important to notice that God never tells us to figure out how to “smell better.” We Christians are not to water down our witness so that we do not offend the unsaved by our smell of death. In fact, the very next verse (2 Cor. 2:17), speaks of those who water down the Word, ostensibly to be accepted by others. Christians smell like death to unbelievers. Hopefully, some of them will recognize that the death they smell is their own, and come to Christ for salvation so they can live forever.

2:16. “took you in by deceit.” Paul is employing the figure of speech *eironeia*, which we would call “irony” or “sarcasm.” Bullinger defines this figure as “The expression of thought in a form that naturally conveys its opposite” (*Figures of Speech*, p. 807). By writing, “we took you in by deceit,” Paul shows the ridiculousness of such a statement and thus powerfully communicates the opposite.

2:17. “adulterating.” The Greek is *kapeleuo* (#2585 καπηλεύω) It was used frequently of of tavern-keeping [because the owners would water down the wine.] “*trade in, peddle, huckster* (of retail trade)...Because of the tricks of small tradesmen the word almost comes to mean *adulterate* (so Vulg., Syr., Goth.)” (BDAG). We felt “adulterate” was the best translation here. The emphasis is not on “peddling,” as if evangelism was wrong. The point is that the street hucksters “watered down” what they sold to make a profit, so the product was adulterated, which is exactly what Paul says to the Corinthians he did not do. We feel that the Vulgate, Syriac, and Gothic translations got that point.

3:4. “in God through Christ.” Literally, the Greek reads, “we have such confidence through Christ towards God,” but this is difficult to read in English. We would not say, “I have confidence towards God,” rather, we would place our confidence *in* God. An alternate translation might read, “we have such confidence as this *directed* to God through Christ.”

3:11. “passes away *came* with glory... permanent *is* in glory.” The Greek phrasing here is very interesting. Paul uses two participles (passing away, remaining) and two prepositions (through, in) but no verbs. Literally, it would read, “the one fading away, through glory; the one remaining, in glory.” This effectively paints a picture of the old covenant temporarily passing *though* glory, fading away, while the new covenant remains

in glory. The preposition *dia* (#1223 δία), meaning “through,” creates a feeling of the law momentarily journeying across the realm of glory, never meaning to permanently reside there—the Law is portrayed not as an end in-of-itself, but as a progression on the journey to bring us to Christ:

Galatians 3:23-25 (ESV)

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian...

The new covenant, on the other hand, is said to be the one remaining *en* (#1722 ἐν) glory. It is permanent, taking up its residence in glory land and is there to stay.

3:18. “reflecting as a mirror.” The verb translated as “reflecting” is *katoptrizomai* (#2734 κατοπτρίζομαι), which can mean “to behold” one’s self in a mirror, as many versions translate it (e.g. ESV; NASB; KJV; ASV; NAB), or to reflect one’s image, to mirror one’s self, as represented in NRSV; NIV; HCSB; NET; and NJB. The translators are evenly divided on the issue; however, it most likely means “reflecting” here. This can be seen from the context which speaks of Moses, whose face shown with glory and who covered his face with a veil (v. 13). Verse 18 is drawing a parallel between Christians and Moses. When he came down Mount Sinai, Moses was not *beholding* glory in a mirror but was *reflecting* the glory of God out to the Israelites. Furthermore, it is not reflecting as *in* a mirror but reflecting *as* a mirror; our job as Christians is to reflect the glory of God like a mirror reflects the beams of the sun. Unlike Moses who covered his face, we openly reflect the glory of the Lord and become transformed into this glory. This experience of transformation goes beyond what happened to Moses, whose mere external appearance was affected only temporarily.

4:2. The Greek reads “the hidden things of shame,” which is the figure of speech *antemereia*, “exchange of cases.” The adjective “shameful” is put in the nominative as the object of a genitive, to give it more force. However, it is somewhat confusing in English.

4:13. Quoted from Ps. 116:10.

5:1. “here on earth.” The Greek is *epigeios* (#1919 ἐπίγειος), and means existing upon the earth, earthly, terrestrial. It is an expression of locality, not of character, as if “earthly” were contrasted to “godly,” or some such. Our house, our tent, is here on earth. “our tent.” The Greek is the genitive of apposition. “The house of our tent,” where the house and the tent are the same thing. Our earthly body is called a “tent” because it is so temporary in nature.

