

## 2 Corinthians

**1:10.** “hope.” The Greek verb is *elpizō* (#1679 ελπίζω). To “hope” is to have a desire for, or an expectation of, good, especially when there is some confidence of fulfillment. It is used that way both in common English and in the Bible. However, the Bible often uses the word “hope” in another way—to refer to the special expectation of good that God has in store for each Christian in the future that is based on the Word and promises of God and therefore guaranteed to occur. This includes the “Rapture,” receiving a new, glorified body, and living forever on a new and wonderful earth. Today, the ordinary use of “hope” allows for the possibility that what is hoped for will not come to pass. However, when the Bible uses the word “hope” to refer to things that God has promised, the meaning of “hope” shifts from that which has a reasonable chance of coming to pass to that which will absolutely come to pass.

A biblical occurrence of “hope” as “an expectation of good” can be found in Acts 27:20. Paul was on a ship bound for Rome. A storm came up and raged for many days, such that “we gave up all *hope* of being saved.” Another example is in 3 John 14 where the apostle John wrote to his friend Gaius and said, “I *hope* to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.” These are examples of the Bible using the word “hope” in the way it is used in everyday language, such as when someone says, “I hope the mail comes on time today.” However, there are also many times the Bible uses the word “hope” to refer to things that will absolutely come to pass, such as everlasting life and the blessings associated with it. Colossians 1:23 mentions “the *hope* held out in the gospel,” i.e., “the expectation of future good presented in the gospel.”

Unfortunately, in common English the word “hope” is often used as a synonym for “wish.” When a person says, “I *hope* it rains this week,” it is likely that there is no rain in the weather forecast, and so the statement is made without any certainty or confidence that it will, in fact, rain. It would have been more proper for the person to say, “I *wish* it would rain this week.”

It would help us understand the Bible if Christians used vocabulary the way God does in His Word, and use the word “hope” when there is an absolute certainty, or at least a good chance, that what is “hoped” for will occur. God, “who does not lie,” made many promises about the future everlasting life of the believer. Although we may not know when He will fulfill those promises, we can be absolutely certain that He will fulfill them. We can, and should, base our faith and our behavior on the “hope” that God promises in His Word.

**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.

**2:12.** “in the Lord.” The Greek is *en kuriō* (ἐν κυρίῳ), “in the Lord.” The preposition can make the noun “Lord” definite, so there is no need for the article “the” in the Greek. The phrase refers to a relationship, and could be translated “in association with the Lord,” or “in connection with the Lord.” The exact relationship is not stated. It is saying too much to make the *en* (“in”) instrumental and translate the phrase “by the Lord” because we cannot tell from the text if the Lord opened the door, or if the door was opened by other circumstances that Paul used in connection with Christ to the advantage of the Good News.

**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 (this is referred to in Col. 2:15, see note there). 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.

**2:17.** “adulterating.” The Greek is *kapeleuo* (#2585 καπηλεύω) It was used frequently 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.

**3:1.** “recommend.” The Greek word is *sunistemi* (#4921 συνίστημι). It has a number of different meanings but in this context it means to recommend (cp. note on Rom. 16:1, Col. 1:17).

**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.”

**3:7.** “the glory of his face.” 2 Corinthians 3:7 is referring to the Old Testament record in which Moses goes up onto Mount Sinai for the seventh time and speaks with God while he is there, and when he comes down the mountain his face is radiant (Ex. 34:29-35).

All seven times that Moses ascended and descended Mount Sinai are in Exodus. First time: 19:3 up; 19:7 down. Second time: 19:8 up; 19:14 down. Third time: 19:20 up; 19:25 down. Fourth time: 20:21 up; 24:3 down. Between the fourth and fifth time up Moses went part way up with the elders of Israel: 24:9. Fifth time: 24:15 up (he was there 40 days and 40 nights (24:18) and got the Ten Commandments on stone (32:15) during this fifth trip; 32:15 down. Sixth time: 32:31 up; 32:35 he is commanded to go down. Seventh time: 34:4 up; 34:29 down.

This seventh time down the Mount, Moses was carrying the second set of the Ten Commandments. The first set of stone tablets God Himself carved out of stone and wrote on (Ex. 31:18; 32:15, 16). After Moses broke them, God told Moses to chisel out two new tablets (no easy task with bronze tools) and He would write on them (Ex. 34:1, 29).

