

2 Corinthians

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1:23 I am calling on God as witness to my inner motivation, that, in order to save you from excessive discomfort, I did not come to Corinth,³⁵ **1:24** because we are not being domineering over your belief. Instead, we are fellow-workers of your joy, for you have stood and continue to stand by means of your belief.³⁶ **2:1** I reached a decision myself on this—not to come to you again in sorrow,³⁷ **2:2** because, if I am making you sorrowful, indeed who is the one who makes me happy except the one who was made sorrowful by virtue of me.³⁸ **2:3** And I wrote this very thing, in order that, when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice, because I had confidence in all of you that my joy has its source in all of you.³⁹ **2:4** With great difficulty and distress of heart, I wrote to you through many tears, not so that you would be made to grieve, but so that you would know the love that I have especially for you.⁴⁰

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3:12 Therefore, because we have such a certain expectation, we act with vast, bold openness⁶⁸ **3:13** and are not like Moses. He put a veil over his face to the effect that the people of Israel could not look steadfastly at the end of what was fading.⁶⁹ **3:14** However, their minds were hardened.⁷⁰ Even up until this time, at the reading of the Old Covenant, the same veil remains and is not lifted away, while it is removed when someone is in the Messiah.⁷¹ **3:15** Indeed, up until today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart.⁷² **3:16** Yet,

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

3:17 The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, that's where you find freedom.⁷⁴ **3:18** And we all with unveiled faces, while reflecting like a mirror the awesomeness of the Lord,⁷⁵ are being transformed into the same image from glory into glory, just as from the Lord, that is, the Spirit.⁷⁶

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

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

4:6 Because God is the one who said,

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

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

4:7 So we have this treasure in clay pots, in order that the exceeding quantity of power may be from God and not from ourselves,⁸⁴ **4:8** while we are being pressured by everything but not crushed, while we are uncertain but not despairing,⁸⁵ **4:9** while we are being persecuted but not abandoned, while we are being thrown down but not destroyed⁸⁶—**4:10** always carrying about

Jesus' death in the body so that Jesus' life may be revealed via our body.⁸⁷ **4:11** We who are living are always being handed over to death on account of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may also be revealed via our mortal flesh.⁸⁸ **4:12** For this reason, death is operating in us but life in you.⁸⁹

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

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

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

4:16 As a result, we are not discouraged, but if, indeed, our outer man is in the process of being destroyed, nevertheless, our inner man is being renewed day after day,⁹³ **4:17** for momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal, weight of glory far beyond all comparison,⁹⁴ **4:18** while we do not pay any heed to the things that are seen but to the things that are not seen. The things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.⁹⁵

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

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

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

5:16 Therefore, from now on we recognize no one on the basis of merely their external stuff. If, indeed, we have known the Messiah on the basis of his external stuff, nevertheless now we know him no longer on this basis.¹¹² **5:17** Consequently, if someone is in the Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Look, new things have come into existence.¹¹³

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

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

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

Behold, now is the truly acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.¹²⁰

6:3 We are giving no reason for someone to criticize us in anything, in order that our service not be criticized.¹²¹ **6:4** Instead, in everything, we are recommending ourselves as God’s servants—in much endurance, in tribulations, in pressures, in stressful circumstances,¹²² **6:5** in beatings, in imprisonments, in the midst of riots, in labors, in sleepless nights, in times of going without food,¹²³ **6:6** in single-minded resolve, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in a sanctified spirit, in unhypocritical love,¹²⁴ **6:7** by means of the message of truth, by means of the power of God, by means of the weapons of a good standing before God for the right and left hands,¹²⁵ **6:8** through circumstances where some people think we are great and others think we are awful, through circumstances where some people slander us and others talk about us with glowing reports, as those who are looked upon as deceivers by some and men of truth by others,¹²⁶ **6:9** as those who are said to be absolutely ignorant and stupid by some and those who are seen as possessing the only true and accurate truth of reality by others, as those who are actually dying and yet, behold, we stand to live, as those who are being trained and yet we are not going to experience death,¹²⁷ **6:10** as grieving but always rejoicing, as poor and yet making many rich, as having nothing while also possessing everything.¹²⁸

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

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

I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be
My people <Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:12>?¹³⁴

6:17 Therefore, “come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean, and I will welcome you <Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34>.”¹³⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8:8 I am not speaking by way of commandment, but as proving out by means of the earnestness of others (διὰ τῆς ἐτέρων σπουδῆς) the authenticity of your love also.¹⁶⁰ **8:9** You know about the

gracious gift of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that, while being rich, he became poor on your account, so that you may become rich by means of his poverty.¹⁶¹ **8:10** Thus, I give my opinion in this matter.¹⁶²

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

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

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

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

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

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

9:5 Therefore, I considered it necessary to persuade the brothers to go to you ahead of us and to prepare beforehand your previously promised generous gift, that it may be ready in this way as a generous gift and not as a gift that is grudgingly granted with greed.¹⁸² **9:6** There is this principle, "He who sows meagerly will also reap meagerly, and he who sows generously will also reap generously."¹⁸³ **9:7** Each person should sow just as he decided beforehand in his heart, not out of sadness or under compulsion, because God loves a happy giver.¹⁸⁴

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

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

9:10 He who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed and will increase the products of your righteousness,¹⁸⁷ 9:11 as you are made wealthy in every situation for a completely single-minded commitment that is producing through us thanksgiving to God,¹⁸⁸ 9:12 because the service of this assistance/help is not only fully supplying the needs of the set apart ones, but also is causing an abundance through many thanksgivings to God.¹⁸⁹

9:13 In the light of proving out your authenticity by this service, they will glorify God for your submission to your confession to the good news of the Messiah and for your single-minded commitment to participate with them and with all others,¹⁹⁰ 9:14 as they, in their prayer for you, long for you on account of the extraordinary grace of God in you.¹⁹¹

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

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

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

10:12 We definitely are not bold to classify or compare ourselves with any of those who recommend themselves. In contrast, those who measure themselves by means of themselves and compare themselves with themselves lack understanding.²⁰⁴ 10:13 Plus, we will not brag beyond the limits of our work, but according to the measure of the assignment that God allotted to us, to reach even as far as you.²⁰⁵ 10:14 We are not overextending ourselves as if we did not reach to you, for, indeed, we were the *first* to come to you with the good news of the Messiah.²⁰⁶ 10:15 We are not going to brag in the labors of others that extend beyond our limits. But we have the expectation that, as your belief increases, it will result in our being greatly enlarged among you according to our assignment.²⁰⁷ 10:16 The result will be to preach the good news to regions

beyond you so as not to boast in another's assignment towards those who have been prepared.²⁰⁸ **10:17** Instead,

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, in whatever someone is bold (I am talking like a fool), I also am bold.²³² **11:22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.²³³ **11:23** Are they servants of the Messiah? I am speaking as one who is out of his mind. I far more—in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, in more severe beatings, in frequent dangers of death.²³⁴ **11:24** Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.²³⁵ **11:25** Three times I was beaten with a stick. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day adrift at sea.²³⁶ **11:26** In frequent travels I have experienced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the desert, dangers on the sea, dangers from false brethren.²³⁷

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12:19 You have probably been thinking that all along we have been defending ourselves to you. Actually, we are speaking in the presence of God because of the Messiah. Thus, all things,

beloved, are for your spiritual improvement.²⁶³ **12:20** I am afraid, lest somehow when I come, I may not find you to be as I wish, and I may not be found by you to be as you wish, lest somehow there be strife, envy, angry feelings, conflicts, slanderous exchanges, gossips, prideful feelings, and confusing situations.²⁶⁴ **12:21** I am afraid, lest when I come again, God may humiliate me before you, and I will mourn over many of those who have committed immorality in the past (τῶν προημαρτηκότων) and not repented of the uncleanness, sexual immorality (πορνεία), and licentiousness that they have practiced.²⁶⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρῶν καὶ θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως – God is the very source of mercy (plural in the Greek for emphasis – cf. Romans 12:1, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship) and forgiveness that is necessary in order for morally depraved human beings to obtain citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, He also provides the necessary comfort, persuasion, and encouragement intellectually and inwardly for people to embrace fully this biblical message of His eternal mercy as truth, especially in the midst of any suffering they endure as Paul will go on to say. Being changed inwardly and comforted, persuaded, and encouraged fully and enduringly over the course of the present life is God’s requirement of human beings for their receiving His eternal mercy and entering in the Kingdom of God. But He is also the one who ensures this happens.

⁷ ὁ παρακαλῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul refers specifically to himself and Timothy, as shown by the fact that he continues by using the contrasting personal pronouns “we/us” and “you/you.” Paul and Timothy are able to be successful in comforting and encouraging others of the truth of the biblical message only when God miraculously works within these other people. This divine comfort and encouragement is the same that comes to Paul and Timothy in the midst of their suffering as the latter two both model being encouraged by the biblical message of God’s promise of eternal life and continue to proclaim this message to the Corinthians. Thus, Paul and Timothy’s ability to comfort and encourage others is their ability to continue believing and proclaiming the biblical message in the midst of the hardship of their suffering. However, the actual comforting and encouraging of others is accomplished only if God is working inwardly in these other people.

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

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

⁹ οὕτως διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ περισσεύει καὶ ἡ παράκλησις ἡμῶν – It is also a fact of reality that Paul and Timothy enjoy a level of comfort and encouragement through the truth of the biblical message that is commensurate with the level of their suffering for this message—all by the miracle of the grace of God at work within them that occurs because of God’s plan to use them in

bringing about the fulfillment of His project of producing a people fit and qualified through their authentic belief for the eternal kingdom and realm where Jesus will be their king and everyone else will have received God's complete and eternal mercy (mercies!).

¹⁰ εἶτε δὲ θλιβόμεθα, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως καὶ σωτηρίας – The purpose of Paul's and Timothy's suffering that results in God's further comforting and persuading them of the truth of the biblical message is so that they may be authoritative spokesmen for the good news of God's mercy to the Gentiles, and specifically the Corinthian Christians in this context. Implied of course is that this is on the basis of Paul's being called by God to be the sole and unique apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, God fully intends to use Paul and Timothy as His tools to comfort the Corinthian Christians and persuade them of the truth and value of the biblical message that ultimately results in their eternal salvation and participation in the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

¹² καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς ἡμῶν βεβαία ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν – Paul's and Timothy's long term expectation of the eternal salvation of the Corinthian Christians is well based on the miraculous role that suffering will play in their being comforted and persuaded of the truth of the biblical message as God continues to comfort and persuade them inwardly through His grace. And most likely Paul's and Timothy's confidence comes from having watched God work in the Corinthians to the effect that they truly seemed to embrace the message of Jesus as their king and priest and to live their lives accordingly after they initially chose to believe during their first visit. Paul is now looking forward to his third visit after their response to his recent letter, thus even more confident that they are genuine in their belief (cf. chapters 2, 7, 12, and 13).

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

A strong possibility for the origin of the suffering of the Corinthian Christians is the false apostles who are very worldly in their approach to the Corinthians, even being harsh and overbearing towards them as similar to the persecution that Christians would receive from other kinds of unbelievers (cf. chapter 11).

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

This incident is most likely the one described in Acts 19:23-41 in Ephesus during the latter part of his third missionary journey (since this part of Luke's account of events in Ephesus is separate from the events in Acts 19:1-22, even though it does not sound as though Paul was in as much danger as some of his traveling companions. It is also possible that this is a more recent incident in Ephesus just before Paul writes 2 Corinthians in Macedonia or Illyricum and of which the Corinthians are not yet familiar ("we do not want you to be ignorant"), especially if Luke leaves out a lot of details regarding Paul's lengthy stay of 2¼ to three years in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:8-10; 20:31). However, the best way of understanding Luke 19 is as mentioned above. Nevertheless, it should not surprise the Corinthians that once again Paul found himself near death for the sake of the gospel (cf. 2 Corinthians 11). This also helps in interpreting the suffering that the Corinthians are enduring as mentioned in v. 7, that it is coming from unbelievers, and the most emphasized unbelievers in this letter are the false apostles described in chapter 11.

¹⁵ ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχέκαμεν – Paul and Timothy feared for their lives in Ephesus when the whole city seemed to turn against them.

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

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

¹⁸ εἰς ὃν ἠλπικαμεν ὅτι καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται – Paul repeats for emphasis sake that Timothy and he are confident that God will rescue them from eternal death, although the “yet” in this statement could refer to another physical death as God continues to use Paul as the sole apostle to the Gentiles.

¹⁹ συνυπουργούντων καὶ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῇ δεήσει – Paul’s role in human history is to proclaim the biblical message of Jesus as Messiah to the Gentiles, and he himself with Timothy will receive the same gift of eternal life from God which the Corinthian Christians will receive (if indeed it is eternal death and not physical death to which Paul is referring). In addition, Paul knows that Timothy and he need God’s grace, strength, power, and faithfulness to persist in their belief just as much as any Christian needs these. Therefore, he is counting on the Corinthian Christians to pray for the perseverance of his faith as he is praying for theirs. In this way, people who have been affected by Paul’s fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles will eventually be grateful when he too obtains entrance into the eternal kingdom of God along with them, thus further demonstrating the verity of the message which he has proclaimed to everybody’s benefit.

Or the Gentiles will be grateful when God rescues their primary teacher, Paul, from another threat of physical death so that he can continue teaching them. They truly need him and will be grateful for God’s persevering his life for their benefit.

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

Or Paul is saying that they will be grateful that God saved him from physical death in order that he may continue teaching and encouraging them as he is doing now. This interpretative option is making more sense in the light of Paul’s talking about many people praying and many people being grateful together as their prayers are answered for the preserving of Paul’s life now. This would also be a subtle way of Paul’s defending himself before the Corinthians as the one true apostle to the Gentiles to whom they should listen in contrast to the false apostles of chapter 11. And he does not have to be saying that he is absolutely convinced that God guarantees that He will keep him alive. All he would be saying is that, if God so chooses to preserve his life a little while longer, then people praying for this will be a good thing along with their thanking God for answering their prayers in this manner. In other words, Paul is still a believer in God’s total sovereignty over his life and also realizes that eventually he will die when God so chooses for him to do so.

²¹ ἡ γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἀπλότῃ καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ’ ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul’s and Timothy’s single-minded resolve and whole motivation from God as a result of His kindness and work within them and that leads them to perform Paul’s gift and role as the apostle to the Gentiles is what gives them confidence in the authenticity of their belief. Indeed, no one can carry out his responsibility as a human being within the biblical story apart from God’s causing him to do so. It is not human wisdom that is guiding Paul and Timothy to fulfill their apostolic role, but God’s grace and independent work within them according to His ultimate plans and purposes. The combination of the objective and the subjective are what convince Paul and Timothy that they are true Christians and carrying out Paul’s apostolic responsibility, and ultimately they brag about God’s grace and not about anything coming from themselves which is accomplishing their own salvations.

This is in contrast to the false apostles (chapter 11) who have ulterior motives for influencing the Corinthians. Thus, Paul is carefully contrasting himself with them to defend himself without sounding heavy handed or domineering.

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

This is also in contrast to the false apostles who have brought a message that is different from Paul’s, most likely including the necessity of the Gentile Corinthian Christians to follow the Mosaic Covenant in order to prove they are true followers of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.

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

the first person singular “I” and then back again to the first person plural “we.”

Paul wants the Corinthians to hold on to his apostolic message until the end of their lives, not the message of the false apostles.

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

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

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

²⁶ καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν διελθεῖν εἰς Μακεδονίαν καὶ πάλιν ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑφ’ ὑμῶν προπεμφθῆναι εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν – The double gift of grace to the Corinthians would be in the form of their being exposed twice to the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah by Paul and Timothy who would pass through Corinth on their way to northern Greece, Macedonia, and on their way back from northern Greece. And this would be before Paul and Timothy proceeded back to Jerusalem with their monetary gift to the Jewish Christians during the current famine (cf. 2 Corinthians 8,9). Thus, it was not Paul’s plan to return to Ephesus, which he had done after writing the “letter of sorrow” from Macedonia without going back to Corinth.

As a result, Paul will later say that he chose not to return to Corinth after his second visit there where something disturbed him so much that instead he wrote a letter from Macedonia and then went back to Ephesus. Plus, he decided to remain in the Asian/Greek area in order to deal with the situation in Corinth, with respect to both the false apostles and the immoral behavior with the resultant harsh treatment brought on by the influence of the false apostles who were emphasizing punishing people harshly according to the Mosaic Covenant.

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

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

Paul and Timothy are saying that it is true that a revealing characteristic of man’s moral depravity is to claim to be committed to people and then break that commitment for completely selfish reasons. It is to abandon truth for the sake of one’s own selfish agenda and avoidance of suffering.

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

²⁸ πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν ὁ πρὸς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἔστιν ναὶ καὶ οὐ – Regardless of Paul’s and Timothy’s motives, the real issue is the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of the message that they proclaim. Cf. Philippians 1 where Paul applauds the people who are selfishly ambitious but are presenting accurately and with a healthy dose of grace the information about Jesus as

the Messiah. Therefore, once again, Paul and Timothy refer and appeal to God and His faithfulness, because the message which they are presented focuses on Him and has its basis in Him.

²⁹ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ γὰρ υἱὸς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς – Interesting syntax here. Paul is defending his apostleship and that he, not the pseudo-apostles, belongs to God. However, the one who really belongs to God, the most important person who belongs to God, is Jesus the Messiah, and it is to him that Paul and Timothy want to direct the attention of the Corinthians. Thus, we can infer that as much as the false apostles are pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, they are subtly directing the Corinthians’ attention to them and not to Jesus, while Paul wants to direct people’s attention to Jesus alone and not to him. Yet, he is having to defend himself, putting him in the uncomfortable position of talking about himself more than he would like.