5:2. “continually groan.” The verb “groan” is in the present active. We groan and groan.

5:5. “prepared.” The Greek is to *katergazomai* (#2716 καταργάζομαι), and one of the meanings is to cause to be well prepared, prepare someone (BDAG). The Christian is well prepared for receiving a new, everlasting body.

“God.” The position of “God” in the sentence in Greek makes it emphatic. Our future clothing has nothing to do with us. We are prepared by God, we will be clothed by God. The crowning experience of the believer, a new body, is all of God, all we did was to accept the invitation.

5:10. “must.” The Greek word is *dei* (#1163 δεῖ), and refers to what is necessary. “Must” is a good translation. We cannot avoid or decline the Judgment.

“be exposed.” The Greek word is *phaneroo* (#5319 φανερώω), to be made manifest, to be revealed, to be exposed. Furthermore, it is in the passive voice, so it is not something that we do, but something that is done to us. “To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one’s character. All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ...” (Philip Hughes, *The International Commentary on the New Testament; The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. P. 180).

“by means of.” This is very important. The body is shown to be the vehicle for the actions of the person’s will. The Greek word is not *en* (in) but *dia* (through, by means of). It is not just what a person does “in” the body, but what is done through the body that will be openly exposed. This would include allowing demon spirits entrance to our bodies and working evil through us. We need to be in control of ourselves, and think and live godly lives.

5:14. “For the love of Christ constrains us.” This is an important phrase and needs to be properly understood. The Greek word “constrain” is *sunecho* (#4912 συνέχω) and means, among other things, to hold together any whole, lest it fall to pieces or something fall away from it, to hold together with constraint, to compress, to be held by or closely occupied with, any business. What Paul is saying is that the love of Christ keeps him focused on his mission. It is true love that keeps one focused on the goal of bringing others to Christ and helping them grow.

5:15. “in place of everyone.” From the Greek preposition *huper* (#5228 ὑπέρ). See Romans 5:6 commentary on “in place of the ungodly... for... in our place.”

5:17. “new creation.” When the natural man of body and soul is born again, he takes on the very divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4), which becomes part of him. Thus he is indeed a “new creation.”

“things have become new.” Lenski correctly points out that the subject of “become” does not come from “have become new,” which contains its own subject. The subject is imported from the context, i.e., things (or perhaps “we”) have become new. The KJV imports “all things” from Rev. 21:5, but obviously not everything becomes new when someone is born again, just the things inside that believer. The Revised Version and the ASV, which have “they have become new” misses the point. It is not the old things that become new, it is that there are new things created.

5:18. “these things.” This is the meaning of this word in this context. Cp. Lenski.

5:19. “God was reconciling.” The emphasis of the verb is that God was reconciling, not that God was in Christ (cp. Vincent). God reconciled us to himself “through” (cp. Lenski) Christ.

5:20. “we are ambassadors.” We are “ambassadors” in that we speak for Christ. We represent his kingdom on earth. The Greek verb, *presbeuo* (#4243 πρεσβεύω) means “we are ambassadors,” and also “we are legates.” In ancient times it was important that kings, emperors, etc., had people with the authority to represent them. Someone had to be empowered to act as the king himself in any given situation. “Such delegates—Jewish or Greco-Roman—came with the authority of the sender, in his place, to secure his interests” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 310). “The term is frequently used of imperial legates, who represented the Roman emperor in foreign lands and govern there on his behalf with legionary troops” (*New International*

Biblical Commentary, p. 140. Cp. *Kittel's Theological Dictionary*, Vol. VI, p. 681). "...a legate is a noteworthy personage, at the top of the military hierarchy, and presbeuon and presbeutes are technical terms for imperial legates in the Greek Orient" (Spicq, *Theological Lexicon*, p. 174, 175).