Exodus 34:29 tells us that Moses' face was radiant. The Hebrew text says that Moses' face shined (the Hebrew word is *qaran* (Strong's #7160) and means "to shine." Moses' face was reflecting the brilliant light of God, and it was shining so brightly that the Israelites, including Aaron the High Priest, were afraid of him (Ex. 34:30), and he had to cover his face with a veil (Ex. 34:33, 35). What Exodus does not specifically say, but just assumes, and Corinthians tells us explicitly, is that the radiance of Moses' face eventually went away.

**3:11.** "passing glory, much more that which remains has permanent 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 *through* 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.

**"Lord who is the Spirit."** Cp. Williams; ESV; NIV; HCSB; NET; NAB; NJB. The Greek has the two genitive nouns, "Lord" and "Spirit," in apposition, in other words, they are describing the same reality. The Lord and the Spirit are the same.

**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.

**4:4.** “*and shining forth.*” The Greek text in this verse contains the figure of speech *amphibologia*, or double meaning (cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). The double meaning arises from the phrase *mē augasai ton phōtismōn*, which can be understood to mean, “lest [they] see the light” or “lest the light shine.” Most modern versions go with the first translation, as for example the NIV, “so that they cannot see the light.” The ASV, KJV, and Darby’s translation, on the other hand, understand the phrase in the second sense. In reality, both are true. The devil desires to keep unbelievers from seeing the light, and to keep them from shining this light forth, once they are illuminated by the face of Christ.

**4:6.** “to provide illumination.” The *pros* (#4314 πρός) in this verse indicates purpose, “*in order to provide illumination*” (cp. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*).

**“on the face of Jesus Christ.”** When Moses saw the glory of God, that glory was reflected on his face and was so bright it frightened the people of Israel (see note, 2 Cor. 3:7). Now we have the opportunity to see and reflect the glory of God, which is not on the face of Moses, but the face of Jesus Christ. We must look at Jesus to reflect the glory of God.

**4:7.** “this treasure.” The treasure is the “knowledge” of the glory of God (verse 6).

**4:10.** “carrying around in our body the putting to death of Jesus.” As Lenski points out, “the putting to death of Jesus” makes Jesus the object of the phrase instead of the subject, but both are grammatically acceptable, and both make sense, it just seem to be more in line with the subject matter being discussed to make the putting to death the subject and Jesus the object of the phrase. In order to understand this verse we must understand that Christ is still suffering. His death atoned for sin once and for all, but he is alive, and he is still suffering. Sometime this is due to the purposeful actions of his enemies (“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Acts 9:4), and sometimes through ignorance, laziness, weakness, or other sins and faults by unbelievers and believers alike that hurt him, usually through hurting his Body. This suffering of ours that is also the suffering of Jesus is a theme in 2 Corinthians, and first appears in 1:5 where the sufferings of Jesus overflow into our lives, and are our sufferings.

**“the life of Jesus.”** Just as we cannot understand the verse if we do not understand how we carry the putting to death of Jesus, we cannot understand it if we do not grasp what the life that he gives, (and makes publically known through us) is. It is not referring to the post-resurrection physical life of Jesus, although we certainly make known that Jesus is alive. The emphasis of this verse is that we reveal to others the “life,” the salvation and everlasting life (along with “real life,” a real sense of meaning and “being alive”) to others. This allows us to understand verse 12, in which death “keeps working” in the apostles, but life “keeps working” (the verb is understood in the sentence) in the Corinthians. As the ones being ministered to by Paul and his companions, the Corinthians kept getting to see and experience the life that flowed from Jesus via the sacrificial lives of the apostles. There would be a turn around, of course. As the Corinthians matured in the faith and ministered to others, they would bear the burden and the dying of Jesus, while others would see and experience the “life” of Jesus that they provided

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

**4:14.** “*to be* with Jesus.” We have added “to be” in italics to best capture the meaning of the word “with,” and to avoid a misunderstanding about the phrase “raise us with Jesus.” The word “with” is *sun* (#4862 σύν), and means “in association with,” “in accompaniment with.” We will be raised *to be with* Jesus, to be in his company. The “with” here does not mean a temporal with, as in, “we were raised with Jesus, when he was raised.” The verb is future tense, we “will be” raised, hence, it is speaking of a future rising. As Kistemaker has written, “not that Jesus was raised again, but that Jesus as the firstfruits of all his people guarantees their resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 51, 53). Jesus will secure the glorious state of all believers and be with them in God’s presence (11:2; Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24).”