Paul had to do this same kind of thing in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

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

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

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

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

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

Another option is that “anointed us” (and the sealed, etc. in v. 22) refer to all Paul and Timothy and include the Corinthian Christians. However, as Paul goes on to talk about himself and Timothy, his argument is more about defending himself as the one true apostle to the Corinthian Gentiles and not including them in the benefits of the gospel, even though he does mention this latter issue too.

³⁴ ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς τὸν ἄρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν – God is the one who has commissioned, through His inward work by the Holy Spirit, the apostles to carry out their authoritative responsibilities. This inward work also constitutes the down payment, i.e., God’s evidence, of His fulfilling His promise of granting eternal life to the apostles and the other apostolic workers like Timothy and Silvanus. Eternal life, ultimately, is what they are counting on also, not being viewed as wildly successful human beings in this world. Paul is willing to give up all fame and honor in the world in order to gain eternal life and mercy from God. cf. 5:5.

³⁵ Ἐγὼ δὲ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ὅτι φειδόμενος ὑμῶν οὐκέτι ἤλθον εἰς Κόρινθον – Now that Paul hopes that he has convinced the Corinthians that his motivation and behavior towards them has always been good and moral, he feels that it is time to answer their implied question, “Ok, Paul, then why did you not come back to us but sent the letter instead when you had told us that you were returning after you visited Macedonia?” So here he starts presenting them with the real reason why he did not come to Corinth, as opposed to the reason the pseudo-apostles are giving, i.e., that Paul was neglectful of them and unloving towards them. Instead, Paul did not desire to be overbearing toward the Corinthians and make them intimidated by his reappearance. He had already been disappointed by whatever immoral behavior he discovered when he visited them on his way to Macedonia, and we can assume that he must have dealt with the issue as best as possible at the time.

However, the person and/or persons involved clearly did not respond well to his dealing with it at the time, so that he had to write another letter to them that he mentions in this letter. Thus, he was saving them from excessive discomfort by not reappearing in Corinth. It was for this reason, not out of being wishy-washy that he did not return as he had said he would.

³⁶ οὐχ ὅτι κυριεύομεν ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως ἀλλὰ συνεργοὶ ἐσμεν τῆς χαρᾶς ὑμῶν τῇ γὰρ πίστει ἐστήκατε – Even though Paul is an authoritative apostle, Timothy’s and his relationship to the Corinthians’ Christianity is as guides, not as authoritarian tyrants. They are very aware of the personal nature of belief, that it must be something a human being does as much as possible based upon the inner work of God along with intellectual interaction with the biblical truth. It should not be because of the influence, personality, or some such cause from another human being, even from an apostle. Therefore, the condition the Corinthians have fulfilled for being authentic Christians is their own belief, not their submission to an authoritarian human being or their following the Mosaic Covenant—such as is the situation because of the false apostles. As a result, all the true apostles walked a difficult line, the line of being authoritative without being either authoritarian or uncaring with respect to people’s belief. Paul and Timothy want the Corinthians to enjoy the hope of salvation that they have acquired by virtue of their own belief and not the coercion of other human beings. Plus, they always encourage Christians that it is their belief and moral obedience, not their scrupulous adherence to the Jewish Mosaic Covenant, that is the necessary condition for acquiring eternal salvation and life from God.

³⁷ Ἐκρίνα γὰρ ἐμαντῶ τοῦτο τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν – Paul is willing to own the decision not to visit them, but he considers his reason a good one, too. It was not to cause them and him any more discomfort and sorrow than was absolutely necessary and wise in this present situation, which he goes on to explain to some degree. He had dealt with the situation when he was there, and yet it was not enough to clear it up and get the person who was involved in the immoral behavior back on track with the gospel and its call to morality. So would another visit fix the problem? This is what Paul had to be wondering, and he decided on his own that a letter addressing the same issue would be better at this point, so that, if the letter worked, the next time he appeared in Corinth they would all be on the same page theologically speaking, thus resulting in everyone being happy with God and with one another, including with Paul and Paul with them.

It sounds as though Paul’s second visit to the Corinthians was before the false apostles began to influence them. Paul tried to deal with the situation of immorality with grace and mercy. But this didn’t work. Then the false apostles came along and dealt with it from the harsh and punitive standpoint of their understanding of the Mosaic Covenant, and this did work. However, it worked so well that it brought even more sorrow and sadness to the situation (cf. 2:7,8). And Paul did not want to return to Corinth and come across to the Christian community as harsh and domineering like the false apostles. So he wrote a letter instead that hopefully would result in their returning to an attitude of grace and mercy for handling immoral situations. And his letter worked (cf. chapter 7). The Corinthians felt bad about not dealing with the situation at all before and dealing with it too harshly as a result of the false apostles’ influence (cf. 2:7,8).

³⁸ εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼ λυπῶ ὑμᾶς, καὶ τίς ὁ εὐφραίνων με εἰ μὴ ὁ λυπούμενος ἐξ ἐμοῦ – Paul admits that his writing the truth to them in a previous letter has brought some discomfort and sorrow into their lives, in spite of the fact that he was not personally there again in Corinth, and in spite of the fact that his primary purpose was to love them and not cause them pain and sorrow—even though this was unavoidable since he was dealing with an issue of sin and immoral behavior within the community. Nevertheless, the individual who is at the center of this issue can change his mind and bring joy to Paul’s heart and mind even without Paul’s being there. Indeed, this seems to be what happened.

Interesting syntax at the end of this verse with ἐξ ἐμοῦ instead of ὑπο ἐμοῦ, but the meaning seems to be the same. It is the person whom Paul made to grieve through his letter who also brings joy to his heart by his repentance.

cf. 2 Corinthians 10:10, “There is the fact that someone says, ‘On the one hand, his letters are heavy and strong, but, on the other hand, the appearance of his body is weak, and the delivery of his message is worthy of contempt.’”

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

⁴⁰ ἐκ γὰρ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας ἔγραψα ὑμῖν διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων, οὐχ ἵνα λυπηθῆτε ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε ἦν ἔχω περισσώτερος εἰς ὑμᾶς – Paul was anguished over their situation—to the point of tears when he first wrote them about it after just having visited them. His response of truth could have been interpreted by them as being unloving. Indeed, it made them grieve, probably partly because he sounded harsh. But Paul wants to assure them that he was being entirely loving toward them. So it is not that Paul would not expect them to grieve appropriately over what was going on, but that they would interpret his letter as more an act of love on his part than a reason to make them sad.

Cf. John the Baptist in Luke 3 to the crowds, “You offspring of vipers...” John was harsh towards people whom he considered for the moment to be unbelievers. Paul was being lovingly truthful in his previous letter towards people whom he considered to be authentic believers.

⁴¹ Εἰ δέ τις λελύπηκεν, οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ, πάντας ὑμᾶς – Probably, the pseudo-apostles are helping to convince the Corinthians that Paul is the sole source of their sadness because of both his heavy-handedness in his letter and neglect by not coming to them when he had promised that the would. Yes, Paul has confronted the issue more aggressively than anyone has, which makes it seem as though he is the one who causing them so much pain and sorrow. Paul looks like the bad guy here, which is often what happens when someone confronts immoral behavior and his honesty meets with anger, disapproval, and rejection—because people do not like to hear that they are wrong. However, Paul’s point is that they need to look to the individual who caused this problem, not to him, for the source of their sorrow. He is not what is burdening them,

especially because he chose not to appear again personally in Corinth which may have felt heavy-handed to them if he had. He is simply the messenger of truth, and their burden comes from this man's immorality colliding with the truth, which should be the case anytime the biblical message collides with immorality. We should not blame God and the Bible for what is making us sad about somebody's behavior, but should blame the person's actions simply in the light of the truth of God in the Bible.

⁴² ἱκανὸν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων – This is why Paul did not visit Corinth again at this time, because he did not want to add to the weight of the whole community on this man for his repentance and making a change in his life, thus causing everyone more discomfort than was necessary. Now Paul can say that what they have done toward him is sufficient to help him move away from what was disturbing Paul and them and provoked his writing them a letter.

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

We can assume that he has learned about all this through Titus who took his letter to them as Paul relates in chapter 7.

⁴⁴ διὸ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην – Paul's ultimate goal is for the Corinthians to remain committed to one another in the midst of their genuine belief, regardless of how much sorrow he has experienced and the truth has caused in this present situation. The point is to get back to the cross of the Messiah and its implications in all their lives, i.e., whereby they continue to appeal to God for His eternal mercy and count on Him to grant it through Jesus while also loving one another sacrificially as fellow believers.

⁴⁵ εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοι ἔστε – Even though Paul's intentions are not authoritarian, it is still true that any human being's response to him and his presentation of truth demonstrates the authenticity of this person's Christianity, because the person is recognizing his authority as an apostle and the biblical truth which he is presenting. And this also was Paul's purpose in writing the letter after having first addressed the issue when he was present in Corinth. He basically wanted to find out through his letter whether are authentic Christians or not. If they responded well to Paul's admonition to deal with the immoral behavior in their midst, then he would know that the Spirit of God has worked in them and that they are genuine in their faith. If they ignored him and rejected what he said in the letter, then he would know that all their previous words where they proclaimed to be followers of Jesus were only an act. And this would be in the face of whatever influence the false apostles with their erroneous message are attempting to have on the Corinthians.

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

Cf. 1 Timothy 1:15, "The message is faithful and worthy of all acceptance, that the Messiah Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

⁴⁷ ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν – There is a definite adversary to truth and God's purposes within the world. This single person as the Bible describes him is Satan, an angelic being who has been granted by God a fair amount of influence in earthly affairs, especially it would seem at the level of leaders who help establish the current trends in religions, societies, and cultures. In addition, according to the clues in this context, the goal of Satan (his name means adversary) is to drive a wedge between Christians, while using the truth, especially the truth about immorality, to cause them to act in an overbearing way toward one another and not being forgiving toward one another (as the false apostles are encouraging the Corinthians to do towards those who have "broken the Mosaic Covenant"), thus alienating them from each other—and ultimately from God in the process as they become proud and arrogant in their self-righteous response to immorality in their presence and forget the key element of the gospel of God's grace and forgiveness. It is as Jesus says that lacking mercy towards one another results in rejecting God's mercy and missing out on eternal salvation (Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy").

Paul's goal is to avoid falling into this trap and encourages the Corinthian Christians to love one another genuinely (with gentleness, kindness, and compassion) and thereby remain unified and genuine believers in God on the basis of their understanding the good news of God's gracious and independent mercy through the Messiah Jesus.

⁴⁸ Ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θύρας μοι ἀνεωγμένης ἐν κυρίῳ – In the midst of handling this situation at Corinth from western Asia (the area on the coast of modern western Turkey where Troas was located; and probably Ephesus specifically), Paul left Ephesus and traveled towards Macedonia for the purpose of proclaiming the NT message, so that others could hear and become authentic believers—as well as for the purpose of meeting up with Titus as soon as possible to hear how his letter of sorrow had been received in Corinth.

And it was clear to him that God had prepared not only a platform for him to speak the gospel in Troas but also the hearts of some of his listeners who became genuine believers in Jesus the Messiah.

⁴⁹ οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἄνεσιν τῷ πνεύματί μου τῷ μὴ εὐρεῖν με Τίτον τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, ἀλλὰ ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς ἐξῆλθον εἰς Μακεδονίαν – Paul was looking for Titus to meet him in Troas and report on the Corinthian's situation with the possibility that Titus was going to give a bad report and recommend that Paul himself go immediately to Corinth to help with the situation (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:13ff.; Paul must have been hugely relieved by Titus' report so that now he is writing this letter with Timothy in lieu of returning to Corinth, because the Corinthians have responded so well to his other (3rd actually) letter). However, when Titus

did not show up in Troas and even though there was plenty of opportunity to proclaim the NT message there, Paul's deep concern for the Corinthians motivated him to press on to Macedonia and northern Greece, hoping to meet up with Titus there.

This of course sounds shocking to our modern Christian sensibilities that an apostle would pass up a clear and God-given opportunity to see other people come to authentic belief and gain salvation from God's eternal condemnation just because his co-worker had not met up with him to report on how a difficult situation was being handled in a different location. Couldn't Paul trust God for handling it through Titus? After all, he had trusted God for his own physical life (cf. 1:9). But Paul believed that he had a *bona fide* choice to make between staying in Troas and traveling closer to Corinth for the sake of continuing to the Corinthians with this immoral issue. Clearly, he really wanted to get things squared away in Corinth and therefore headed west and closer to this city, probably hoping to meet up with Titus on his way east towards him.

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

This is encouraging to any of us Christians that regardless of outward appearance of our success in influencing people towards believing in the gospel, we can know that God is always using us to this effect. Our job is not to measure our success, but like Paul choose to be the most loving we can towards people, exercising biblical wisdom and trust in God.

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

⁵² οἷς μὲν ὁσμὴ ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον, οἷς δὲ ὁσμὴ ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν – As an apostle, Paul, along with his apostolic workers, with their aroma of Jesus, affect non-believers who remain such and lack a changed inwardness by pushing them even more toward eternal condemnation if they continue to disbelieve. And they affect people who are either in the process of becoming genuine believers or are already believers and who have God-given authentic biblical inwardness by pushing them even more toward eternal salvation and life in the Kingdom of God. This is to say that Paul has one of two effects on people. He either draws people to God with the quality of genuine belief, or he pushes people away from God with the quality of unbelief and rejection of the truth.

Therefore, regardless of whether we are proclaiming the gospel with our words or our actions, we too are affecting people. Or rather, God is affecting people by using us in ways that we cannot even see.

⁵³ καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός – Paul's and Timothy's question is with the false apostles in mind. Who really qualifies to be an apostle and have a genuine negative or positive effect on other morally depraved human beings that is coming entirely from a position of accurate truth and authority? The implied answer of course is Paul and Timothy because of God's working within them and through them as a result of His assigning them (and not the false apostles) the responsibility to be authoritative apostles.

⁵⁴ οὐ γὰρ ἐσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν – The Corinthians were experiencing two different kinds of apostles—those who sold their message for monetary gain and those who provided it freely, or at least without demanding that they be supported (cf. 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul explains his not exercising his right to be supported by the Corinthians in order to remain loving towards them). Only the latter, i.e., Paul, Timothy, et al., were "from God" and could say that their presentation of the message was "in the Messiah" (ἐν Χριστῷ) as they were those who authentically associated with him as their Lord and Savior by means of their changed inwardness and belief.

Was it the case that small, religious societies in the Roman Empire paid their teachers and officers, so that Paul is viewed as a charlatan because he does not demand to be paid, which comes from his view of God's grace—that it cannot be obtained through a person's making himself worthy of it? Certainly it was true of the sophists that they were paid for their wisdom and instruction. It was probably not unusual for Jewish rabbis to expect (even demand) to be paid for their work. Thus, it may have been engrained in the culture that the only ideas worth hearing are those from reputable spokesmen who get paid. This is not much different from today.

The phrase ἐξ εἰλικρινείας uses the same word, "purity of motive," as 1:12 where Paul first declared the appropriateness of his inner motivation for his conduct in the world and towards the Corinthians. This then is in contrast to the false apostles' motivation and behavior, which is worldly in comparison because they demand to be paid for their service and they are quite domineering in their treatment of the Corinthians. The false apostles, therefore, are more concerned about money than they are about behaving morally in the presence of God. This is how religious hypocrisy, i.e., play acting at biblical faith, works.

Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, 18-21, "11:7 Or did I commit immorality by humbling myself in order that you could be exalted, because I proclaimed the good news of God to you without charge. 11:8 I robbed other churches by taking wages from them in order to serve you. 11:9 Therefore, when I was present with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone. Instead, when the

brothers came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you and will continue to do so... **11:18** Because many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also, **11:19** because you, being wise, gladly put up with the foolish. **11:20** You put up with someone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he grabs hold of you, if he puts on airs, if he beats you on the face. **11:21** To my shame, I must confess that we have been weak.”

The people who are qualified to proclaim the gospel and produce the two kinds of effects (acceptance and rejection) are those who have been granted this responsibility by God, as opposed to the false apostles who claim that those who are qualified are also those who are committed to following the Mosaic Covenant from their own resources, because they believed that every human being has the ability to please God simply by outwardly obeying His commandments in the Mosaic Covenant.

⁵⁵ ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἐαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν; ἢ μὴ χρῆζομεν ὡς τινες συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν – In this larger section of 3:1-7:16, Paul is defending two things, 1) his status as an apostle given to him by God and 2) his “ministry,” i.e., the manner in which he serves people, especially these Corinthian Christians, as he presents himself as a sinner desperately in need of the mercy of God and who loves people out of this understanding of God’s eternal love and grace.

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

Paul presents the message of the gospel, the Spirit of God works in people’s hearts, the people respond to the message positively because it genuinely resonates within them, they affirm that the message is true on the basis of the evidence and authority of Paul who presents the message, Paul continues to present the message, the Spirit continues to work in people’s hearts, they continue to respond positively to it, and they continue to affirm the message as true and Paul as an authoritative spokesman for the message. These are all the credentials that Paul needs, and even just the fact that God has appointed him as the unique apostle to the Gentiles is actually good enough for him (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16-18, “**9:16** If I proclaim the good message, there is no bragging for me, because the necessity imposes itself upon me. For may I be damned if I do not proclaim the good news. **9:17** Now, if I do this willingly, I have a wage. But if I do it against my will, I have been entrusted with the responsibility of managing this role. **9:18** Therefore, what is my wage? That, when I proclaim the good news, I may offer the good news *gratis*, in order that I not make full use of my right within the good news.”