6:1. "in an empty, *fruitless*, way." The Greek is *kenos* (#2756 κενός), and it means, empty, vain, devoid of truth. Metaphorically it can mean destitute of spiritual wealth, of one who boasts of his faith as a transcendent possession, yet is without the fruits of faith. Also it is used metaphorically of endeavors, labors, acts, which result in nothing, are fruitless, or are without effect. Lenski points out that here, *eis kenos* (literally "unto empty") means "in an empty, hollow way." In this case, Paul entreats the Corinthians that they do not receive the grace of God, but then have no real fruit from it. Verse three makes this clear: the Corinthians could receive the grace of God, but then, instead of producing good fruit, would by their actions produce offences that would cause others to blame the ministry. Heinz Cassirer (*God's New Covenant*) translates the phrase, "you must not receive God's gracious gift in a manner tending to make it profitless." Although most translations read "in vain" for *eis kenos*, that is far too harsh, and often leads to the mistaken theology that a person can lose his salvation. We Christians never receive God's grace "in vain," as if there was no profit to it. Salvation itself is priceless. However, Christians can, and sadly often do, receive the grace of God but then do not produce the fruit of it in their lives.

6:2. Quoted from Isaiah 49:8.

6:4. "servants of God." The Greek reads, "ministers of God," the genitive of relation. This is not the genitive of possession, as if God owned the ministers, but rather of relation, ministers of the things of God.

6:7. This is another instance in which the verses in the English versions are obviously divided awkwardly. The shift from "in" for the first 19 things on the list to the last things on the list marked by the Greek *dia*, is very clear.

"through." = *dia* with the genitive case means "through" (see appendix on Greek prepositions). The minister of the Good News cannot be someone who demonstrates his Christ-like character only when times are good and things are going well. The minister must purify his heart so that whether times are good or bad, he acts like Christ, can help others, and even can grow in character. As the minister lives day after day and year after year, he will pass through good times and bad. The minister of the Gospel works while some of his experiences are good and some are bad; some people are lauding him while some dishonor him; some reports about him are bad while some are good.

One of lesser known meanings of *dia* is "between," and Lenski makes the case for *dia* meaning "between" in this context, and not "by," or "through." On this view of the verse, the minister of the Gospel works while some of his experiences are good and some are bad, and he is "between" them, some people are lauding him while some dishonor him, and he is "between" them; some reports about him are bad while some are good, and he is "between" them.

"the instruments." R. C. H. Lenski has what we believe is a very good and sound interpretation of this verse. The Greek word that most versions translate as "weapons" or "armor" is *hoplon* (#3696 ὅπλον), which, like most Greek words, has more than one meaning (not all of which appear in the Bible). *Hoplon* can refer to any tool or implement for preparing a thing, armor (Rom. 13:12), arms or weapons used in warfare (John 18:3),

or an instrument (Rom. 6:13). How are we to choose whether this word should be translated as an instrument or aid, or a weapon? The answer is the same way we always make that translation choice: by context. In the context of this verse there is a clear continuous parallelization between one good thing and one evil thing (glory vs. dishonor; evil report vs. good report; deceivers vs. true; unknown vs. well known; dying vs. we live; as punished vs., and *yet* not killed; grieved vs. always rejoicing; etc.). So if the phrase means, as most versions have, “by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,” then it is the only time in the list a good thing is not juxtaposed with an evil thing—they are both positive weapons, just held in different hands. So in this case, the context makes it clear the verse is not referring to a weapon that is held in the right hand and the left, but rather “instruments,” or “aids” of righteousness some of which are “of the right hand” and some of which are “of the left hand.”

“of the right hand and of the left.” The Greek reads simply “of the right” or “of the right hand” and “of the left.” The key to understanding this verse is a biblical custom (more particularly a custom of the East than a custom of the Roman world but to some extent existent in the Roman world), that the right hand was the hand of blessing, and the left hand was the hand of cursing. The origin of the custom was the common practice of eating with a hand (not knives, forks, spoons, or other table utensils) and cleaning oneself after going to the bathroom with a hand and water (not toilet paper). In the biblical culture, it was the custom that people ate with their right hand and washed after using the bathroom with their left hand. Thus, the right hand became the hand of blessing, and the left hand was known as the hand of cursing. As the use of the right hand was dominant in the culture, it was almost always the strongest hand, and so also strength and power are attributed to the right hand. Gifts and blessings were given with the right hand (Ps. 16:11; Ps. 80:17; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 1:16). Oaths were made with the right hand (Isa. 62:8). An honored person was placed at the right hand (on the right hand side; Ps. 110:1; Matt. 26:64; Rom. 8:34). If someone was very deceitful, then his right hand was false (Ps. 144:8, 11). Joseph was upset with his father Jacob when Jacob blessed Joseph’s two children because Jacob put his right hand on the head of the younger child, when by custom the right hand of blessing should have been placed on the older child (Gen. 48:9-20).