**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 κατεργάζομαι), 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).

“judgment seat of Christ.” Jesus Christ will do the actual judging, but God is the authority behind the judgment. See note on Romans 14:10.

“**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.

**5:11.** “we persuade others.” The verb “persuade” in this phrase is in the present tense, active voice, and can be understood in one of two ways. It is either conative, “we try to persuade” (Robertson), or durative “we are busy persuading” (Lenski). The question is

whether Paul meant to communicate what they were trying to do, or simply relating what they were in fact doing. In truth, Paul was doing both, he was busy persuading, trying to persuade others. In English, the translation “we are persuading” can communicate both these senses and thus was the choice for the REV.

“**others.**” The Greek is *anthrōpos* (#444 ἄνθρωπος), and it used collectively of both men and women. The REV often has “people,” but it was felt that was too stiff here, so “others” brings the meaning across.

**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.”

“**Look!**” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

“**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.** “all this.” 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.” Our union with Christ (Rom. 6:3), includes the honor, privilege, and ability to act in his stead.

*Presbeuō* was used in the Greek language to refer to three different kinds of people: an “elder,” an “ambassador,” and a “legate.” Whenever we come across a Hebrew or Greek word that has more than one meaning, we must decide which of them is the correct or appropriate meaning in the verse. In this case, we can do that by “trying out” the meanings of *presbeuō*. Reading “elder” in this context does not make good sense, and thus “elder” is not the meaning here. Reading “ambassador” in this context makes sense, because we have the ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18 and 19). As ambassadors whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), we are in a foreign country here on earth, spreading good will and trying to win support for our king and country. But we are also legates for Christ.

Communication in the Roman empire was slow. In the Roman world, if a war broke out the Emperor may not even hear about it for weeks, and then not be able to decide what to do simply because no matter what information he had and how many daily messengers arrived, their “news” was always old. Worse, when the Emperor’s orders actually arrived at the trouble spot--well, the situation was likely totally different or the trouble even over.

One way the Greco-Roman rulers dealt with the problem was through the office of the legate, a person with the authority to represent the ruler, a person delegated and empowered to act as the king himself in any given situation. About *presbeutēs* Barnett writes: “Such delegates—Jewish or Greco-Roman—came with the authority of the sender, in his place, to secure his interests,” and they were referred to as legates.<sup>36</sup> *Kittel’s Theological Dictionary* adds, “In the Roman period *presbeutēs* is the Greek equivalent of [the Latin] *legatus*...It is commonly used for the imperial legates.”<sup>37</sup> Spicq adds, “...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.”<sup>38</sup>

The fact that each of us is a “legate” is an important point being made in 2 Corinthians 5:20, because even though we are ambassadors for Christ, we are also his legates--his personal presence on earth. As we walk by the spirit, in a very real sense we are “Christ” in the situation. We see this played out over and over again in the New Testament, especially in Acts. One notable example in Acts occurred when Peter was traveling around Israel teaching, and a woman named Tabitha who lived in Joppa, the old seaport city of Israel, died. The disciples found out Peter was in a nearby city and called for him. Notice how Peter acts in the place of Christ when raising the dead. He assessed the situation, then acted, saying “Tabitha, get up” (Acts 9:40).

Peter prayed about what to do, but once he received revelation guidance about what to do concerning Tabitha, he did not pray for God to raise her. He did not say anything such as: “Dear God, here lies Tabitha. Please raise her from the dead. Please put life back into her.” No, Peter did not pray like that. Rather, he acted like Jesus acted. When Jesus was in the presence of a dead girl, he did not ask God to raise the girl, he said, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” (Mark 5:41). In fact, if we study Jesus Christ’s healings and miracles, there is not one single time Jesus asked God to do the healing. It was God’s power that did the work, certainly, but Jesus knew he was God’s representative on earth, so he healed a leper, saying, “Be clean” (Matt. 8:3). He healed a cripple, saying, “Stretch out your hand” (Matt. 12:13). He cast demons out of people by commanding them to leave, as we see in Luke: “Come out of him” (Luke 4:35). Peter knew that he was the legate of Christ, the personal presence of Christ, and he healed as Jesus did.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Barnett, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1997), p. 310.