⁵⁶ ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε. ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν (ὁμῶν), γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων – Here Paul concedes the possibility that something within the creation and outside him can serve as a “letter of recommendation” for him as an apostle. It is the Corinthian Christians themselves who have become authentic believers (Paul and Timothy hope) by virtue of the fact that God has changed their hearts and made them such. This change can be seen by others as the Corinthians continue to believe and obey the NT message that Paul and Timothy have presented to them. It is helpful to recall 1 Corinthians 1-3 that the message which the Corinthians have believed is naturally offensive sinful human beings apart from the inner work of the Spirit of God. Therefore, Paul certainly considers the Corinthians to be appropriate letters of recommendation even if non-believers would not because the latter reject the truth of God regardless.

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

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

⁵⁸ ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξίν λιθίναις ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξίν καρδίαις σαρκίνας – The two phrases “not with ink” and “not on stone tablets” probably refer to two different kinds of “letters of recommendation” that false apostles are using to verify their apostleship. The first letter is either 1) one written on papyrus with ink from some group or Christian community who claim that they can legitimate the false apostles’ authority, but Paul is not explicit as to who is this group, or 2) the OC. The second letter is the false apostles’ themselves claiming that their obedience to the divinely written Ten Commandments on stone tablets as part of the Mosaic Covenant (a part for the whole) and contained within the written documents of the OT legitimates their authority in contrast to Paul who has told the Gentile Christians in Corinth that they are not obligated to follow this covenant (cf. Romans, Galatians). Plus, Paul cannot point to any scriptures other than the OT which appear to focus on the Mosaic Covenant. So while the OT serves as a kind of letter of recommendation for the false apostles, Paul has nothing that corresponds to it to point to. Certainly it seems to stand to reason that having a set of scriptures (as the false apostles do) is more authoritative and legitimating than not having one (as Paul does not). All it would appear that Paul can point to is the event of Jesus’ stopping him on the road to Damascus, which he cannot prove. This is why Paul refers to people and their changed lives instead of to any written documents (or written stones). Paul will go on to refer primarily to this second letter

so to speak by using the example of Moses and his shining face to contrast God's effect externally (as the false apostles are relying through their human obedience to the Mosaic Covenant) and internally (as Paul is relying on through the Spirit) with respect to Timothy's and his laying a claim to being true apostles.

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

Thus, God has written the NT message on the Corinthians' hearts through the work of His Spirit, i.e., His activity within the creation (cf. Jeremiah 31:33 – "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"—which along with Jesus as priest and offering provides eternal mercy for sinners). This is eternally more important than any physical letter of recommendation to or from human beings and is entirely sufficient for Paul and Timothy in comparison to what the false apostles are saying. It also ought to be sufficient to the Corinthian Christians, if they truly grasp the NT message that Paul and Timothy have presented to them so as not to be led astray by the false apostles.

Therefore, anyone who focuses on their mere human obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as a necessary condition or basis for obtaining God's mercy is wrong in their claim to have a letter of recommendation from God. In contrast, Paul is claiming that what God has done inside the Corinthian Christians by changing their hearts and causing them to be authentic believers in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah is recommendation enough for Timothy and him. This also makes them a letter of recommendation "from the Messiah," because they recognize that Jesus as the Messiah is the proper basis for their mercy from God, not obedience to the Jewish Covenant given to the nation of Israel by God, and there is the fact that God has worked in people's hearts through His Spirit because of Jesus.

Now, we can and should only point to the apostolic documents of the NT in much the same way the false apostles referred to the OT and the Mosaic Covenant. However, the NT message is radically different from how the Jews had interpreted (and still do interpret) the OT with the former's explanation of Jesus as the Messiah and the very center of God's plans and purposes (as opposed to the Jews' understanding that they as a nation and their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant are the center). Plus, our pointing to the NT documents should be accompanied with the focus on Jesus and on the quantitatively greater work of the Spirit of God in people who here in the apostolic message during this time period between Jesus' first and second appearances. This is truly the age of the Spirit of God in contrast to the Spirit's limited work in OT times.

⁵⁹ Πειθίστην δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν – Still speaking only of the apostolic workers and their authority from God, Paul's and Timothy's confidence is really in the light of the Messiah's appearance and existence and is directed toward God ultimately and not any human being who could declare them adequately qualified to be apostles. Neither is his confidence going to be in just the Mosaic Covenant and pointing people to it. Anybody can do this, but only those whom God has specifically called to be apostles can carry out this responsibility.

⁶⁰ οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν ἱκανοὶ ἐσμεν ἠλογίσασθαί ὅτι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἱκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy look to the author of the story, God, for any sense of confidence that they might have in fulfilling Paul's responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles. Confidence in themselves or any other human being, as is the case with the false apostles, is infinitely less significant than confidence in God. This is the key difference between a biblical understanding of authentic spirituality and a worldly or unbelieving understanding of it.

⁶¹ ὃς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης. οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἠποκτέννει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ – It is not as though the OT is bad, but the false apostles believe that they are qualified to be apostles on the basis of either some written letter of reference, such as an actual letter of reference written with ink and papyrus or the letter of reference of following the written OT and specifically the Mosaic Covenant (from their own human ability). Paul's and Timothy's comment is that relying strictly on anything written as the false apostles are doing, even the Ten Commandments and the rest of the requirements of the Old Covenant, will bring only eternal condemnation, because it misses the point of God's qualifying true apostles for their task and eternal life on the basis of *the inner work of His Spirit* (which is also the way God qualifies sinful human beings in general for His eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God. It is within the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 that God says that He really will fulfill His promise to make of Abraham's descendants a great nation by changing their hearts. Thus, the core of the proclamation of the New Covenant is only Jesus and his priestly role on the basis of this offering himself to God, but the duty to proclaim this message comes from the Spirit of God and makes Paul a servant of the New Covenant. In other words, it is impossible to be a legitimate servant of the New Covenant apart from the initiating and ongoing work of the Spirit of God.

This issue boils down to whether people find the legitimacy of their Christianity in what they have done in and of themselves, even in supposed obedience to the Bible, which is an external criterion, or what God has done within them by means of His Spirit. Our tendency as human beings is to believe that the only proper way to acquire legitimate and justified authority and rights is by means of either written authorization from a respected group of leaders or what we have done that we can point to in supposed obedience to the Bible. This is the thinking behind drivers licenses and passports, as well as behind ordination of pastors by denominations. The government authorizes me to drive a car or enter into another country as a citizen of this country after meeting certain requirements and criteria, and denominations authorize people to be shepherds of Christians after meeting certain external doctrinal requirements. But Paul is pointing to only that which God has done within him which gives him legitimacy as an apostle of Jesus the Messiah (and as a Christian), and this is in line with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 as he proclaims the core message, the mystery of Jesus as crucified Messiah.

While it is possible to find life within the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Leviticus 18:5, “So you shall guard My statutes and judgments, by which a man may live if he does them” (cf. Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:2)), but this is not achieved through a person’s inner sinful resources, but only through the Spirit of God.

The false apostles proclaim Jesus as the Messiah but minimize the relevance of him and the New Covenant, claiming to be servants mainly of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. In contrast, Paul is a servant of the New Covenant and Jesus, not so much of the Old Covenant, especially the way the false apostles are looking at it.

⁶² εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις – Paul and Timothy switch from referencing both written letters from human leaders and the ten commandments of the Mosaic Covenant to referencing only the written letters, so to speak, on the stone tablets of the Mosaic Covenant. The similarity is that they both are external to a person’s heart and inwardness, thus providing no help in and of themselves for qualifying someone to be an apostle or teacher of the apostolic message. Therefore, strict reliance on them without taking into account what God is doing inside people according to His Spirit and grace will not lead to an accurate assessment of a person’s spirituality. Indeed, strict reliance on external matters leads to “death,” by which Paul probably means eternal death ultimately because of his contrasting this with the work of the Spirit by which people gain eternal life through Jesus’ death and advocacy (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:10).

Again, this is the contrast between Paul’s serving people and the false apostles’ serving people. Paul’s involves the Spirit. That of the false apostles does not. Thus, the “serving of death” is not the Mosaic Covenant per se (see note above regarding Leviticus 18:5), but that of Moses where the Spirit of God was working in a very limited fashion in contrast to what He is doing in the midst of Paul’s proclaiming the New Covenant. Moses could not count on the Israelites’ genuinely believing and obeying God by virtue of a Spirit changed heart. Paul can. This is why God has made him the apostle to the Gentiles.

Thus, historically, the ministry of Moses was one of death because of the lack of work of the Spirit of God in the Israelites’ hearts (in spite of Leviticus 18:5, but in the light of Deuteronomy 29 & 30 where God promises eventually to circumcise their hearts, which we now know will occur when Jesus returns to set up the millennial kingdom).

So four options for “the ministry of death” as it is translated in the NAS95: 1) Misunderstanding the MC as the false apostles are, thinking they have the inner ability to please God, but which is resulting in eternal death and condemnation; 2) The “Law’s” facing a person into his sin and making him realize he deserves the condemnation of God and cannot escape it in and of himself; 3) The MC’s lacking adequate means to obtain God’s mercy through the Levitical priesthood in contrast to the NC and Jesus’ death; 4) God’s restrictive operation in the midst of Moses’ ministry and the MC because He simply did not work in many hearts of the Israelites with His Spirit to change them and cause them to become authentic believers who would qualify for eternal life instead of eternal condemnation and death.

It is the 4th that Paul means that is coherent with v. 8 and Paul’s mention of the Spirit that is abundantly given as he proclaims the Messiah according to the New Covenant.

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

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

cf. **Jer. 31:33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

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

And this is in the midst of the fact that there actually is no external shine on the faces of Paul and Timothy as apostolic workers. Yet, Paul and Timothy inwardly demonstrate a greater awesomeness than Moses did externally, because the New Covenant with its promise of inwardness on an increased basis due to the greater quantity of believers through the work of the Spirit of God is more awesome than the Mosaic Covenant.

There is also the possibility that because Paul is contrasting condemnation with dikaiosune, he is transitioning from focusing on the Spirit to focusing on Jesus as the proper offering for eternal mercy, i.e., the core proclamation of the New Covenant. In other words, Paul serves people vis-à-vis Jesus and not the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

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

Or he may be referring to only Jesus at this point in his argument.

⁶⁷ εἰ γὰρ τὸ καταργούμενον διὰ δόξης, πολλῶ μάλλον τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ – The key elements between externalities and inwardities is that they both were sanctioned by the transcendent Creator for the sake of properly worshiping Him. However, while the former look good in the present realm, they do not in and of themselves qualify a person for eternal life. Instead, the latter are invisible in the present realm and yet do qualify a person for eternal mercy and life. The former are temporary, e.g., the shine on Moses’ face, while the latter are permanent and eternal.

Or Paul, by referring to the permanent, may be referring to only Jesus as the means to making the New Covenant an eternal one, which then requires the Spirit of God to work in the heart of an individual to make him qualified for the eternal effects of Jesus’ providing mercy through his death (similar to the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices of bulls and goats vs. Jesus’ Melchizedekan priesthood and his sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 7-10)).

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

Thus, Paul speaks boldly and openly about his sin in the light of God’s grace (unlike the false apostles). He does not hide anything from the Corinthians, including his sin, which is what Paul is implicitly accusing the false apostles of doing (cf. 4:2 and 6:11-13).

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

How does Paul know that the shine faded? Probably from reasoning through the effects of God’s presence externally vs. the effects of God’s presence internally. Once Moses left God’s theophanic presence, the cause of the shine on his face was gone, and would it not seem reasonable that Moses’ face would eventually return to its normal state?

The fading nature of the Mosaic Covenant could refer to either 1) the erroneous perspective of the false apostles, or 2) the inadequate provision for eternal mercy of bulls and goats as offerings in contrast to Jesus as the New Covenant. Most likely, #2 is meant here. Moses’ hiding his face is a metaphor for what Paul is not doing and the false apostles are doing, hiding their sin from the Corinthians.

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

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

The present day (in relation to Paul) Jews do not see the fading nature of the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., the inadequate provision for mercy through bulls and goats, and instead rely on it rather than on Jesus and the New Covenant. Only being “in the Messiah”

through the Spirit's internal work removes the veil over the Jews' minds so that they can see the wonderful provision for mercy of the crucified Messiah. This did not happen for the Jews in Moses' day, nor so much in Paul's day, but it will happen in Jesus' day when he returns to establish the millennial kingdom.

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

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

⁷⁴ ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία – Paul is saying that it is God and His Spirit who removes the veil from any Jew's heart, i.e., circumcises his heart (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:1-10; Romans 2:28,29), so that he can hear what God says and embrace it with authentic belief. Thus, the Spirit frees the Jew from his veiled heart which is preventing him from being “in the Messiah” (cf. 3:14) and from the glory which fades, the Mosaic Covenant, into the glory that remains into eternity, the New Covenant. The Jew becomes free from obeying the Mosaic Covenant the way he used to, i.e., from his own sinful resources, to obeying God through the inner activity of the Spirit of God.

⁷⁵ ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι – Paul switches from the idea of the veiled heart of the Jew back to the veiled face of Moses in order to say that he and all other believers such as the Corinthians have chosen to remove the veils from their faces so to speak (by the inner work of the Spirit of God). This has allowed them to meet with God, listen to what He says of the Messiah, believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and thereby reflect in their lives the glory and awesomeness of God as they believe and align their behavior with the moral commandments of God while also freely confessing their sin and moral depravity (which would seem inglorious but instead is the exact opposite because it points to the glorious mercy of God through the crucified Messiah Jesus)—instead of relying on their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as either the basis or a necessary condition for eternal life. They are moving from the former glory of the fading Mosaic Covenant (or the relatively less glory of confessing their sin before a merciful God) to the eternal glory of the New Covenant when God transforms them into morally perfect people in the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

⁷⁶ τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος – Christians are in the process of moving from any kind of glory they demonstrate through the Mosaic Covenant that is minus the Spirit of God and Jesus as the acceptable offering for mercy (their old outlook on how to relate to God) to the permanent and ultimate glory of the New Covenant and the Spirit of God in its context (their new outlook on how to relate to God).

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

But the first option is more coherent.

⁷⁷ διὰ τοῦτο, ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν, οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν – God in His grace showed Paul and Timothy mercy by giving them the responsibility to proclaim the NT message to the Gentiles through Paul's being assigned the role of apostle to the Gentiles. Paul has described and referred to a significant amount of suffering which Timothy and he have experienced because of their performing their responsibility as apostles among people who have been hostile to their message. But nothing that human beings do, even their being disinterested in the gospel due to the influence of the false apostles discourages Paul and Timothy from being confident about continuing to fulfill this responsibility to serve people on behalf of God. They simply keep going despite people's resistance and any other obstacles or hardships.

⁷⁸ ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτά τῆς αἰσχύνῃς – What are “the things that one hides out of sense of embarrassment?” In this context, they must pertain to either 1) the false apostles and being similar to Moses' hiding the fading of the shine on his face by tricking people into following their leadership into obeying the Mosaic Covenant, or 2) sin, the depth of which the false apostles are not willing to reveal about themselves. #1 is what Paul goes on to mention in this verse. Therefore, they would be things that appear to be glorious in connection with the false apostles but which also do not maintain their glory. They are external only and not germane to the issue of authentic belief. And the false apostles would promote them because they are not willing to understand completely the depth of their own depravity and the necessity of the Spirit of God's work within them. Thus, they hide this too, which is the cause of everything else they are doing wrong. They hide the deceitful tactics they are using to influence people.

In contrast, Paul and Timothy are saying that they are completely open about the truth and commend to people's understanding and however God wants to use it in their lives. They do not have to manipulate or trick people into following their leadership. God will cause people to respond positively to their leadership and the truth of the gospel they express.

Paul is saying that the false apostles should be embarrassed by their manipulation, and they would be if they really understood the truth of the gospel. But like Moses' fading shine, these tactics are not intended to cause people to remain focused on God. The contrasting dynamic is God's grace and Spirit. People need His grace and the fulfillment of His promise of salvation and eternal life through something other than the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., through the New Covenant of Jesus' death and the Spirit's work which bring about the permanent, eternal mercy which is obtained through the crucified Messiah who intercedes on behalf of people.

⁷⁹ ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ – Whatever the false teachers are hiding and leaving out of their message as they demonstrate the natural, immoral part of their humanity by proclaiming falsehood (the profound evil condition of man), Paul and Timothy are all about the truth in regard to God, themselves, and their audience. The false apostles are in effect tricking people. Paul and Timothy are not. Paul is all about proclaiming the gospel of grace and Jesus in solving the problem of people's sin, and then they are all about depending on God's grace also for the effects in people's lives.

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

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

In other words, while it is important for people to be clear about the gospel, the only way they can do this is if God makes them open to it. Otherwise, it is concealed and hidden Paul cannot trick people into believing the gospel.

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

Thus, Satan prevents people from seeing the glorious nature of Jesus and the New Covenant in comparison to the limited glory of the Mosaic Covenant so that they continue, like the false apostles, to focus on the Mosaic Covenant instead of Jesus.

⁸² οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν – This is Paul's sly way of claiming that the false teachers are promoting more themselves than Jesus and even the Mosaic Covenant to the Corinthians by virtue of the false teachers being the model that each Corinthian should emulate, while basically ignoring Jesus. But Paul and Timothy are truly the Corinthian Christian's slaves in that they have been doing everything they can to enhance the Corinthians' understanding and belief in God and His grace along with Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, Paul and Timothy promote only Jesus, and if there is any reference to themselves, it is because Paul is an apostle, which is easily explained by his story. They should emulate him, too, but not at the expense of following Jesus.