When we understand the custom of the right and left hand, 2 Corinthians 6:7, becomes very graphic and powerful. The things in the right hand (the hand of blessing), and the left hand (the hand of cursing) can both be aids to righteousness if we have the proper attitude toward them. Even evil things can help us become more like Christ. Thus this would be similar to Romans 5:3, 4, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

5:21. “sin offering.” The Greek is *hamartia* (#266 ἁμαρτία). It means “sin,” but it can refer to “a sin offering.” Many Greek lexicons do not mention that *hamartia* can mean “sin offering,” but that is one of its meanings. For example, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* by Barclay Neman says *hamartia* means, “sin” and “sin offering.” *Hamartia* refers to “sin offering” many times in the Septuagint (cp. Ex. 29:14, 36; 30:10; Lev. 4:3, 8, 21, 24, 25, etc.). F. F. Bruce writes about the phrase *hamartian epoiesen* (“made him to be a sin offering”) in *The New Century Bible Commentary*: “...this remarkable expression... can best be understood on the assumption that Paul had

in mind the Hebrew idiom in which certain words for sin can mean not only sin, but ‘sin offering.’” We must keep in mind that Corinth was a large Greek city. Both Acts (primarily 18) and the Epistles to the Corinthians indicate that the congregation in Corinth had a large percentage of Gentiles. They, as well as many Jews, used the Septuagint as their Bible, and so would have been very familiar with the use of *hamartia* as “sin offering.”

Albert Barnes (*Barnes' Notes*) explains that Jesus had to be a sin offering, saying he could not become “sin,” nor “a sinner,” nor “guilty.” First, Jesus could not literally become “sin.” Sin is breaking the commandments of God. No person can become “sin.” We are not “sin,” and Jesus did not become “sin” for us. Nor could Jesus have become “a sinner.” Bauer’s Greek lexicon (BDAG) treats *hamartia* as if it should be translated “sin” but understood as referring to “the guilty one,” i.e., the sinful one. If that were the case, then by the figure of speech metonymy, “sin” would stand for the one who had sin, i.e., the sinner himself. Thayer’s Greek lexicon does a similar thing, and says that “sin” puts the “abstract for the concrete,” using “sin” but meaning “the sinner.” Thus, both Bauer and Thayer see this verse as saying Christ becomes “a sinner” for us, but that cannot be correct. For one thing, the whole Bible testifies to the holiness and sinlessness of Christ. More to the point, however, is that if Jesus did become “a sinner,” then he could not have been our savior, because the death of one sinner does not in any way impute righteousness to another sinner. There is no merit in the death of a sinner. The only reason Christ’s sacrifice is sufficient to provide salvation for all people is that he was not a sinner. Similarly, Christ could not have become “guilty,” as if “sin” were put by metonymy for the effect of sin, which is guilt. Again, one guilty person cannot atone for the life of another guilty person. The correct conclusion, and one that Barnes arrives at, is that Christ is a “sin-offering.” He was sinless, and because of that fact he could give his life as an offering to God for the sin of others. *The New Testament in the Language of the People* by Charles Williams is one version that has “sin offering” in 2 Cor. 5:21.

That Jesus was a sin offering for us shows us the great love, grace, and mercy of God. It truly confirms Psalm 103:10: “He [God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.” We all deserve death, in fact, well deserve it. But in His great love God provided a sacrifice that would justly provide a way for us to have everlasting life.

6:8. This is another instance in which the verses in the English versions are obviously divided awkwardly. The shift from *dia* to *hos* is very clear.

6:12. “You are not restrained by us.” There was nothing that Paul or his companions were doing that caused the Corinthians to hold back, it was simply that the Corinthians were not giving themselves totally to the relationship.