<sup>37</sup> Bromiley, Geoffrey, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1968), Vol. 6, p. 681. This ten-volume theological dictionary is often referred to as “*Kittel’s Theological Dictionary*.” Where the ellipse appears in the quotation above, there are a number of references to ancient works to substantiate the point.

<sup>38</sup> Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994), Vol. 3, p. 174, 175.

Paul healed the same way that Jesus and Peter did (Acts 14:10, 16:18). There is no record in Acts of anyone being healed where the one doing the healing prayed for God to do it. In every specific case, the individual did the healing or miracle, but was clearly doing so by the power of God, which is why God always gets the glory.

We Christians are legates of Christ--the personal presence of Christ on earth. However, we have a decision to make. Just as a Roman legate could go to the hippodrome and sit and eat olives and watch the horse races all day long instead of going out and representing the Emperor, so Christians can act in ways that hang on to the flesh and not walk in the power of Christ. Walking in the fullness of the power of Christ does not "just happen," it is a purposeful decision. We must realize the power we have, and then go into the world and walk it out in faith. So should 2 Corinthians 5:20 read "legates" instead of "ambassadors?" "Ambassadors" fits the context so well that it seems best to leave it as the reading in the text and have the reading "legate" in the margin as an additional meaning.

**"We implore on behalf of Christ."** Although many English versions supply "you" and thus have something similar to "we implore you," there is no "you" in the Greek text, and it is misleading to supply it. "We" Christians are ambassadors and legates for Christ, and "we" implore people who need it to be reconciled to God.

**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.

**6:1.** "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.

**"Look!"** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. It is the figure of speech asterismos, and the double use of it here in this verse should grab and hold our attention. NOW is the acceptable time! NOW is the time for salvation! Some people say, "Well, so and so will get saved when the time is right, on the Lord's timetable." That is fatalism (or Calvinism) and denies free will and the expressed meaning of the Word of God. God wants everyone to be saved right away so they assure themselves a place in the Kingdom and also can begin to store up rewards for themselves. For more on "Look," see commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!").

**6:4.** "servants of God." The Greek reads, "servants of God," which in this context is the genitive of relation. This is not the genitive of possession, as if God owned the ministers, but rather of relation, servants (some versions read "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."** The Greek is the preposition *dia* with the genitive case, and means "though" (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. While this is true, we felt that the word “through” was clear enough. A person going through glory and dishonor spends his time “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 ὄπλον), 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.”

**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.

**6:9. “Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

**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 persons 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.

**7:1.** “spirit.” This is not referring to the “gift of holy spirit,” but is a use of “spirit” as “soul.” There are things that are specifically in the category of “flesh,” that defiles us, such as sexual sin or other sins directly involving the body. In contrast to the flesh, however, is the soul, which as a kind of “spirit,” is sometimes referred to as spirit. In this context, “soul” type things that we need to cleanse are our thoughts and attitudes.

**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.** “in the sight of 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.

**7:14.** “put to shame.” See commentary on Romans 9:33.

**8:2.** “generosity.” The Greek word for “generosity” (#572 ἀπλότης) can also mean “sincere concern, simple goodness” (BDAG).

**8:8.** “*comparing it with.*” Cp. NIV; NET. By comparing the Corinthians’ love to the earnestness of others, Paul proves whether their love passes the test. It is when their love stands in contrast to the giving of others that this test can occur.

**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).

**9:4.** “put to shame.” See note on Rom. 9:33.

**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 commentary note on 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 *tolmaō* (#5111 τολμᾶω), “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).

**“is of no account.”** 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 ἐπισκηνόω). 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.”

**12:14.** “**Look!**” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

**12:16.** “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.

**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 *phusiōsis* (#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.** “we also are weak in him.” The words “in him” mean “in union with him” (see commentary on Romans 6:3). We are used to thinking of being “in Christ” and thus being having been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), having died with Christ (Rom. 6:8), having been buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), and being raised with Christ (Eph. 2:6). However, we are also “weak” in Christ. Christians are not spiritual bullies, asserting ourselves and getting our way because we are so spiritually powerful. We are spiritually powerful, but our power is used the same way Christ and Paul used their spiritual power. Christ said to learn about him, for “I am meek and humble in heart” (Matt. 11:29). Christ became a sacrifice whose life was poured out for others, and that must be true of us too.

“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, *parakaleō* (#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 *chairō* (#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).