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

⁸³ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν ἐκ σκότους φῶς ἠλάμψει, ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Again, Paul wants to state explicitly that whatever he is as an authoritative spokesman for Jesus and a slave of the Corinthians is solely because of God and His inner work within him through His Spirit. He backs up this statement by citing Genesis 1 and Isaiah 9 where God is said to produce light miraculously where there was formerly darkness. Paul's heart, before he became a genuine believer in Jesus as the Messiah, was the very definition of darkness, both morally and in terms of what he was believing intellectually. He was committed to evil, to rebelling against God, and to an understanding of reality which was false. But just as God at the beginning of the creation miraculously made light shine where there had been only darkness, so also He miraculously caused Paul to see the truth of the gospel and embrace it. God then went on to cause Paul to proclaim the truth in the midst of the culturally, intellectual, moral, and religious darkness of the 1st century Roman Empire. By inference, when any person listens to Paul's presentation of the biblical message, it will be God who miraculously changes the person's inwardness so that he grasps an understanding of God's glorifying Himself by using Jesus as the Messiah and ruler of

the eternal Kingdom of God. The glory of God on Jesus' face so to speak is permanent and unfading, unlike the shine of God's glory on Moses' face. Staring at Jesus' face and God's glory on it is what the apostolic message of the gospel encourages people to do, knowing that Jesus never covers up his face. He always fully revealed his messiahship and role as the icon of God within the creation, and Paul always fully reveals the facts about Jesus, too.

⁸⁴ ἔχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν, ἵνα ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ἧ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐξ ἡμῶν – Next, Paul refers to God's miraculous light production in Timothy's and his hearts to state its effect on them as they face multiple difficulties in their lives as apostolic co-workers and even look like losers to the false apostles. Thus, the light shining in and out of Paul's and Timothy's hearts (cf. v. 6), which is their enlightened understanding of the NT message as they proclaim it, miraculously resides in their beings by God's power and grace, but their bodies are destructible clay pots and shaped by God as their potter. This also means that God, not they, causes their proclaiming the gospel as well as their enduring and persevering in their faith through all the different kinds of suffering they experience. Sure they may look weak and ineffective in their ministry, but God ensures that there is an effect to what they are doing in spite of themselves. Paul would say that he is nothing, while God is everything, which, even if the false apostles are explicitly saying the same thing, they do not actually believe this and are acting differently from it.

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

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

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

And both these are in contrast to what the false apostles claim their lives are like, that they are living the victorious Jewish life.

⁸⁶ διωκόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπομενοι, καταβαλλόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι – Paul and Timothy also experience consistent persecution from unbelievers, and this persecution makes them feel as though the loving God has abandoned them.

However, they know that He has not. Their persecution is simply part of His sovereign plan for them as apostolic workers.

In addition, the persecution that Paul and Timothy experience is nothing short of their being pushed down hard physically, emotionally, and psychologically so that they "fall to the ground," a fall that could destroy them in these three ways. However, God's faithfulness makes sure that their belief is never destroyed, no matter how much people try to make their belief and apostolic theology and message go away.

And again, these are in contrast to what the false apostles claim about their lives.

⁸⁷ πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ – In spite of all the difficult circumstances that Paul and Timothy encounter, the one thing that never leaves them is the message of the crucified Messiah and His resurrection to fulfill His role as Messiah and eternal advocate. This message reminds them of their own moral depravity and inability to do anything good in and of themselves. God must and does work miraculously by His grace within them. In this way, Jesus' death exists within them, either 1) as they constantly repudiate their sinfulness and inherent evil, or 2) as they encounter the same kind of hostility the Jesus experienced that could kill them physically. #1 makes more sense in the light of the difference between Paul's message and that of the false apostles.

And Jesus' own eternal life also exists and reveals itself within them as God will bring about eternal life for them even if their bodies die. Therefore, God faithfully continues to fulfill His promises to Paul and Timothy while they faithfully endure whatever hardship and suffering God graciously sends their way as they head towards eternal life.

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

cf. Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." This is to say that God will transform their mortal bodies into immortal and eternal bodies because they have grasped the significance of the crucifixion, that they are sinners who cannot please God unless He grants them His grace of His own independent free will.

⁸⁹ ὥστε ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν – The result of Paul’s and Timothy’s going through hardship and coming across as losers is that the Corinthians get to hear a message of eternal life that comes through Jesus and the Spirit of God, so that they believe it for the sake of their own eternal salvations. Thus, while inherent moral depravity, “death,” occurs in Paul and Timothy through their understanding of the gospel, eternal life, “life,” occurs in the Corinthian Christians as part of the process of the message of Jesus going from God through Jesus through Paul and Timothy to the Corinthian Christians so that they will be granted eternal life and morally perfect bodies. Paul’s acknowledgement of his deserving death because of his sin because he has grasped the significance of Jesus’ death as he proclaims this message to the Corinthians results in eternal life for them.

Of course, Paul is not claiming that the Corinthians are not experiencing hardship as a result of their faith, but he is defending his apostleship in the light of the influence of the false apostles on the Corinthians, hoping to show by the example of his faith persevering through all the suffering God has brought into his life just how genuine is his calling as an apostle.

⁹⁰ Ἐχοντες δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἔτάλησα, καὶ ἡμεῖς πιστεύομεν, διὸ καὶ λαλοῦμεν – cf. Psalm 116:10 – I believed when I said, “I am greatly afflicted” (אֲנִי עָנִי וְאֶתְנַחֵם אֱלֹהִים). In the LXX, Psalm 116:1-9 is actually Psalm 114:1-9, Psalm 116:10-13 is Psalm 115:1-4, Psalm 116:14 is missing in the LXX, Psalm 116:15-17a is Psalm 115:5-8 (Psalm 116:17b is missing the LXX), Psalm 116:18-19a is Psalm 115:9-10 (Psalm 116:19b is missing in the LXX). Thus, Psalm 116:10 in the LXX is Psalm 115:1 – Hallelujah. I believed; therefore I believed; and I have been greatly brought low (ἀλληλουῖα, ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐτάλησα: ἐγὼ δὲ ἐταπεινώθην σφόδρα). Therefore, the Hebrew can even be translated in such a way like the LXX that the psalmist is declaring his confidence and willingness to speak. This is who he is—a believer and a speaker of truth, even though or in the midst of his having been greatly humbled by God’s attentiveness and salvation towards him in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Just as the psalmist was delighted that he continued to believe Yahweh for His promises and to speak to Yahweh in the midst of suffering, so Paul and Timothy have believed the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah and speak to people about it in the midst of their own suffering. If suffering, belief, and speaking to and about Yahweh are good enough for the psalmist as Yahweh remains attentive and faithful to him, Paul and Timothy consider belief and speaking the gospel to be good enough for them because God is being attentive and faithful towards them. By citing the psalmist’s experience of suffering, believing, and speaking in the midst of God’s salvific activity towards him, they hope to defend further their divine calling to be authoritative spokesmen for the Messiah Jesus.

Thus also Paul and Timothy claim that they have the same “spirit of belief” as the psalmist, i.e., the same inwardness of courage, confidence, and willingness to speak about the truth of God.

Another possibility is that Paul and Timothy are referring the Spirit of God as the cause of their believing and speaking, i.e., the Spirit of God who works within sinners to accomplish these results. But in the light of context of Psalm 116 where the Spirit is not mentioned explicitly, the former interpretation makes more sense. Nevertheless, Paul is implicitly contrasting Timothy and him with the false apostles, who find their confidence and motivation to speak by their supposedly successful obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

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

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

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

⁹³ Διὸ οὐκ ἔγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα – Paul and Timothy are saying that a grasp of all this theology that they have been expressing along with the Corinthians’ living out the theology is extremely encouraging to them—just as he said in 4:1. In 4:1, it was people’s lackadaisical response to the gospel as they are being influenced by the false apostles that could be discouraging. And yet Paul remains steadfast in his trust and hope in God. In this context, while Paul and Timothy watch their physical bodies get older and beat up by persecution in preparation for dying, which only enhances their awareness of their mortality. But they know that God faithfully and lovingly works within them daily to cause them to believe right up to the end of their lives, which manifests the necessary requirement of their changed hearts for their qualifying for eternal life at the judgment.

⁹⁴ τὸ γὰρ παραυτίκα ἔλαφρόν τῆς θλίψεως ὧμῶν καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρους δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν – Paul and Timothy are able to put their apostolic suffering in perspective. It basically is nothing in comparison to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. And eternal life really cannot even have an accurate and precise measurement of its value put on it. In essence

the very idea of eternal mercy, life, and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God is ineffable. While Paul can articulate fairly accurately his suffering in this life, he cannot articulate very well the experience of eternal life and moral perfection in the next life.

⁹⁵ μὴ σκοποῦντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα· τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια – As Paul and Timothy continue to contrast themselves with the false apostles, the latter point to things that people can see to validate their apostleship and manner of serving, particularly their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Paul and Timothy, instead, point to what God is doing within them and to their stored, new bodies in an invisible vault (cf. 5:1) by having given them understanding of the truth and the motivation to proclaim it in the face of all kinds of opposition and factors that potentially could be discouraging.

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

⁹⁶ Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνου καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομῆν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – Without any help from the ability or activity of human beings, God is going to transform the temporary dwelling places of their bodies into permanent and eternal dwelling places. And God has reserved these in an invisible vault where no human beings can harm or destroy them the way they can their current physical bodies.

Paul and Timothy, because of Paul's calling as an apostle and authoritative and accurate spokesman of the message of Jesus as the Messiah, know exactly what is going to happen to them as genuine believers in Jesus.

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

"In the heavens" refers to the nature and invisibility of their new bodies which will be both immortal and morally perfect. In addition, "made by human hands" refers to God's being the only fabricator of their eternal, morally perfect bodies. Paul and Timothy are currently subject to physical death and still plagued by their moral depravity, in spite of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within them who has fortunately enslaved their commitments to God and morality (cf. Romans 6).

⁹⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες – Paul and Timothy groan over their sin and the toll that their outward, apostolic suffering is taking on them, while also looking forward to acquiring the complete clothing so to speak of immortal and morally perfect bodies—in contrast to the partial clothing (or nakedness – cf. v. 3) of being annihilated in eternity (as opposed to the option of their nakedness referring to their current, physical bodies which if left to their own would result in annihilation and extinction).

Paul and Timothy are hurting in the midst of the persecution and suffering that comes their way because of their being apostolic workers. They are also innately mortal and evil, and both these aspects and elements of their existential humanity result in pain while they encounter the hostility of the world towards God and the biblical message. Indeed, it really may be more their own sinfulness which is causing their groaning with repentance than persecution from unbelievers.

The positive side of this pain is that it leads them to long greatly and unceasingly for eternal life, for both an environment and an actual new body that are free from any negative elements of their current existence. Their current, physical bodies will result in eternal annihilation, i.e., being fully unclothed and naked, unless God grants them eternal life, i.e., being fully clothed.

⁹⁸ εἴ γε καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι [MT - ἐνδυσάμενοι] οὐ γυμνοὶ εὐρεθισόμεθα –

Option 1 – Paul and Timothy realize the nakedness of their current bodies means that they would experience eternal extinction if God does not grant them eternal life through His grace.

Option 2 – Paul and Timothy do not want to be annihilated and therefore "naked" after the judgment. Instead, they want to be clothed with bodies that are not only immortal but also morally perfect.

Option 3 – Paul and Timothy are naked now as mortal, sinful human beings and do not want to be naked and annihilated for eternity because of their immoral condition.

Paul and Timothy could be offering a warning to themselves regarding perseverance of faith, without which even they will not obtain eternal life. Thus, the translation, would be, "assuming, of course, that we shall not be found naked after having taken off." However, the context displays their confidence in God's granting them eternal life and mercy, thus indicating that the MT with ἐνδυσάμενοι is correct as translated above. Paul and Timothy are confident that they will have something to show of which they will not be ashamed, i.e., not being naked and extinct, with respect to their lives as apostolic workers. Moral perfection in the eternal Kingdom of God is what they will show rather than annihilation. Thus, option 2 above is correct.

⁹⁹ καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκηνῇ στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς – Summarizing what he just said in the previous verses with the three different options possible for "unclothed" vs "clothed."

Through the internal work of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Timothy have had their fundamental desires changed, from being content enough with nakedness, i.e., their inherent evil and mortality whereby they reject God and the biblical message that results in eternal annihilation, to being satisfied only with being clothed, i.e., becoming moral perfect and immortal in the Kingdom of God. This verse summarizes the previous verses.

¹⁰⁰ ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεός, ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος – Unlike the false apostles who are constantly pointing to their outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant for what qualifies them for God’s eternal (?) blessing, Paul and Timothy point to only God. He has made them qualified, not themselves. And He has done so through the inner work of His Spirit in their hearts, which Spirit has established Himself in their inner beings as proof that they will eventually acquire eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Because God is behind the journey that Paul and Timothy are on, they can be confident that He will make sure that they complete the journey of arriving at their goal of eternal life, especially because they know that God’s Spirit is causing them to remain on the right path and that His Spirit is a bona fide down payment for their obtaining the final piece of merchandise, God’s eternal mercy and life.

Thus, God alone is the one who has created Paul and Timothy to be those who long for moral perfection and the eternal Kingdom of God, having changed them by the Holy Spirit during the course of their existences on earth. Thus, they can call the Holy Spirit and His work within them a kind of down payment from God to them of what God will eventually “pay” them in whole and in perpetuity, eternal life. cf. 1:22.

¹⁰¹ Θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε καὶ εἰδότες ὅτι ἔνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἔκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου – Paul and Timothy have not yet arrived at their final resting place of being with Jesus in the eternal Kingdom of God. Yet they live with confidence in this interim situation in their mortal and sinful bodies that feels a little like being in limbo.

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

¹⁰² διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν, οὐ διὰ εἰδους – Paul and Timothy’s confidence in their eternal destiny is not based on anything they can point to that they have accomplished in and of themselves—as the false apostles are doing. Their confidence is based on their inner belief that has come about by means of the inner work of the Spirit of God—just as Paul has been talking about.

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

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

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

¹⁰⁵ τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἵνα κομίσῃται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἐπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον – Because Paul includes the word “all” here, he means the apostles and all other Christians. The judgment seat of the Messiah is the final judgment of the two resurrections of Revelation 20 where Jesus as the Messiah will basically intervene on behalf of authentic believers and appeal to the Father for mercy on their behalf, while condemning unbelievers to eternal destruction by not intervening on their behalf. Jesus will intentionally advocate at the first resurrection on behalf of all believers and will intentionally remain silent so to speak at the second resurrection by not advocating for unbelievers.

Thus, Paul and Timothy provide a teleological basis for their pursuing obedience to God in the present realm. This basis is to reach the goal of surviving the final judgment. If a person does what is good, i.e., is a persevering believer in the truth of the NT message who demonstrates this belief with pursuing morality, he will receive what is “due” to him, eternal life, even though he does not deserve it. It is simply graced to him by God. If a person does what is evil, i.e., remains a rebel against God all his life, he will receive what he is due, eternal condemnation, and he will actually deserve it. This will occur at God’s judgment seat so to speak where the Messiah will provide his personal advocacy, and he will appeal for God’s eternal mercy for those who lived with persevering faith in the present realm. In Revelation 20, we learn that mercy comes with the first resurrection at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, while condemnation comes with the second resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom.

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

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

¹⁰⁷ θεῶ δὲ πεφανερῶμεθα: ἐλπίζω δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθα – This is what counts most to Paul and Timothy, that they are fulfilling their responsibility to God and that He knows it. And as he mentioned in chapter 4 about his extensive and bold openness about himself as a sinner and God as merciful through Jesus, he says so again. This openness is in God's presence and the Corinthians' presence. He has nothing to hide as everything about him with the Spirit's work within him is for the sake of proclaiming the gospel and seeing others acquire eternal life. Thus, Paul would want the Corinthians to recognize his purpose and actions in obedience to God, because it will work out to their benefit by their obtaining God's mercy and eternal life if they listen to him instead of to the false apostles.

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

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

If Paul wants to be known for something external in his life, it is not his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant but his faithfulness to proclaim the gospel and seeking to persuade people of its truth.

¹⁰⁹ εἶτε γὰρ ἐξέστημεν, θεῶ: εἶτε σωφρονοῦμεν, ὑμῖν – Here is what the Corinthians can brag about with respect to how Paul and Timothy "appear" outwardly in comparison to the outward appearance of the false apostles' obedience of the Mosaic Covenant. The false apostles must be claiming that Paul and Timothy are crazy, because they are not putting the Mosaic Covenant first and act like losers. But Paul knows this is all because of the Messiah and his death and resurrection to qualify to be people's king and priest, which the false apostles do not understand. Jesus' death, resurrection, and qualification to be king and priest is something really to brag about.

Paul and Timothy are realistic about the response that people will give them in the world. If they appear crazy to people with their message of a crucified and resurrected Messiah in the midst of their own sinfulness and moral depravity, and people reject this message because they appear crazy, then they are glad to look crazy for God's sake. It is part of the role that God has assigned them as apostolic workers. On the other hand, if they appear to be the smartest people in the world to authentic believers, then this is what God has also planned as part of the process of collecting morally depraved human beings for His eternal kingdom by changing them inwardly through the work of His Spirit and convincing them of the absolute, rational truth of the gospel. Only genuine believers will recognize that Paul's continued sinfulness and lack of moral "perfection" (as the false apostles are claiming to have) is actually a sign of authentic Christianity.