“bowels.” The Greek is *splagchnon* (#4698 σπλάγχνον) and it means “bowels.” For centuries scientists and theologians thought that the ancients only equated “bowels” with a person’s emotional life out of ignorance. Now scientists are now discovering that the bowels have a very large number of nerve cells, and actually can “think” on its own, and is a very important part of a person’s emotional life. Almost everyone is aware of times he or she has been afraid or upset and had their stomach “tied up in knots,” or became physically sick, or lost their appetite. The bowels play a huge part in our emotional life, and that fact is well represented in the Greek text. Unfortunately, it is very hard to see this in most versions of the Bible because “bowels” have been replaced by

“heart,” “affection,” or a similar word. While the translators mean well by trying to translate the Greek in a way that communicates to the modern reader, the great truth that the bowels are a huge part of a person's emotional life is lost. Also, translators use “heart” instead of the proper translation “bowels,” we lose another great truth in Scripture, that the heart is less associated with a person's emotional life and more associated with the mental life. Verses that involve our bowels include:

- **Luke 1:78 (KJV)** Through the tender mercy [bowels] of our God;...
- **2 Cor. 6:12 (NASB)** ...you are restrained in your own affections [bowels].
- **2 Cor. 7:15 (NASB)** ...his affection [bowels] abounds all the more toward you....
- **Philippians 1:8 (NASB)** ...I long for you all with the affection [bowels] of Christ Jesus.
- **Philippians 2:1 (NASB)** If therefore there is any...affection [bowels] and compassion,
- **Colossians 3:12 (NASB)** put on a heart of compassion [literally: “put on bowels”]....
- **Philemon 1:7 (NASB)** ...the hearts[bowels] of the saints have been refreshed....
- **Philemon 1:12 (NASB)** And I have sent him...my very heart [bowels]....
- **Philemon 1:20 (NASB)** ...refresh my heart [bowels] in Christ.
- **1 John 3:17 (NASB)** But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart [bowels] against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

The words kidney (Rev. 2:23), and “belly” are also used.

6:13. Figure of Speech, *Interjectio*, or Interjection (cp. Bullinger, Figures of Speech).

6:16. Quoted from Lev. 26:12 and Ezek. 37:27.

6:17. “stop touching” See Lenski. Quoted from Isaiah 52:11.

6:18. Quoted from 2 Sam. 7:14.

7:9. “I am rejoicing.” The Greek is *chairō* (#5463 χαίρω), rejoice, as it is in the present active. Paul was in the act of rejoicing (cp. Lenski's translation).

7:12. “before God.” The placement follows The New Testament by Williams and The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Placing the phrase at the end seemed much more confusing.

8:13. “as a matter of equality.” This phrase comes from a Greek idiom, literally, “out of equality.” See BDAG's entry on the word for “equality,” *isotes* (#2471 ἰσότης): “state of matters being held in proper balance... *as a matter of equality.*”

8:15. Quoted from Exod. 16:18.

9:3. “I am sending.” This is what is known as the epistolary aorist (Kistemaker, p. 310). The Greek is in the past, “I sent,” but at the time Paul was writing he had not yet literally sent the brothers. They would actually be coming with the letter. To avoid confusion we have translated according to the present tense meaning, as do many versions (ESV; NIV; NRSV; NET).

9:5. “generous gift.” The Greek word for “generous gift” is the same word for “blessing” in the verse, *eulogia* (#2129 εὐλογία). We agree with BDAG that the sense of “blessing” here is that of a generous gift. The idea of “gift” comes out as “bounty” in the KJV. Because “bounty” seems an archaic translation, and the English word “bounty” has acquired other meanings that could cause confusion here, most modern versions read “gift” (cp. ESV; NIV; NASB; HCSB; NRSV; NAB; NET).

9:9. Quoted from Ps. 112:9.

9:10. “increase the harvest of your righteousness.” The phrase “harvest of your righteousness” means the rewards given to people by Christ for their righteous deeds. God will cause our harvest to grow, meaning he will increase the rewards we reap at Judgment Day. Righteousness here is to be understood in the sense of *righteous acts* accomplished by the believer (e.g., Acts 10:35), and not to be understood as the state of righteousness given by God (e.g., Rom. 5:17). Galatians 6:9 gives the key to understanding this verse: “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (ESV). Hence, Williams translates this phrase: “enlarge the harvest which your deeds of charity yield.”