¹¹⁰ ἢ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς, κρίναντας τοῦτο, ὅτι εἰς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἄρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον – While the false apostles are motivated by their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and its resulting in obtaining God's blessings, Paul and Timothy recognize the significance of Jesus the Messiah's loving them through his death so that all those who embrace him as Messiah may "die" by recognizing their moral depravity, thus preventing them from thinking they can please God in and of themselves. In this way Paul and Timothy find the motivation to keep on doing what God has called them to do as apostolic spokesmen for the gospel—despite the short term effects, or lack thereof.

Paul and Timothy love Jesus for having loved them and demonstrated the need that they have as morally depraved men for his advocacy at the judgment. Jesus showed them through his death on the cross just how much they are incapable of acquiring God's mercy on their own. This is their death, that itself results in their abandoning being led by their own morally depraved selfishness and instead choosing to follow the Messiah, i.e., choosing to live a life pleasing to God in service of the Messiah and the news about him.

Indeed, Jesus' death shows that all people everywhere throughout history deserve to die eternally, thus being an encouragement

to all people to embrace the fact of their sinfulness and die to it by repudiating it so that they can be saved by Jesus and God's mercy as they believe in the former and appeal for the latter.

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

¹¹² *ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν* – Just as Jesus is now invisible in contrast to his having been visible during his physical presence on earth, authentic believers' true spirituality is invisible within them in contrast to the false apostles' claim that true spirituality is to be found in people's external obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

Because of their apostolic understanding of God, Paul and Timothy do not bother with a person's external credentials for their being authentic Christians as the false apostles do in connection with the Mosaic Covenant, even though Jesus as the Messiah acquired his credentials through the physical act of dying on the cross after God verified his messiahship through his miracles and his teaching. However, after Jesus' resurrection, he became a different being through the Father's giving him an immortal body to replace the mortal one that he had when he was crucified. Likewise, the authenticity of a person's belief is inward, not outward. Yet, his outward commitment to the things of God plays a vital role in his demonstrating his true belief. But all of this is in contrast to the false apostles who are so focused on people's outward actions that conform to the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, believing that these actions are what qualify a person for God's promise of eternal life.

Paul and Timothy are not saying that they actually saw Jesus during the three years of his first appearance on earth (even though it is highly possible that Paul did), but they are saying that Jesus was physically present on earth and is not now so that his being invisible is a significant aspect of reality just as the invisible and intangible reality of a changed heart and authentic belief in believers is more significant than any outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant that they could demonstrate.

¹¹³ *ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρήλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινὰ* – People do not remain the same when they engage in true spirituality, as the false apostles are claiming, i.e., that you simply take who you are and apply it to obeying the Mosaic Covenant, thus pleasing God quite easily. Instead, God makes them different people, who are boldly open about their sinfulness and God's grace as Paul and Timothy are. As a result, their oldness of being closed and blind to their immoral condition and in desperate need of God's initiating grace and mercy goes away.

Just as Jesus became a new, immortal creation after his resurrection, God has recreated a important element of those human beings who are authentic believers—their hearts and minds. Their old fundamental rebellion and enslavement to their moral depravity has been changed into an enslavement to the things of God and a fundamental desire for eternal life, mercy, and moral perfection at the level of their hearts and minds. This is what authenticates their belief instead of outwardly obeying the Mosaic Covenant as the false apostles are claiming.

¹¹⁴ *τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς* – In contrast to the false apostles who always want to point to something they have done according to the Mosaic Covenant in and of themselves to qualify for eternal life, Paul and Timothy claim that God is the One who brings about what He desires in regard to His plans and purposes for them, even giving them the responsibility to serve people by announcing that they can be reconciled to God through Jesus (and by implication the New Covenant). This is to say that “everything” that ends up contributing to a person's acquiring God's blessing of eternal mercy and life comes from God and not from the individuals who qualify for this blessing.

And Paul is implying that of course it is God's sovereign grace which has resulted in Timothy's and his being changed from the status as God's enemies to the status as His friends. Thus, God Himself is the ultimate credential for anyone who wants something to point to outside himself as that which proves that he is a Christian, because God is the final source of this. Paul and Timothy can confidently say that God is the One and the only One who has brought about forgiveness for them. In addition, they can say with equal confidence that God has officially commissioned Paul, and therefore Timothy as his associate, to carry out the responsibility of being the sole apostle to the Gentiles and serving people by proclaiming His gospel.

¹¹⁵ *ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς* – Paul defines reconciliation as God's making His friends through forgiving them by means of Jesus' death and qualifying to be people's high priest and intercessor. And God has literally put inside Paul and Timothy the responsibility to serve people by announcing this to them as clearly and lovingly as possible, waiting upon God to work His magic so to speak in their hearts of opening them up to this truth and moving them to embrace it.

Paul's and Timothy's specific responsibility as apostolic workers is to announce in every Gentile setting the fact that God has turned His enemies into His friends through the mercy acquiring actions of Jesus as the crucified Messiah. And this Paul and Timothy do with the authority and accuracy given to apostles, which God has placed inside them and entrusted into their care.

¹¹⁶ *ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ* – Still speaking of only themselves, Paul and Timothy want people to respond positively to the apostolic message which they present, because it is actually God Himself who is appealing through them to sinners to be saved and escape His condemnation and

destruction. And all this is on the basis of the messianic work of Jesus—not the Mosaic Covenant, the former of which Paul describes in the next verse.

¹¹⁷ τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἀμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενόμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ – God caused Jesus to go through the experience of the punishment for disobedience of dying that he did not deserve in order that Jesus could successfully appeal at the judgment to Him for mercy on behalf of morally depraved human beings who do deserve eternal death. This was his propitiatory offering which God used to establish the basis for our salvation.

Paul and Timothy are still referring to themselves as the “we” who “are justified before God in [Jesus],” even though the obvious implication is that all genuine believers acquire this good standing before God through belief in Jesus and by being associated with him as those who are “in Jesus.” Thus, Jesus becomes the solution to man’s biggest problem, finding the means to escape God’s wrath and condemnation and to acquire His forgiveness with moral perfection and eternal life instead.

Thus, another option for δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is “those whom God changed from being sinners to righteous and morally perfect people in eternity.” In this way, Paul is pointing to their future and eternal destiny.

¹¹⁸ συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν μὴ εἰς κενὸν τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ δεῖξασθαι ὑμᾶς – Paul and Timothy (not the false apostles) are working with Jesus in line with his death that proclaims man’s moral depravity and inability to please God, and thus they encourage the Corinthians not to reject the message of God’s undeserved grace that after hearing it from them and then switch to a mentality of obeying the Mosaic Covenant in order to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings—as the false apostles are promoting. This message of grace is the gospel of Jesus’ death that brings justification and eternal life to sinners (cf. 5:21), and Paul and Timothy are saying, don’t let Jesus’ death occur for nothing in regard to you. Embrace his death and resurrection as the basis and means to your eternal salvations.

Paul’s and Timothy’s job is to be examples of God’s gracious stance towards sinful human beings who deserve only His condemnation and destruction by encouraging them to embrace the message of the Messiah regarding God’s kindness and mercy, and to do so with all sincerity and perseverance so as to obtain eternal life. Thus, they work with Jesus as his apostolic workers and ambassadors, so that their goals are the same as those of Jesus and God.

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

¹¹⁹ λέγει γάρ καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι – LXX, καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι (מִיָּמֵינוּ לְבָרִית עִבְדֶּךָ אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה וְעַתָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה וְעַתָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה) – Just as God foretold that He would listen to His servant Israel, i.e., Jesus, when he cried out as he was bringing about salvation for His people, the nation of Israel...

In Isaiah 49, God encourages His servant, “Israel,” who seems more like one individual, that He will use him to raise up the nation of Israel and be a source of truth to the Gentiles. God also says that He will “keep” (guard) this servant and give him as a covenant to the people because He has helped him in the “day of salvation.”

Option 1) – This day was when Jesus went to the cross to provide eternal salvation for sinners and he needed the Father’s/Yahweh’s help in order to do so as demonstrated by his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Hebrews 5:7, “In the days of His flesh, he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and he was heard because of His piety”). And God helped him!!

Option 2) – God helped him accomplish salvation for sinners by raising him from the dead in order to make him a servant of the New Covenant (cf. Isaiah 49:8).

Option 3) – God helped him both through the cross with fortitude and strength to endure the suffering and then after the cross too by raising him from the dead. This option makes the most sense to me.

Paul and Timothy see their job as the same as God’s, to encourage those who belong to God’s servant, Jesus, who himself belonged to the nation of Israel (cf. Isaiah 49:3-6), to regard each day as their day of salvation whereby they need God’s help, resulting in their persevering in belief in the truth of the NT message from God, as well as not to let Jesus’ death and resurrection go for nothing by rejecting him and focusing on the Mosaic Covenant instead as the center of their relationship with God.

Therefore, as God listened to Jesus and helped him to endure his crucifixion and raised him from the dead, God listens to bona fide followers of Jesus and helps them endure such things as the error of the false apostles and any suffering they endure like that of Paul’s and Timothy’s in 6:4-10 in order to persevere in their belief in the crucified and resurrected Messiah, Jesus. This goes along with Paul’s saying that God is renewing them day by day in their inner being (4:16).

¹²⁰ ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας – Paul and Timothy are saying that now is when God’s people (including the Corinthians) need to cry out for His grace and mercy through Jesus to receive salvation and to embrace Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah who provides them with eternal salvation.

See note above. Every moment of the Corinthians’ (and our) existences on earth is a good moment to cry out to God for help to believe Him for His grace and Jesus as our Messiah who will bring God’s eternal mercy and life to them/us through his advocacy. It is also a good moment to recognize all the Jesus did for them by dying for them and being raised by the Father from the dead that leads to eternal salvation and life for them.

¹²¹ μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, ἵνα μὴ μοιμηθῇ ἡ διακονία – In the face of criticism from the false apostles for not emphasizing the Mosaic Covenant, Paul and Timothy can honestly say that there is nothing about what they are doing that can be

criticized, because they are merely following God's and Jesus' instructions to be true apostolic workers while even they cry out to God for help for their belief and obedience just as Jesus did and the Corinthians should and experience everything that Jesus himself even told Paul he would have to endure as he fulfilled his role as the only apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15,16 where Jesus says to Ananias concerning Paul, "...Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." As a result of what they have endured as consistent with their roles, Paul and Timothy's consciences are clear. Thus, they work hard to do what is right before God and the Messiah, and in their consciences they believe this is exactly what they are doing.

¹²² ἀλλ' ἐν παντί συνιστάντες ἑαυτοὺς ὡς θεοῦ διάκονοι ἐν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ, ἐν θλίψεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν στενοχωρίαις – In the light of everything they have said and are experiencing (as they will go on to explain in detail), Paul and Timothy recommend themselves to the Corinthians as God's servants—and thereby de-recommend the false apostles—in the midst of extensive enduring of suffering with authentic faith, in tribulations, pressured filled situations, and stressful circumstances that all could crush their faith. Thus, they recommend themselves differently from the false apostles. The latter do so from their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, while Paul and Timothy do so from their suffering and the perseverance of their belief and fulfilling their role as apostolic workers in the midst of their suffering.

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

¹²³ ἐν πληγαῖς, ἐν φυλακαῖς, ἐν ἀκαταστασίαις, ἐν κόποις, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις, ἐν νηστείαις – in the midst of all these very negative experiences (cf. chapter 11), which include being beaten, being thrown in prison for their faith, experiencing riots by people who oppose them, the hard work travel to continue to spread the gospel, many nights where Paul's concern for Christians keeps him up praying for them, and even times when food is scarce in their travels (especially when imprisoned).

¹²⁴ ἐν ἀγνότητι, ἐν γνώσει, ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ, ἐν χρηστότητι, ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ – These are all positive and describe Paul and Timothy's inwardness and demeanor—in the midst of single-minded commitment to God, His salvation by His grace, and their task of proclaiming the message of Jesus, having the true and correct knowledge of the gospel, being patient with people as they try to come to grips with the gospel, acting kindly towards all people as representatives of God's kindness towards them, having a changed inwardness that is always necessary to exist in conjunction with the things Paul lists in this verse, and loving others not as a mere act in order to get their approval (cf. Galatians 1) but out of genuine care and concern based upon God's love for them.

¹²⁵ ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας, ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ διὰ τῶν ὄπλων τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῶν δεξιῶν καὶ ἀριστερῶν – These also are all positive and not that much different from what Paul said in the previous verse—acting in their lives on the basis of the biblical truth, acting as a result of God's power through His Spirit who performed miracles to affirm their apostleship, and powerfully fighting off the error of the false apostles with the weapons of the truth through the message in one hand and the miracles in the other hand so to speak.

¹²⁶ διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀτιμίας, διὰ δυσφημίας καὶ εὐφημίας: ὡς πλάνοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς – through circumstances where some people think Paul and Timothy are great and the false apostles think they are awful, through circumstances where the false apostles slander them and others talk about them with glowing reports, as those who are looked upon as deceivers by the false apostles and men of truth by others

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

¹²⁷ ὡς ἀγνοούμενοι καὶ ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν, ὡς παιδευόμενοι καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι – as those who are said to be absolutely ignorant and stupid by the false apostles and those who are seen as possessing the only true and accurate truth of reality by others, as those who are actually dying and yet, behold, they are still alive, as those who are being disciplined by God through others' mistreatment and yet they are not being put to death.

The first part of this verse continues the description of responses from the two kinds of people in this world as in the previous verse.

Plus, Paul says that Timothy and he are constantly being trained by God to continue to know and believe the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, and, regardless of their natural process of heading towards physical death or how intent people are in getting rid of them by killing them, they stand to acquire eternal life and avoid eternal death and destruction. This is the gospel for Paul and Timothy, that they know they will inherit eternal life.

¹²⁸ ὡς λυπούμενοι αἰεὶ δὲ χαίροντες, ὡς πτωχοὶ πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτιζόντες, ὡς μὴδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες – as grieving over all the losses they experience but always rejoicing in the gain they stand to acquire of eternal life through God's love, as poor financially and yet making many rich with eternal life through the gospel, as having nothing in terms of earthly possessions while also possessing everything that will culminate in the greatest possession of all—the eternal Kingdom of God. Paul and Timothy experienced a tremendous amount of loss in their lives as well as sheer poverty at times. They feel like men who have been stripped of everything. However, none of this dissuaded them from grasping and believing the NT message. If anything, these experiences strengthened their resolve to be patient for the eternal Kingdom of God, because they knew that it

would be there that they would be permanently rich and the owner of all the wealth, especially moral perfection, with which God planned to shower on them as authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

Taking into account this whole list of experiences that Paul and Timothy have endured, certainly they look like losers, which the false teachers must have taken advantage of by challenging the Corinthian Christians as to whether or not they really want to follow such men. But Paul is saying that all the negative and positive things in his life are what God through Jesus told him he would have to experience as His servant and apostle to the Gentiles. So the Corinthians should not look at these things as that which demonstrates they are losers, but as that which reveals they are winners for Jesus.

The implications of this is that if any other Christian in history goes through the same kind of experiences, he can know that he is in good company with both Jesus and Paul and as a result willingly submit to God's sovereignty for his life just as these men did.

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

¹³⁰ οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν, στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν – The false apostles must be saying that Paul and Timothy are less than true apostles and Christians because they are not obeying God completely, i.e., through the Mosaic Covenant. And the Corinthians have become less than open and truthful with Paul and Timothy about their lives. However, it is the Corinthians (and the false apostles by implication) who are less than true Christians. Paul and Timothy have been completely open with the Corinthians about their sin and the gospel of Jesus/grace, while the Corinthians are putting restrictions on what they are willing to share with Paul and Timothy because of what they are experiencing within their own guts, perhaps concern that by letting Paul lead them they are going in the wrong direction (according to the false teachers), or concern about not living up to the standards of the false teachers and of even themselves because of how much they have bought into the message of performing for God to obtain, indeed make themselves worthy of, His blessings through the Mosaic Covenant.

The Corinthians are the problem in the relationship between Paul/Timothy and them. Paul and Timothy are not the problem.

¹³¹ τὴν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν, ὡς τέκνοις λέγω, πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς – Paul and Timothy urge the Corinthians to be as open about their sin and the gospel of Jesus/grace as they are in order to demonstrate genuine belief in the gospel vs. the direction they are thinking of going by being influenced by the false teachers.

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

¹³² μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνομία, ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος – This is Paul's way of saying that the false teachers are accused in the same way he says of those against whom he is writing in Galatians. Thus, Paul and Timothy urge the Corinthians as authentic believers not to work at their Christianity with the false apostles who are unbelievers, because it makes for an uneven working relationship—the Corinthians will be doing most of the work by virtue of their authentic faith. This is in contrast to an even working relationship that they already have with Paul and Timothy, because genuine belief naturally produces this kind of relationship among believers. Thus, getting mixed up with the false teachers is like trying to mix righteousness (moral purity) with lawlessness (sin) and light (truth) with darkness (lies). Paul uses the metaphor of a yoke on the shoulders of two oxen who are plowing together. If one oxen is stronger than the other, then it will pull the plow away from a making a straight furrow. Cf. Deuteronomy 22:10, You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Paul wants the Corinthian Christians to yoke themselves to someone who will cause their furrow to be straight and in line with the truth and not veer off into the error of promoting the Mosaic Covenant at the expense of the centrality of Jesus and God's grace. Likewise, he wants someone to be yoked to him so that they are walking together evenly and consistently towards the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

¹³³ τίς δὲ συμφώνησις Ἰησοῦ πρὸς Βελιάρ, ἢ τίς μερὶς πιστῶ μετὰ ἀπίστου – Speaking more explicitly, does it make sense to mix the Messiah (the Corinthians) with a false god (or the Antichrist, or the devil) (the false apostles) or belief (the Corinthians) with unbelief (the false apostles)?