10:1 The verses that open 2 Corinthians 10 must be understood in light of the fact that false apostles had entered the Church and were spreading lies and false doctrine. This can be easily seen by reading chapters 10-12. These false apostles were accusing Paul of being two-faced, being bold in his letters when he was away from Corinth, but being timid when he was personally present in Corinth. Furthermore, they accused Paul of living by the standards of the world. Paul begs the Corinthians to listen to him, and hopes that he will not have to be bold with them as he will have to be with the pretenders. Paul uses the analogy of a war in this section of scripture, and asserts that he fights with spiritual weapons, and with them demolishes arguments, lies, and false doctrines, and will take captive the lies (thoughts) that are circulating in the Church. Furthermore, he will bring these disobedient people to justice, but he will only be able to do that when the Corinthians themselves are ready to stand firmly on the truth.

“clemency.” See note, Acts 24:4, and 1 Timothy 3:3. The Greek is *epieikeia*, (#1932), “consideration springing from a recognition of the danger that ever lurks upon the assertion of legal rights lest they be pushed to immoral limits. The virtue that rectifies and redresses the severity of a sentence” (Zodhiates, *Word Study Dictionary*). Occurs only here and Acts 24:4. Paul is being very calm here, asking to be heard on the basis of the meekness and clemency of Christ. Thus, even if there are Corinthians who are set in their mind against Paul, they should still be meek enough to hear him out, giving clemency to Paul.

“timid... bold.” This was the accusation of Paul’s accusers. They accused him of being timid (actually, “low”) when he was with them, but “bold” in his letters when he was away. Paul uses their words to obviate their arguments, and hopefully make the Corinthians aware that they are lies. Paul was very bold when he was in Corinth, debating in the synagogue, standing against the Jews, and even being dragged into court before Gallio (Acts 18:1-18); and he had been just as bold in his letters (cp. 1 Corinthians).

10:2. For the *de* meaning “yes,” see Lenski.

“daring.” Greek is *tolmao* (#5111), “to show boldness or resolution in the face of danger, opposition, or a problem, *dare, bring oneself to (do someth.)*...have the courage, be brave enough” (BDAG). Paul’s accusers say he is timid when he is present, but now they will find out the truth, for Paul will be daring with them, showing firm resolution in the face of their opposition. Having established the Church himself, he now goes to war, fighting with courage and even daring, wielding the sword of the spirit to keep the people sound in the faith.

10:5. This verse is about Paul’s defense of the truth against the arguments of the “super-apostles” (11:5; 12:11) and others who brought in ideas that were against Paul and

opposed to Christ. Although we often use this verse to teach that each Christian should take captive his own thoughts so that he can be an obedient Christian, that is not the primary reading of the text. The “thoughts” that needed to be taken captive were the false logic, lies, and false doctrines of those people who came in after Paul. They taught another Jesus and another gospel (11:4), and Paul calls them “false apostles,” and “deceitful workmen” (11:13). If a Church is going to be healthy, the false doctrines and beliefs have to be “taken captive.” The general principle still applies, however, for a healthy church is made up of healthy Christians, and if a person is going to be spiritually healthy and obedient to Christ, he must take his own thoughts captive to Christ. The fact that the primary meaning of the verse is taking captive the lies and false doctrines in the Church explains verse 6 (see below).

“thought.” Greek is *noema* (#3632 νόημα), “A mental perception, thought; 2. specifically, (an evil) purpose” (Thayer).

10:6. “whenever your obedience is complete.” Paul states that he is ready to bring to justice the people who are disobedient, but he must wait until the obedience of the Corinthians is complete. The point of bringing the disobedient ones, the ones spreading lies and false teaching, to justice is to have a healthy church. But if the Church itself is not ready to discipline those who are bringing lies and false doctrine, what is the point? The Church at Corinth “put up” with false teaching too easily (11:4), so Paul writes that he is ready, but will only be able to act when the Corinthians are ready. It is never easy, fun, or “nice” to confront lies and false doctrine, and there are many who are even critical of that, elevating the importance of “self expression” and “personal beliefs” above the truth, but we must make no mistake; there is a truth, and it comes from God to the Church. We must be willing to fight for it and defend it or we might as well not “play church” at all.