Cf. Psalm 18:4,5 and the use of Belial to refer to wickedness and evil. בְּעִלְזָּבַד is used 26x in the OT, referring to those who act in a way that is contrary to God's moral commandments and to moral wisdom. In Psalm 18:4 for example it is translated with ἀνομίας.

Paul is asking what agreement does Jesus as the Messiah have with the evil of the false apostles who are completely missing the significance and importance of God's grace through him in contrast to attempting to obtain God's blessings through a person's

following of the Mosaic Covenant.

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

¹³⁴ τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναφ̄ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναός θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος, καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μου λαός – And does it make sense to be a temple of the one, true God (the Corinthians along with Paul and Timothy) and a temple of false gods (the false apostles), in the manner as God claimed to dwell among the Israelites and not among the pagan idolators of the Ancient Near East?

The erroneous message of the pseudo-apostles, even if it is all about the Bible, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant, is as much idolatry as that of the pagans who reject the Bible and God outright.

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

The irony of Paul's using these quotes is that they originally were addressed to Jews who were to separate themselves from Gentile pagans, and he is now using them to exhort the mostly Gentile Corinthians to separate themselves from Jews who are teaching such an erroneous message that he considers them to be unbelievers.

¹³⁵ διὸ ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν καὶ ἀφορίσθητε, λέγει κύριος, καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε· κἀγὼ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς – Just as God promised in Isaiah 52 to separate the Jews as authentic believers from all other peoples and unbelievers when He brings about the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel at the return of Jesus, so God through Paul is urging the Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from the false apostles and all other unbelievers.

Isaiah 52:11, Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD (LXX, ἀπόστητε ἀπόστητε ἐξέλθατε ἐκείθεν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε, ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῆς ἀφορίσθητε, οἱ φέροντες τὰ σκεύη κυρίου). In Isaiah 52, God is exhorting the Jews, those who have the responsibility to hold and use the sacred instruments of worship in the temple (the Levites), as they depart from the midst of the earth (the feminine noun of reference in the Hebrew text for the "her"), i.e., from other nations, and return to the land of Israel, to keep themselves separate from all other people who are not willing to obey Him. Paul and Timothy are saying that the Corinthians should do likewise in relationship to the false apostles. Cf. Ezekiel 20:34, "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you (καὶ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς = welcome you) from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out."

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

¹³⁷ Ταύτας οὖν ἔχοντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας, ἀγαπητοί, καθαρῶσμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ – "These promises" of which Paul says that he and the Corinthians have are actually ones made to the nation of Israel. But just as God will be faithful to fulfill all His promises to them, so also will He do the same for any authentic believer in human history, specifically grant them eternal life and existence in the Kingdom of God. Again, there is irony here because Paul is implying that God will not grant these promises to the Jewish false teachers but to the (mostly) Gentile Corinthian Christians.

Paul uses a Mosaic Covenant-like phrase, "let us cleanse ourselves from all polluting of the flesh and spirit," to encourage the Gentile Corinthians to separate themselves from the Jewish false apostles while living their lives "in the fear of God," i.e., properly fearing God through Jesus/grace and the New Covenant, and in the light of God's promises to be among them and in them for His eternal purposes. The false apostles are people of the height of gross immorality.

cf. Leviticus 16:30, "for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD."

cf. Jeremiah 51:4, "Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, 'Oh, do not do this abominable thing (τὸ πρᾶγμα τῆς μολύνσεως ταύτης = this practical action of this defilement/polluting) which I hate.'"

Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight his individual love for the Corinthian Christians, and by doing so, includes

them in the “we” of those who possess all the promises of God pertaining to His being the Father of those who reject error and embrace truth as stated in the previous three quotes from the OT at the end of chapter 6. Paul also encourages the Corinthian Christians and himself to live their lives in a moral manner that is separate from that of people who are committed to error and evil, including the pseudo-apostles who say that they are followers of Jesus as the Messiah, but who clearly are not because of how they treat the Corinthians and how they present the Mosaic Covenant by emphasizing it above the New Covenant of the Messiah.

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

So Paul urges the Corinthian Christians along with Timothy and himself to finish their lives this way as those who have been separated by God out of the world of unbelievers and in the fear of God, i.e., in the context and sphere of fearing God’s condemnation if they were to attempt to obtain salvation by any other methodology than God’s independent grace, mercy, and Jesus as their crucified advocate. This is how important it is to get this part of one’s theology correct and to live it persistently while being confronted with all sorts of other ideas that could derail one’s biblical understanding of God.

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

¹³⁹ πρὸς κατάρκισιν οὐ λέγω· προεῖρηκα γὰρ ὅτι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν ἔστε εἰς τὸ συναποθανεῖν καὶ συζῆν – Paul in no way would want to come across as indicating that the Corinthians are now subject to God’s condemnation, as the false apostles would if they abandon their emphasis on the Mosaic Covenant, because, just as he has communicated, the Corinthians are dear to them and slated for the same eternal destiny—after death to rise again to eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

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

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

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

¹⁴² ἀλλ’ ὁ παρακαλῶν τοὺς ταπεινοὺς παρεκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ Τίτου – God’s timing in Paul’s and Timothy’s lives was such that He caused Titus to meet up with them, which in itself was very encouraging to them, to see the friendly face of someone else who was committed to the gospel as much as they were,...

And Paul states that any true encouragement for those who are suffering in the midst of their faith comes from God, and He will indeed bring encouragement in the form of the truth of the gospel ultimately so that believers can persevere in their faith and not give up on God’s love, grace, and mercy for the sake of their eternal salvations. The result may not be that the difficult and painful feelings of sadness, confusion, or anxiety completely go away. But they are counterbalanced by the truth in the believer’s mind as it is used by God’s Spirit.

¹⁴³ οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει ἣ παρεκλήθη ἐφ’ ὑμῖν ἀναγγέλλων ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἐπιπόθησιν, τὸν ὑμῶν ὀδυρμόν, τὸν ὑμῶν ζῆλον ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ ὥστε με μᾶλλον χαρῆσαι – as well as to get Titus’ report that the Corinthians had responded well to Paul’s letter of sorrow and longed to continue to have him lead and teach them (thus this long letter of both).

While it was great for Paul and Timothy to be encouraged simply by meeting up with Titus, another true believer, it was even more encouraging for them to hear from Titus about the authenticity of the Corinthians’ belief which manifested itself in how

much they were thinking of Paul and longing to see or hear from him with respect to the true truth of his apostolic message while also genuinely mourning over their sin which he will speak about more in a moment—all of which we can assume is in contrast to the false message of the pseudo-apostles. This naturally led Paul to rejoice even more in the midst of his suffering because it further confirmed God’s work within the Corinthians and the worthwhile effects of his hard work among them of educating them in the gospel.

¹⁴⁴ ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἐλύπησα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, οὐ μεταμέλομαι· εἰ καὶ μετεμελόμην, βλέπω γὰρ ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἐκείνη εἰ καὶ πρὸς ὄραν ἐλύπησεν ὑμᾶς – As in chapter 2, Paul says that in spite of how sad his previous letter made the Corinthians and him in turn, he does not regret having written it.

Continuing with the first person singular “I,” Paul takes full responsibility for what he and his associates wrote in the previous letter that caused the Corinthians to grieve. This would have been actually 3 Corinthians, a letter which we have lost. But the sorrow and grief of the Corinthians was worth it in Paul’s opinion.

¹⁴⁵ νῦν χαίρω, οὐχ ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν ἐλυπήθητε γὰρ κατὰ θεόν, ἵνα ἐν μηδενὶ ζημιωθῆτε ἐξ ἡμῶν – While Paul regrets having caused the Corinthians to experience the pain of grief for what he said in the previous letter where he confronted their “sin,” he is glad that the ultimate effect by virtue of Gods’ work within them was their repenting and dealing with their immorality before God so that they would not suffer the “loss” (=demonstrating their belief is not genuine) of God’s granting them eternal mercy and life.

According to Titus, they actually repented of their sin, and Paul identifies their repentance as having been caused by God. Thus, Paul can see that God used Timothy and him as instruments of repentance in the Corinthians’ lives for the purpose of their not experiencing the loss of their salvations. This was a theoretical possibility only in the sense that failure to repent of sin would have indicated a false faith on their part from the beginning. In other words, God’s sovereign grace assures that people whom He has chosen and in whom He has worked by His Spirit to change their hearts will repent and persevere in their belief until the end of their lives.

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

¹⁴⁶ ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀμεταμέλητον ἐργάζεται· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται – Paul states that there are two kinds of sadness when a person realizes that he has done something wrong and immoral. One kind is in the midst of God’s inward work during a person’s life and producing authentic repentance that leads eventually to eternal salvation. The other kind lacks God’s inward work and, while the sadness itself appears genuine, it results in eternal condemnation instead of salvation. Typically, this latter sadness is because of getting caught doing something wrong, but because of genuine guilt at the person’s evil.

Therefore, unless a person is a complete sociopath, he can and will feel bad about his immorality, sin, and its effects in his life and the lives of others. And his sorrow and grief may even look like Christian sorrow and grief. But without God’s inward work through His Spirit, this person’s sorrow and grief is only in the light of its effects in this world and not in regard to its possible effects pertaining to eternal life and God’s condemnation.

¹⁴⁷ ἰδοὺ γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ κατὰ θεὸν λυπηθῆναι πόσῃν κατειργάσατο ὑμῖν σπουδῇ, ἀλλὰ ἀπολογίαν, ἀλλὰ ἀγανάκτησιν, ἀλλὰ φόβον, ἀλλὰ ἐπιπόθησιν, ἀλλὰ ζῆλον, ἀλλὰ ἐκδίκησιν ἐν παντὶ συνεστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς ἀγνοῦς εἶναι τῷ πράγματι – Paul wants the Corinthians to notice for themselves how much diligence this God caused sorrow has produced in them that includes their clearing themselves of blame for false belief, their proper self-reproach for not having done this sooner, their proper reverence for God and His judgment, their longing for moral perfection in eternity, their strong motivation to deal with their sin properly, their doing whatever they can to right any wrongs in their lives, all of which have proven they are genuine believers.

Paul is truly excited to see what God has done in their lives through the sorrow which He has caused in relation to their sin which Paul exposed in his previous letter. It has resulted in all the elements which a Christian should experience in response to their sin. First, there is “earnestness,” i.e., an intense conviction to deal with the sin before God in a manner that is pleasing to Him and in line with having a heart that is oriented towards Him and committed to Him.

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

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

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

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

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

we can pursue avoiding it as much as God's grace permits in the present realm.

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

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

¹⁴⁸ ἄρα εἰ καὶ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, οὐχ ἔνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος οὐδὲ ἔνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος ἀλλ' ἔνεκεν τοῦ φανερωθῆναι τὴν σπουδὴν ὑμῶν τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ – It is hard not to see the two people mentioned here as the father and son of 1 Corinthians 5 where "the son has his father's wife," and the Corinthians are not paying any attention to the immorality of the situation. Same as in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

Notice though the variant in the MT, "our earnestness on your behalf could be demonstrated to you before God." This makes more sense, because Paul could not absolutely certain that the Corinthians would respond positively to his letter. He just knew that before God he needed to write, or he would not be acting responsibly as an apostle of the Jesus the Messiah.

He could be stating that his purpose for writing the previous letter was not strictly so that the one who was committing sin could be confronted and change his ways, but so that the entire Corinthian Christian community could have the opportunity to demonstrate the authenticity of their Christianity on behalf of Paul and Timothy as apostles and in God's presence (cf. 2:9). But the first option still makes more sense.

¹⁴⁹ διὰ τοῦτο παρακεκλήμεθα. Ἐπὶ ὅδῃ τῇ παρακλήσει ἡμῶν περισσοτέρως μᾶλλον ἐχάρημεν ἐπὶ τῇ χαρᾷ Τίτου, ὅτι ἀναπέπναιται τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul and Timothy found great encouragement first in Titus' report about the Corinthians when they all met up in Macedonia in northern Greece, and even more that Titus himself found such refreshment in his own spirit from the genuineness of the Corinthians' faith and the way they responded to Paul's letter and treated him. When Christians really connect in regard to the gospel of God's grace, mercy, and promise of eternal life in the midst of life's hardships and suffering, there is nothing better for a person's soul and spirit. It is truly refreshing, invigorating, encouraging, and satisfying. You can just take a deep breath and say, "Yes, God is good."

¹⁵⁰ ὅτι εἶ τι αὐτῷ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κεκαύχημαι, οὐ κατησχύνθη, ἀλλ' ὡς ἅπαντα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ἐλαλήσαμεν ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν ἢ ἐπὶ Τίτου ἀλήθεια ἐγενήθη – The Corinthians have not let Paul and Timothy down with respect to what they have bragged about to Titus that is right in line with Paul's having proclaimed the truth of the gospel to them and their having genuinely embraced it.

At some time in the past, Paul and Timothy had bragged to Titus about the Corinthians' belief, because they had experienced it more recently than Titus (cf. 8:6 – Titus had begun the process of the Corinthians' collecting a donation for the Judean Christians). Fortunately, Titus found the Corinthians to be genuine in their belief when he arrived to engage with them in the issues that were going on amongst them in Corinth and in the midst of the effect of Paul's previous letter where he had confronted their sin (the "just as we spoke all things to you because of the truth").

¹⁵¹ καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐστὶν ἀναμνησκομένου τὴν πάντων ὑμῶν ὑπακοήν, ὡς μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐδέξασθε αὐτόν – Titus grew in his appreciation for and desire to be with the Corinthian Christians as he experienced their reverential reception of him as Paul's (and the gospel's) envoy and observed their obedient response to Paul's letter and the gospel, that it was truly genuine.

It was not that Titus himself caused them to be afraid and tremble, but he was representing God and the truth of the NT and apostolic message which they had first heard from Paul. This is what engendered fear in the Corinthians and which was so heartwarming for Titus. Cf. Philippians 2:12,13 – "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

¹⁵² χαίρω ὅτι ἐν παντὶ θαρρῶ ἐν ὑμῖν – Paul is very happy that, to the extent a human being can know another person's inwardness, he knows that the Corinthians are authentic believers and followers of the apostolic message.

Thus, all the defense of his apostleship which he has presented in this letter is in the light of the things in chapter 7 where he has expressed that he is convinced of the authenticity of their faith. Consequently, this has been a softer defense than that in Galatians, because Paul has confirmation of the Corinthians' zeal for the gospel in the light of the possible influence from the false apostles.

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

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

Paul and Timothy got to experience God's grace working within the Macedonian Christians when they saw that they not only

rejoiced in the NT message of eternal life, but also, in spite of their own economic poverty, chose to be generous to other Christians who were in need—so that these two things together revealed the wealth of their single-minded commitment to God’s project of eternal life and mercy for His chosen people. In other words, their economic poverty was no hindrance to their being rich in their resolve to remain committed to the gospel and God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶¹ γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι’ ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε – The greatest example that Paul can cite is that of Jesus’ graciously giving, out of his wealth as the icon of God and ruler of the creation, his life for morally depraved human beings, in order to make them rich with eternal forgiveness, salvation and life. In this example, then, poverty is first Jesus’ death on the cross, the complete absence of physical life, and wealth is his status and role as the Son of God and king of the eternal Kingdom of God. Then, wealth for the Corinthian Christians is receiving God’s blessing of eternal life and mercy.

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

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

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

¹⁶³ τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει, οἵτινες οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενήρξασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι – The Corinthians and Titus had agreed together a year ago to help the Jerusalem Christians. While Paul is not commanding them to follow through on their commitment, he is saying that doing so, i.e., doing good towards others and fulfilling one’s commitment to them, is better for them than not doing so, especially when they had originally decided and were eager to make this gift a year ago. The benefit is that they are proving out the authenticity of their belief. Cf. Acts 20:35, “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to

give than to receive.” Cf. 8:9.

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

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

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

¹⁶⁶ οὐ γὰρ ἵνα ἄλλοις ἀνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἰσότητος – Here is an interesting point that Paul is making. He is saying that one of the goals of God’s grace *within the Christian community* is to motivate Christians to meet the basic needs of other Christians, not so that the latter will not suffer while the former suffer, but so that both may have their needs met to the extent possible by the sharing of resources. And Paul will go on to point out that these basic needs are both physical (money, food, clothing, etc.) and spiritual (the gospel message which can result in authentic belief and eternal mercy and salvation). Romans 15:25-27 helps with understanding this.

Thus, the “equality” in this verse refers ultimately to Christians’ recognizing that they have equal value and significance before God and therefore an equal right to be loved by one another, even if their financial resources or spiritual resources never happen to be equal within the body of Christ. This is to say that they should all value each other equally to the extent that they are willing to share their resources with one another so that no one has to live in a state of deprivation, that there is an equality of lack of deprivation. And this state of deprivation could involve financial deprivation (that translates into a lack of food that could lead to physical death—as in the case of the Judean Christian Jews in comparison to the Macedonian and Achaian Christians or the poor families attending the “Lord’s Supper” in 1 Corinthians 11 in comparison to the wealthy families in the Corinthian Christian community) or an intellectual/spiritual deprivation (that translates into a lack of the important ideas of the gospel that could lead to eternal destruction—as in the case of the Gentiles in Greece in comparison to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, which Paul talks about in Romans 15:25-27).

Therefore, this equality does not refer to an equality of total financial or intellectual/spiritual resources among Christians. The Greek Christians may still have more money than the Judean Christians, and the Judean Christians may still have more intellectual understanding of the gospel than the Greek Christians. But the point is that no one is so lacking that they can be considered to be deprived and “starving” when it comes to these resources and that could lead to “death.”

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

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

¹⁶⁸ καθὼς γέγραπται ὁ τὸ πολὺ οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν, καὶ ὁ τὸ ὀλίγον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν – cf. Exodus 16:18, οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν ὁ τὸ πολὺ, καὶ ὁ τὸ ἕλαττον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν. Except for the word order, these are the same. When the Israelites gathered the manna (first use of the word in OT – Numbers 11:6, “There is nothing at all to look at except this manna (מַן) (τὸ μαννα); cf. Exodus 16:15, “When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it (מַה הוּא) (τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο)?’)” off the ground, they did so according to God’s instructions that they should gather an omer per person in their tent. By doing so, the amount fit their physical needs so that large families had enough and small families did too. EBC – an omer = approximately two quarts or one-tenth of a bushel. [This would be a little less than one gallon (231 cubic inches), because a bushel is approximately 2150 cubic inches.]. Thus, the ratio of manna/person was the same, meaning that each person had an equal right to survive in

God's eyes.

Paul uses this example in the OT to encourage the Corinthian Christians to give financially to the Jewish Christians in Judea so that neither they nor the others are in need physically, because this was God's intent for the Israelites when taking them through the desert. It is not that Paul is advocating a kind of Christian communism but that no one is suffering deprivation within the Christian community when there are people within it who could help make this the case, i.e., that no one is suffering deprivation—physical or spiritual. Each Christian has an equal right to live, and everyone in the Christian community should love his brothers and sisters with this in mind—sharing what he has and as much as he can, even if it is out of his own poverty. Thus, the total wealth of each Israelite family in the Sinai desert may have been different, and the total wealth of each Christian might be different. But God made sure every member of every family had enough food for each day so that no one was in a condition of deprivation or starving, and Christians should make sure that every individual within the Christian community has enough food and shelter for each day. Cf. the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," the implication being that God's gift to meet the needs of His people may come through His people—as a gift, although the labor is worthy of his wages.

¹⁶⁹ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ τῷ δόντι τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδὴν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ Τίτου – Again, it is God's grace who has even motivated Titus by working inwardly in him to be eager to help the Corinthians follow through on their commitment to send a gift to the Judean Christians. Thus, the earnestness that the Corinthian Christians originally had to meet the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem is the same earnestness that Titus has to encourage the Corinthian Christians to follow through on this original desire. God, therefore, is making everyone eager to help all those who are involved in this mutual love which Christians are showing one another. This is part of the working of His grace in individuals that affects the group at large.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁶ εἶτε ὑπὲρ Τίτου, κοινωνός ἐμός καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός· εἶτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, δόξα Χριστοῦ – Titus' participation in Paul's carrying out his responsibility of proclaiming the NT message speaks for itself. The other two men are envoys of the Christian groups throughout Macedonia who are the very glory and brilliance of the Messiah. Paul means that by

the miracle of the grace of God, there truly are people in this world who are genuine followers of the Messiah, thus representing him and thereby being a source of glory to him by their existence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁹⁴ δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρὼν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμήσαι ἐπὶ τινὰς τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας – The Corinthians already consider Paul to be quite intimidating when he writes his letters in contrast to a

meekness that he displays in their presence. In this situation, some of them have become convinced by the false apostles that he is an “apostle” who is only out for himself, because Timothy and he are not encouraging these Gentiles to obey the Mosaic Covenant and be Jewish in the midst of their following the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. Therefore, Paul does not want to come to them this third time (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:1) and have to change the way he typically is in their presence so as to take on a boldness that could look intimidating to others, while trying to convince them that he is a true apostle.

¹⁹⁵ ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα – Paul admits that, for Timothy and him, there is an inherent participation in the world of unbelief and rebellion toward God simply by being a human being within the created reality. However, their battle with the false apostles and with the Corinthians who have become convinced by them is definitely not on the basis of appearance as the false apostles have adopted worldly perspective on how to measure success, i.e., outward performance of the ceremonies and rituals of the Mosaic Covenant. Indeed, Paul’s message is right in line with the truth of the Bible properly understood.

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

Paul likens people’s erroneous worldviews to which they are committed to fortresses and bastions, the walls of which that they will protect to the death to prevent from being breached by the truth. They will use their whole being to fight off the truth in order to hold on to their lies. However, Paul, Timothy, and the others employ not only his authority as an apostle but also the biblical truth that he has learned and taught to them to breach other people’s defenses against the truth and demonstrate their understanding of reality to be false and a lie.

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

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

¹⁹⁸ καὶ ἐν ἐτοιμίῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὡμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή – Paul, as an apostle, along with Timothy as an apostolic worker, stand ready to see all rebellion against God punished and avenged by God at the final judgment when also the Corinthians’ obedience will be brought to its completion and they humbly receive eternal salvation and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God through God’s grace and mercy. Paul does not know exactly when this will happen. He just knows that it will.

¹⁹⁹ τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἐαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς – This is the crux of the issue regarding truth and falsehood. Truth is about whether or not the inwardness of human beings has been changed such that they face into their moral depravity and humbly appeal to God for His mercy. However, because no one but God can see a person’s actual inwardness, the measurement of it by other people is impossible, making an evaluation of even an apostle’s success in his serving God impossible. On the other hand, falsehood is about human beings’ dressing up their external actions in order to appear good, while failing to face completely into their inner moral depravity. But external actions and their effect on others’ external actions make it easy to evaluate someone’s success, which is what the false apostles are claiming that they can do with Paul. He simply does not look as successful as they are in getting people, i.e., Gentiles, to follow God, especially because they have the whole Mosaic Covenant to use as a measuring stick, which, by definition, is unavailable to Paul. The Gentiles are not obligated at all the Mosaic Covenant, including its religious, ceremonial, and ritual commandments. Therefore, it cannot be used as a measure of spirituality or religious success for Paul’s effect on them. This is why ceremonies, rituals, and religious practices with the number of people performing them have been such an attractive way to measure the success of Christianity down through the centuries, and is certainly still popular today. Paul wants the Corinthians to compare their sense that they are followers of the Messiah to his also being a follower along with Timothy. Paul and Timothy are just as convinced as the Corinthians that they are genuine disciples of Jesus.

Cf. **John 7:23** “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath. **24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**”

²⁰⁰ ἐάν τε γὰρ περισσώτερόν τι καυχῆσθαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἢς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὡμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυρήσομαι – This whole letter is on long defense of Paul’s apostolic role and his unique authority to proclaim the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah with 100% accuracy and completeness. Timothy who accompanies him has chosen to share this responsibility with him as his student of the truth. It may appear as though he is bragging, but he has tried to defend himself with as little bragging as possible with the intention of encouraging his readers to embrace the truth for the sake of their eternal salvation, knowing that in the final analysis God is the only one who can cause them to do so. Therefore, if Paul has to keep on writing ideas and defending his apostleship to persuade the Corinthians of the truth, he will not be ashamed of doing so, because he knows that God will use these ideas and his apostleships as He sees fit.

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

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

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

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

But Paul and Timothy do claim that the false apostles’ only real measuring stick is themselves, which the false apostles would be glad to admit is true, but which also demonstrates that they lack an understanding of the biblical message that ultimately focuses on people’s inwardness that cannot be humanly measured. Another way to say this is that by using obvious, external elements of the created reality to measure their success, the false apostles are not grasping the truth of God’s reality and of the primary importance of what God is doing inside people by opening them up to the truth of the gospel of grace through Jesus the Messiah—and not through religious actions.

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

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

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

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

²⁰⁸ εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι – Again, Paul’s and Timothy’s desire is never to brag about God’s work in another place as though they have some sort of claim to it. Instead, they expect that the maturation of the Corinthians in their understanding of the NT message will then enable them to focus their attention on other regions beyond them. This will be in line with their desire to “boast” about only what they have done and not take credit for what others have done. If God has assigned other Christians to speak to unbelievers in other places and who have been prepared to hear the gospel and respond with authentic belief, then that is God’s business and prerogative.

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

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

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

Cf. 11:4,19,20 for negative meanings of ἀνέχω. It is one thing to put up with the truth by submitting to it and believing it. It is certainly another thing to put up with falsehood by submitting to it and believing it.

²¹² ζῆλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζῆλω ἡρμოსάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἀγνήν παραστῆσαι τῷ Χριστῷ – Just as God expressed His jealousy for the Israelites in the OT, Paul feels the same way toward the Corinthians and to whom they are going to grant authority—to the false apostles or him, especially because Paul was the first to present the NT message to them. Thinking of the Corinthians as a bride, Paul had engaged them to be married to Jesus at the judgment so that they would be his subjects in the eternal Kingdom of God. Indeed, by their single-minded adherence to the truth of the biblical message, they would show up at the judgment as “pure virgins,” unadulterated and uncontaminated intellectually and uncorrupted and unstained spiritually by falsehood and lies from elements within their culture, whether Jewish or pagan. They should work at protecting themselves from Satan's and the world's evil and lies by thoughtfully and carefully holding to the apostolic message which Paul and Timothy first taught them.

²¹³ φοβοῦμαι δὲ μὴ πως, ὡς ὁ ὄφις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὐάν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ, φθαρῆ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν – Paul considers the Corinthians' attraction to the false apostles to be of equal error to Satan's deception of Eve and convincing her to draw away from obeying God in the Garden of Eden. Just as she thought that she could make herself wise by disobeying God, the Corinthians think that they are becoming wiser by focusing on the Mosaic Covenant and making themselves acceptable to God through it. Thus, the Corinthians' buying into the message of the false apostles is making them lose their intellectual and spiritual virginity, because the false apostles are deceiving them into thinking that strict adherence to the Mosaic Covenant is necessary for Gentiles as well as Jews—even in the midst of believing that Jesus is the Messiah. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that these false apostles do not appreciate the significance of Jesus' death as a propitiatory offering to God in order for him to qualify to be the high priest of sinners before God so that they obtain His eternal mercy and forgiveness.

²¹⁴ εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε – Not a commendation, but a gentle rebuke, which is more coherent in this context (cf. 11:19,20 for two more uses of ἀνέχω with the same negative meaning). The Corinthians are putting up with false teachers rather than challenging and refuting them. Their “putting up with [the false message] well enough” is to their shame and detriment. They are not holding on to what Paul and Timothy have taught them. If they can go astray so easily, those who were personally taught by Paul, the foremost theologian of all time besides Jesus, what hope do the rest of us have for not distorting the biblical message? Our hope as genuine believers is that the Spirit of God within us will keep pushing us towards examining carefully the Bible and thinking through exactly what its message is, not settling for anyone's telling us what it is without critiquing their arguments as diligently as possible.

Cf. 11:20.

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

²¹⁶ εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ γνώσει, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ φανερώσαντες ἐν πάσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς – The false apostles are pointing out that Paul is not a very good speaker, which outwardly makes him less influential than them because of their eloquence. And the Corinthians are buying this argument!! Paul admits that he is a poor speaker, but he also points out that Timothy and he truly understand the biblical message to a depth that is unmatched and unparalleled in the world (except among the other apostles) and have demonstrated the resultant humility by not having put any physical demands on the Corinthians of supporting them and preserving their “organization.” Paul has not demanded that the Corinthians love him to the same degree that he loves them, because he knows they cannot match the giftedness which God has granted him. Cf. the implicit and explicit pressure of modern churches to maintain their presence and their institutions, as if they are saying, “You must love the leadership and our institution to the same degree that we have loved you.” Cf. v. 11:7.

²¹⁷ ἢ ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δωρεάν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν – The false apostles have given the impression that their legitimacy is partly based upon the fact that they need and require that people support them financially. This may be a cultural idea, too. For example, there were the Sophists in Greek culture who did charge for their instruction and considered it a legitimate and worthwhile endeavor. Similarly, the false apostles have institutionalized

their activity and made it the object of financial support in order to indicate publicly that they are authorized apostles of Jesus the Messiah. In contrast, Paul has never made anyone feel that the only way that he can be an authorized apostle is if people make sure that he survives financially. “Today, Sunday, I am walking into a church building, i.e., a pagan temple,” to paraphrase Soren Kierkegaard.

²¹⁸ ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν – Indeed, Paul was fine financially based merely upon the gifts that he was receiving from other Christian communities. And these gifts enabled him to present the NT message to the Corinthians free of charge. Sarcastically, he calls these gifts from other groups things that he stole from them, because this is basically what the false apostles are doing to the Corinthians by presenting them with lies and charging them for them.

²¹⁹ καὶ παρὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑστερηθεὶς οὐ κατενάγκησα οὐθενός· τὸ γὰρ ὑστέρημά μου προσανεπλήρωσαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἑμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω – Even when Paul was in need in Corinth, he did not turn to the Corinthians and require them to help him. He did not even suggest it. He was not even going to hint that they should support him financially—regardless of how worthwhile his endeavor was as the apostle to the Gentiles (cf 1 Corinthians 9 & 10). And he is going to continue in this same fashion with respect to them. For him, the important thing is to get the truth out, not to be supported financially even from those who embrace the truth and benefit from it for the sake of their eternal salvations.

By speaking of not wanting to be a burden to the Corinthians, Paul is implying that they are a poor Christian community, which is interesting in the light of Corinth’s role in the Roman world a being a financial and trading center in Greece.

²²⁰ ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ καύχησις αὐτῆ οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας – Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, and he has traveled in areas other than Achaia, where Corinth is located, which provides him with plenty of experiences as an apostle in which he can “boast” to the Corinthians similarly to how the false apostles are boasting. And as long as God gives him strength and breath, he will continue to travel beyond where he has already been and proclaim the NT message, thus providing him with even more experiences later in which to “boast.”

²²¹ διὰ τί· ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν – The false apostles have accused Paul of not caring about the Corinthians because he failed to show up when they expected him (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:15ff.)—because he has been caught up with issues involving other Christian communities since he is the apostle to the Gentiles. But Paul loves the Corinthians dearly, even though he has not spent as much time with them as either he or they would like, and, as he has talked about and goes on to talk about, he does not demand to be paid by them, which they are now interpreting as a lack of love and care for them as they listen to the false apostles. In other words, the false apostles are saying that if Paul truly cared for the Corinthian Christians, he would be there and ask (demand?) them for money.

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

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

This is not all that dissimilar to asking whom people should trust in a church, a group of men who are diligently following the traditional beliefs of Christianity that have existed for almost 2,000 years or one individual who has gone outside the boundaries of transitional doctrines by studying the Bible on his own?

²²⁴ καὶ οὐ θαῦμα· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός – Even the adversary whom God gives a major level of influence in the world, Satan, the real, spiritual and intellectual leader of these men, tries to appear good, even though he is wholly evil, in order to deceive people into thinking that he is good and should be followed instead of their following God. Satan pretends to be a messenger of truth and goodness, when he is full of lies and evil and his modus operandi is to rebel against God and to get as many human beings to do the same thing.

²²⁵ οὐ μέγα οὖν εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης ὃν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν – This is a bold statement by Paul, that the false apostles are not only servants of Satan and not servants of God, but that their eternal destiny is currently one of condemnation and destruction, not of salvation and life.

But it certainly is no huge surprise to Paul to discover that Satan’s servants are trying to deceive people the same way that he does, by appearing to be good and noble and moral with a message that pleases God. Therefore, it makes sense to Paul that these false apostles look as good as they do, even by advocating complete “morality” according to the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, the outcome of their lives will correspond to their evil and deception. It will be eternal condemnation and destruction from God.

²²⁶ πάλιν λέγω, μή τις με δόξη ἄφρονα εἶναι· εἰ δὲ μή γε, κἄν ὡς ἄφρονα δεῖξασθέ με, ἵνα καγὼ μικρόν τι καυχῆσωμαι – Some people think that Paul is a bit crazy for not receiving financial support from the Corinthians, because this is just SOP in their culture for work done by a laborer. And Paul is definitely a laborer for the NT message. But Paul is fine if they want to think that he is a bit crazy by not asking for financial support, and he asks now if they will allow him to boast in the crazy way that follows in the next verses—again, sarcasm.

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

²²⁸ ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ σάρκα, καγὼ καυχῆσομαι – Just as the pseudo-apostles brag about their outwardness, their outward accomplishments, Paul is going to also—even though quite reluctantly and with far different outward actions than they are. The false apostles point to their diligent, careful, and persistent efforts to obey outwardly the Mosaic Covenant, and as Jews there seems in their minds to be no greater way to demonstrate a fervent faith in God. And they believe that if it is good enough for Jews, it certainly good enough for Gentiles. Indeed it should be mandatory for them as it is for the Jews. We can say that just as religion within the institution of Judaism looks really spiritual, so does religion within the institution of the church.

²²⁹ ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες – Paul is being sarcastic, but with the intention of waking up the Corinthians from their spiritual and intellectual slumber so that they grasp the truth of reality as they had when Paul and Timothy first presented the NT message to them. The Corinthians are far too willing to listen to and embrace the message of the false apostles regarding following the Mosaic Covenant to make oneself a bona fide disciple of Jesus.

cf. 11:4,20 for other uses of ἀνέχω with a negative meaning.