10:7. The word for “look” in this verse is *blepete*, from *blepo* (#991 βλέπω). It can be understood in two different ways, either as a command (“look!”) or an indicative statement of fact (“you are looking”). This difference comes out in the varying translations: E.g., “Look at what is before your eyes” (ESV—command); compared with, “You are looking only on the surface of things” (NIV—statement of fact). The difference amounts to this: is Paul at this point in the letter *chastising* the Corinthians for looking at people according to the flesh? Or is he *telling* them to look at the evidence that is before their eyes? According to the context of the letter, we understand the word to fit better as a command. Paul is here asking the Corinthians to consider the clear evidence of Paul and his companions lives compared to that of the “super-apostles.”

10:9. “I do not want to.” The word “want” comes out of the sense of the purpose clause (*hina* + the subjunctive mood). It is Paul’s *intended purpose* not to appear as though he were frightening; therefore, since it is his purpose, it is what he “wants.”

10:10. “unimpressive.” Cp. NIV; NASB. From *asthenes* (#772 ἀσθενής), literally, “weak,” although here it carries the connotation of being physically “unimpressive” (BDAG).

“treat...with contempt.” From *exoutheneo* (#1848 ἐξουθενέω), See commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

10:17. Quoted from Jer. 9:24.

11:6. “unskilled in speaking.” The Greeks took great pride in public speaking, and had schools, and even contests, for public oratory. Some used that against Paul, as if one had

to be a “trained speaker” to be logical and know and present the Word of God. Paul was trained as a Rabbi, so he certainly was trained, just not in the Greek form of oratory.

11:12. “as our equals.” Cp. NIV; NRSV. Literally, the Greek reads “just as we are.”

11:20. “hits you in the face.” This passage, vv. 4 and 19-21, sheds exposing light on the radical form of Christian pacifism that interprets Jesus’ teaching to “turn the other cheek” as meaning one should passively endure physical abuse. In these verses Paul is expressing disappointment with the Corinthians. He says they “put up with” a list of things they should not be putting up with, including false Christs and spirits (11:4), enslavement, domination, and being hit in the face (11:20). The word for “hit in the face” is *dero* (#1194 δέρω), meaning “beat” or “strike.” It is clear from its inclusion in this list that a Christian ought not to put up with being physically struck in the face. The word Jesus used for turning the other cheek in Matthew 5:39 is a different word: *rhapizo* (#4474 ραπίζω), usually translated “slap.” It referred not to a fierce punch, but to a slight backhand meant as an insult. Jesus’ point was not that one ought to endure physical abuse; his point was to overlook foolish insults.

11:21. “to my shame.” This is a Greek idiom that is missed by the KJV translators. Literally it reads, “I speak according to shame,” which comes out in the KJV as “I speak as concerning reproach.” However, this is unclear to the English reader, and does not communicate Paul’s meaning. By saying “I speak according to shame,” Paul refers to his own hypothetical shame, and speaks of it with sarcasm. The translation, “to my shame... we were too weak for that” captures the sarcastic sense of the verse very well.

11:24. “...received forty *lashes* less one.” This was a tradition of the Israelites that originated from the Mosaic Law. Deuteronomy 25:2-3 says, “...the judge shall make him [the criminal] lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that, your brother will be degraded in your eyes.” To ensure that Israelites adhered to the Mosaic Law, the tradition was established to give thirty-nine lashes to prevent breaking the Law if there was a miscount. The one giving the lashes was subject to punishment if the stripes exceeded forty. These lashes were originally administered with a rod, but later the rod was exchanged for a leather strap consisting of three leather thongs. (*Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*; Baker Book House, Vol. III, p. 2642; James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible*; Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I, p. 526).

11:25. “adrift at sea.” This is from the Greek phrase *en to butho*, “in the sea-depth;” the word for “sea-depth” is *buthos* (#1037 βυθός), and to be “in the *buthos*” is an idiom for “adrift at sea” (BDAG).

12:7. “to beat up on me.” This translation is at once very literal, and yet communicates idiomatically in English. The Greek verb is *kolaphizo* (#2852 κολαφίζω), which indicates a beating with the fists, a violent and harsh treatment.

12:9. “rest upon me.” The word “rest” in the Greek literally means to “pitch a tent over, to set up a dwelling place,” from *episkenoō* (#1981 ἐπισκηνώω). Paul is saying that the power of Christ will set up camp over his life and dwell over him.