²³⁰ ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει – The Corinthians are willing to follow and believe the false apostles who are mistreating them by strong-arming them into strict submission to their leadership while also disrespecting their individuality. This is not surprising in the light of how many people prefer to be led by people who mistreat them because of their own psychological issues and dysfunction.

²³¹ κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡσθενηκάμεν – Paul has not come close to being as intimidating as the false apostles, resulting in his feeling like an utter weakling in comparison to them. This is something that he is (sarcastically) ashamed of. The Corinthians sound like a woman in a dysfunctional relationship with a boyfriend who feels compelled to stay in the relationship mainly because her boyfriend (the false apostles) beats her when there is another man who is willing to be kind, patient, and loving towards her. The abuse of her current boyfriend is meeting some important need she has that, for the wrong reasons, she feels that she cannot let go of.

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

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

Perhaps “Hebrews” refers to their Jewish culture and traditions, which Paul can certainly claim to have been and even be now when necessary an important part of his life. “Israelites” refers to their being members of the nation of Israel with their long history as recorded in the OT, which includes all the covenants which God has made with these people, His “chosen people.” “Descendants of Abraham” refers to the promises which God made with him and those who can trace their lineage back to him through Jacob and then Isaac, promises which include eternal life and becoming a great nation on the land of Israel.

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

This is an example of people who have heard the truth from the best teacher, Jesus, and honestly believe that they have understood him correctly, when in fact they have not. Instead, they have catastrophically misunderstood him to their eternal detriment.

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

²³⁶ τρις ἐρραβδίσθη, ἀπαξ ἐλιθάσθη, τρις ἐνανάγησα, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα – Paul’s apostolic authority has resulted in not only violent and negative reactions from human beings, but also violent and negative reactions from the creation, not because the creation is rebelling against God, but because his travels as an apostle eventually put him in such natural danger.

²³⁷ ὁδοιπορίας πολλάκις, κινδύνους ποταμῶν, κινδύνους ληστῶν, κινδύνους ἐκ γένους, κινδύνους ἐξ ἔθνων, κινδύνους ἐν πόλει, κινδύνους ἐν ἐρημίᾳ, κινδύνους ἐν θαλάσσει, κινδύνους ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις – Paul’s seeking to fulfill his apostolic responsibilities has led to just plain suffering in the course of doing so, while the false apostles have the right to avoid all these if they so choose, by not only presenting a less offensive message than Paul’s, but also choosing their own times and places to travel when danger may not necessarily be present. Paul willingly goes where and when God leads him, even if it is into the most dangerous situation.

“Dangers from false brethren” would include this situation in Corinth about which Paul is writing, that given the opportunity, the false apostles would love to rid the world of Paul and his supposed lies about God to the effect that the Gentiles are not obligated to obey the Jewish Mosaic Covenant.

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

Probably the nakedness is while either in prison or stripped of his clothes to be beaten by the Jews and others.

²³⁹ χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτός ἢ ἐπίστασις μοι ἢ καθ’ ἡμέραν, ἢ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν – Paul’s apostolic responsibility of being an authoritative spokesman for Jesus to the Gentiles constantly leads him to care inwardly, lovingly, and deeply for the spiritual condition of the people to whom he has presented the NT message, and to do so in a way that is completely in line with the biblical message of grace and mercy towards individuals—not by asking people for money or demanding that they love him in a commensurate way!

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

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

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

²⁴³ ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρουρεῖ τὴν πόλιν Δαμασκηνῶν πιάσαι με – cf. Acts 9, especially v. 25.

²⁴⁴ καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθη διὰ τοῦ τειχοῦ καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ – While the false apostles can claim to be supported financially by whole groups of people, Paul can claim to have been rejected by an entire city! Therefore, who is the genuine apostle of the Messiah? Paul! Really? On what basis? The nature of the message and the nature of Paul’s behavior along with the nature of the two kinds of responses to them—positive and negative. The gospel cannot be used to support an institution or religious system.

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

²⁴⁶ οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτός τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ – Paul does not know exactly how this happened, only that he experienced an aspect of reality that God wanted to reveal to him—in the third heaven (?). He also puts this in the third person, “I know a man...,” as a way to distance himself further from claiming that anything good he has received from God is because he has somehow earned it.

Assuming Paul is writing this letter approximately A.D. 54-58, fourteen years before would place this even A.D. 40-44.

²⁴⁷ καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε ἄχωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν – Whatever happened to Paul fourteen years ago was a such a nature that he is not even sure exactly how it happened to him.

²⁴⁸ ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι – Paul was snatched away by God from the present earthly realm to another reality where he heard things spoken that he did not understand because of the different, i.e., eternal (?) language being used. Is this “paradise” the parallel universe of the eternal realm? God took Paul out of the story of this realm and transferred him into the story of the parallel realm (?). It seems to make sense that this is the realm in which Jesus resides now and from which he will return to this earth when he sets up the millennial kingdom and thereby restores the Kingdom of Israel.

²⁴⁹ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιοῦτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἐμαντοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις – Is Paul really not talking about himself, or is this a way of humbly saying that authentic belief leads a person to value weaknesses, especially moral weaknesses, in the present realm, as opposed to strengths, because, in the final analysis, it is on the basis of our moral weaknesses and not any of our strengths that God independently provides us with His grace and mercy? Yes, and Paul wants to brag about nothing which he has done in and of himself (like the false apostles), but he brags about only what God has done in the midst of his moral and personal weaknesses.

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

²⁵¹ καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων, διὸ ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι – God gave Paul, who understands biblical theology better than anyone in history except Jesus, a constant reminder in the form of pain/suffering (?) that the present realm and he are characterized by adversarial hostility towards God, so that Paul owes every good thing that will come from this existence, especially his own eternal salvation, to God alone

and not to himself. Notice that he says twice, “in order that I might not have an undue sense of my self-importance.” Paul knows that he is not only important as the one and only apostle to the Gentiles, but also a morally depraved human being, who will tend to feel that he deserves God’s and others’ accolades. Thus, his importance comes only from the fact that God has loved him and revealed Himself to him.

If it were not for God’s predestined choice of Paul and His gracious work of changing his heart within him, Paul would still be one of the most, if not the most, enthusiastic opponents of God and Christianity.

²⁵² ὑπὲρ τούτου τρίς τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστή ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ – Paul admits that suffering is undesirable and naturally leads to appealing to God to remove it. Even he did this in the midst of knowing how wonderful is the theological knowledge which God has given him and how prone to arrogance and self-righteousness he is.

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

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

While the false apostles are bragging about their apparent strengths and successful accomplishments in the eyes of the world, Paul chooses to brag about his actual weaknesses, even moral weaknesses (cf. Romans 7), and God’s powerful work of grace and mercy of producing belief, pursuit of morality, and pursuit of fulfilling his role as the apostle to the Gentiles that are miracles in the midst of his moral weaknesses and moral depravity.

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

²⁵⁵ γέγονα ἄφρων, ὑμεῖς με ἠναγκάσατε. ἐγὼ γὰρ ὄφειλον ὑφ’ ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων εἰ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμι – Paul sarcastically blames the Corinthians and their allowing themselves to be influenced improperly by the false apostles for his having to brag about his apostleship. Instead, the Corinthians should have recognize just how important he is as the apostle to the Gentiles, even though he is an undeserving morally depraved human being just like them, indeed, someone who persecuted Christians and threw them into jail, something he is probably still embarrassed about, and which leads him to call himself a “nobody.” Indeed, he is not inferior to the false apostles but superior to them because through he is a greater sinner than he is in his own mind because of his former hostility towards God and Christianity.

²⁵⁶ τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατεργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν – With miracles God demonstrated through Paul the authenticity of his apostleship, that should have been very obvious to the Corinthians and stuck with them through the time when these false apostles were trying to influence them away from Paul and his message—and they were not performing miracles as proof of their apostleship.

²⁵⁷ τί γὰρ ἔστιν ὃ ἠσώθητε ὑπὲρ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐκκλησίας, εἰ μὴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν· χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην – The false apostles must be saying that Paul did not really care about the Corinthians because he did not charge them for his services to them, while they claim he did charge other Christian communities because he received financial support from them. In reality, Paul never “charged” these other gatherings of Christians for his services. He merely taught the gospel, and the people rightly concluded that Paul deserved to be supported by them.

In contrast, Paul genuinely did not want to burden the Corinthian Christians financially and graciously communicated to them that they need not support him financially. Sarcastically, he asks them to forgive him for thus “mistreating” them, i.e., for mistreating them by not acting like the false apostles, who have demanded the Corinthians support them, which somehow has translated in the Corinthians’ minds to the false apostles being genuine in contrast to Paul.

²⁵⁸ ἰδοὺ τρίτον τοῦτο ἐτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ οὐ καταναρκήσω· οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς, οὐ γὰρ ὀφείλει τὰ τέκνα τοῖς γονεῦσιν θησαυρίζειν ἀλλὰ οἱ γονεῖς τοῖς τέκνοις – Paul uses the naturally understood concept of parents’ providing for their children, rather than the other way around. Paul considers himself the Corinthians’ Christian parent, not laborer. Thus, he does not demand the Corinthians pay him. He does not want their money. He wants them to be authentic Christians. This is in spite of the fact that the laborer is worthy of his wages (cf. 1 Corinthians 9 & 10).

And whenever Paul returns to Corinth, it will be the third time that he has visited them—first during his 2nd missionary journey of A.D. 50-54 and second sometime during his 3rd missionary journey of A.D. 54-58.

²⁵⁹ ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν. εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶ, ἥσσον ἀγαπῶμαι – Paul is willing to give up his life for the sake of the authenticity of the Corinthians’ belief and never receive anything financial from them. Does not this demonstrate that he loves the Corinthians more than the false apostles do? It should even though the false apostles are trying to convince them otherwise. And does it make sense that they love him less than they love the false apostles, which they have improperly done by their paying them for their work? Not at all.

²⁶⁰ ἔστω δέ, ἐγὼ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς· ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχων πανούργος δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον – The false apostles are intimating that Paul is a wily deceiver, because he does not charge for his labor as an apostle. It must be for them that the only good apostle is an apostle who expects and even demands that his wages to be paid—*quid pro quo* materially. It is not that it is completely wrong for an apostle to be thought worthy of his work, as Paul has explained in 1 Corinthians 9 & 10, but the gospel of God’s grace is too gracious to demand that people pay for it, or even to hint that a person “should” be paid for his work as a Christian laborer, especially if there is going to be misunderstanding about the reason for the payment and the message of grace being given. If being paid for his apostolic work is in people’s minds the basis for thinking that his apostleship is legitimate, then Paul has no desire to be paid.

²⁶¹ μὴ τινα ὧν ἀπέσταλκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐπλεονέκτησα ὑμᾶς – Probably unlike the false apostles, Paul has not required that his co-workers such as Timothy, Titus, and others collect payment for their and his services to the Corinthians. In Paul’s mind, this would be to “take advantage,” i.e., undue advantage, of his position and role as an apostle and of his co-workers’ position and role as his helpers in this gracious task. God has graced Paul with the role of proclaiming the gospel, and Paul graces this message to people without demanding that he be paid for it.

²⁶² παρεκάλεσα Τίτον καὶ συναπέστειλα τὸν ἀδελφόν μῆτι ἐπλεονέκτησεν ὑμᾶς Τίτος; οὐ τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι περιπατήσαμεν; οὐ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἴχνεσιν – Paul wants to know if Titus and he have acted the same way toward the Corinthians, i.e., in an undemanding way. This is clearly a rhetorical question. Certainly, neither Paul nor his apostolic workers have even hinted at demanding to be paid for their work in order to preserve the integrity of the message of God’s grace.

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

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

²⁶⁴ φοβοῦμαι γὰρ μὴ πως ἔλθὼν οὐχ οἴους θέλω εὔρω ὑμᾶς κἀγὼ εὐρεθῶ ὑμῖν οἷον οὐ θέλετε· μὴ πως ἔρις, ζήλος, θυμοί, ἐριθεία, καταλαλιά, ψιθυρισμοί, φησιώσεις, ἀκαταστασία – One option is that Paul is concerned that the false apostles have so captured the Corinthians’ hearts that they will end up in conflict with Paul when he comes, that they will be convinced that he should be different and like the false apostles, while he believes that they should be different and like authentic believers who appreciate the apostolic message of God’s grace that Jesus himself brought. Thus, Paul implies that error results in pride, conflicts, and confusion, while truth results in genuine love and care for one another as fellow believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Another possibility is that Paul is concerned that the erroneous ideas of the false apostles will result in mistreatment by the Corinthians of one another, like leaven spreading through the dough. The outward, religious focus of the false apostles’ message is right in line with out natural, sinful tendency as human beings to compete with one another, resulting in strife, envy, etc. This option seems more coherent with the next verse. In addition, certainly Paul would not engage in slanderous exchanges with the Corinthians. Nor would he personally pursue gossip and prideful feelings. These are the result of a human being’s moral depravity acting in conjunction with a focus on an outward, religious system such as the Mosaic Covenant.

²⁶⁵ μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντος μου ταπεινώσῃ με ὁ θεός μου πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ πενθήσω πολλοὺς τῶν προσημαρτηκότων καὶ μὴ μετανοησάντων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελείᾳ ἣ ἔπραξαν – The false apostles’ legalistic message of earning God’s favor through obedience to the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant must be providing room for the Corinthians to continue with various acts of evil rather than repenting of them in the light of the true message of God’s grace. In other words, unbelieving Judaism, whether with the Christian twist of believing in Jesus as the Messiah or not, is not a good help against man’s immorality—certainly not like the authentic, Christian message. Plus, it can become an excuse to sin if people feel that they are doing enough for God by performing some kind of outward religion instead of focusing on authentic love and moral purity toward people. This certainly seemed to be the case in OT Israel, that as long as they were bringing their offerings and sacrifices to God in the temple, they were pleasing Him enough that they could pursue all sorts of evil in the other parts of their lives.

²⁶⁶ Τρίτον τοῦτο ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥήμα – cf. Deuteronomy 19:15, רָבִיבִים יִקְרָאוּ וְיִשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־שְׁנֵי אֲדָמָיִם אִם־יִשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־שְׁנֵי אֲדָמָיִם (LXX – ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ ἐπὶ στόματος τριῶν μαρτύρων σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥήμα). Paul considers his third visit to correlate with the Mosaic Covenant’s requirement that there be two or three witnesses to corroborate the facts of a situation. His third visit will mean that he has his facts straight about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians. Either they are for the NT message, or they are against it. He will be able to tell which is the case when he visits them for the third time.

²⁶⁷ προεῖρηκα καὶ προλέγω, ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεῦτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν ἵ, τοῖς προσημαρτηκόσιν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν, ὅτι ἐὰν ἔλθω ἔρις τὸ πάλιν οὐ φείσομαι – Whenever Paul shows up again in Corinth, he will treat his apostolic responsibility with all seriousness and identify immorality where he sees it in the midst of the Corinthians’ adhering to the incorrect message of the false apostles, just as he did during his first and second visits to Corinth. The biblical message is all about rescuing human beings from God’s eternal condemnation that results from their moral depravity and rebellion against God, which means that it would be inconsistent to condone or even overlook immoral behavior in anyone who claims to want this rescue to occur for him.

²⁶⁸ ἐπεὶ δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος Χριστοῦ, ὃς εἰς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἀσθενεῖ ἀλλὰ δυνατεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν – Even the false apostles must be encouraging the Corinthians to seek out proof the Messiah in Paul, and he is saying that the proof will be in his identifying their immorality just as Jesus would, especially in the midst of God’s powerfully working within them to move them toward truth, morality, and salvation—hopefully. For the false apostles, their “proof” is in their outward performance of the Mosaic Covenant. In contrast, for Paul, his proof is within him, i.e., his message and his pursuit of morality.

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

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

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

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

²⁷³ οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθα τι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας – Nevertheless, Paul and Timothy know that they are compelled to act in obedience to the biblical and truthful message, because God has commissioned solely Paul with the responsibility of being the apostle to the Gentiles. And God will remain faithful to this commissioning of Paul. But this also should be the case for even non-apostolic Christians, that we all would live only for the truth and not against it.

²⁷⁴ χαίρομεν γὰρ ὅταν ἡμεῖς ἀσθενῶμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ δυνατοὶ ᾗτε· τοῦτο καὶ εὐχόμεθα, τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν – Paul and Timothy are not concerned about looking good in the world’s eyes, but they are concerned about the strength of the Corinthians’ (and other believers’) belief for the sake of their maturing and becoming more resolved so that they persevere in their belief to the end of their lives and acquire eternal mercy and life. Therefore, even if Paul and Timothy look weak to the world in the midst of their fulfilling the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel, as long as the Corinthians are growing stronger in their belief and following Jesus as the Messiah, this is what really matters to Paul and Timothy.

²⁷⁵ διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα ἀπὸν γράφω, ἵνα παρὸν μὴ ἀποτόμος χρήσωμαι κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἣν ὁ κύριος ἔδωκέν μοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν – Paul has already admitted that the Corinthians are basically correct in their assessment of him that that his letters are stronger than his personal presence. As long as this is the case, Paul does not mind at all that this letter be strong enough to correct their belief and encourage them to avoid the false teachers and their teaching, so that he does not have to exercise his authority fully as an apostle when he comes to visit them for the third time. The sooner the Corinthians correct their thinking about the gospel, the better, and Paul much prefers this happen while he is away from them than when he comes to Corinth, which also would be in direct contrast to the strategy and methodology of the false apostles.

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

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

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