12:11. “moral obligation.” This is from the Greek word *ophelo* (#3784 ὀφείλω). It is stronger than what the Corinthians “ought” to have done; the word refers to an obligation or debt (BDAG). For clarity in English we have switched the framing from “I” to “you,” like the NJB and NLT. The meaning is the same; it is easier to read “you have a moral obligation to me,” than “I have a moral obligation owed by you.”

12:19. “defending ourselves.” There is beautiful courtroom imagery in this verse that can be missed in English. Paul is here asking the Corinthians if they presume he has been attempting to clear himself of charges before them. He has not. Rather, in Paul’s mind, it is before God that he stands or falls, and God is his only Judge. The Greek word for “defending ourselves”—*apologeomai* (#626 ἀπολογέομαι)—refers to a public defense in a trial, and, by metaphor and extension, to defending one’s self in an everyday life situation. Paul is saying that it is not before the court of the Corinthians that he pleads his case, but before the court of God who sits as Judge he is speaking in Christ.

12:20. “rivalries.” The Greek is *eritheia* (#2052 ἐριθεία). See note on “selfish ambition,” Romans 2:8.

“arrogance.” For this word, the KJV “swelling” is very literal, although unclear as to what the “swelling” indicates. It is from *phusiosis* (#5450 φυσίωσις), which refers to “swelled-headedness” (BDAG), or “an inflated, puffed up, exaggerated view of one’s own importance” (Luw-Nida)—in other words, *arrogance*. Paul is referring to the phenomenon that often happens in arguments, when love for the other person and what is right gives way to a blinding force of care for one’s own pride and position.

13:1. Quoted from Deut. 19:15.

13:3. “among you.” In this case, it is best to translate the *en* (#1722 ἐν) as “among” you, rather than “in” you. The difference is this: “among you” refers to Christ’s power in the fellowship community of the Corinthians, while “in you” would speak of his power for each individual Corinthian believer. The translation “among you” is best because the context of verses 1-2 is speaking of the Corinthians as a group, and the “you” is plural, also referring to the group.

13:4. “to serve you.” This is coming out of the preposition *eis* (“unto”)—it is an *eis* of advantage, meaning “for you,” “for your advantage.” Cp. NIV and Kistemaker, who also render the phrase “to serve you.”

13:9. “fully equipped.” The Greek is the rare noun, *katartisis* (#2676 κατάρτισις), and it only occurs here in the New Testament (although the verb occurs in verse 11). According to Louw Nida, it means to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified. It can refer to the completion or perfection or equipping of the person (“soul” in the classics), or the character. The word means more than just having a mature or complete character, although that is certainly included. Also, closing the letter by saying that Paul was praying for their character seemed unkind. Rather, he is praying that they be fully equipped in every way. Some versions read “restoration,” although that too seems harsh for the ending of an epistle. The fact is that if the believers are fully equipped, they would be in the will of God and need no “restoration.”

13:11. “*Let yourselves.*” The first two verbs are passive, hence “let yourselves,” which is necessary to communicate the passive. The last two are active. Importantly, the passive verbs point out that often we are our own worst enemies when it comes to godliness. We dig in our heels and refuse to let God do His perfect work in us, equipping and perfecting us, and we do not listen to the admonition of others.

“*Let yourselves* be admonished.” Cp. Lenski. Paul has been urging and admonishing them the whole letter, now he appeals to them to let it in, to allow themselves to receive his admonition. The Greek word for “admonished” is in the passive voice, which here is permissive in meaning; “be admonished” thus means “permit

yourselves to be admonished.” The NIV is not literal here but captures the meaning well with the translation, “listen to my appeal.” This word, *parakaleo* (#3870 παρακαλέω), could also mean “be encouraged” (e.g., NET, HCSB) or “be comforted” (e.g., NASB, KJV), so there is a possibility of double meaning. However, we feel the primary meaning, given the context of the reproof throughout the epistle is an appeal for the Corinthians to receive Paul’s exhortation.

“rejoice.” The Greek word *chairo* (#5463 χαίρω), literally meaning “rejoice,” was also used as the standard greeting; it means both “hello” and “goodbye.” In this verse the versions differ on whether Paul employs the term as a salutation (“farewell”; cp. NIV, NRSV, KJV, ASV) or as a command to “rejoice” (cp. ESV, NASB, HCSB, NET, NAB).