

2 Corinthians 8-13 Ep 220



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2 Corinthians – Introduction

Timothy's visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:10) apparently did not have much effect on the situation that 1 Corinthians deals with. Paul was very concerned about their response to 1 Corinthians and to Timothy's visit. In addition, men who claimed to be apostles came to Corinth and denied Paul's apostleship and authority. At least one believer accepted their arguments and turned against Paul, urging others to do the same. This so troubled Paul that he left Ephesus and went to Corinth for a brief, unsuccessful, unpleasant visit (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1–2). He promised to return (2 Cor. 1:16), but decided to postpone his visit lest it cause even more pain (2 Cor. 1:23; 2:3; 13:2). Back in Ephesus he was in danger of his life (2 Cor. 1:8–11). He then wrote a severe letter "out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8), sending it to them by Titus.

After the riot in Ephesus, he left for Macedonia (Acts 20:1) by way of Troas (2 Cor. 2:12–13). He was so disappointed when he did not meet Titus there as expected, that he did not minister there, even though he had opportunity. So he went on to Macedonia. There he did meet Titus, who encouraged him with news of repentance on the part of most of the believers in Corinth. The church as a whole were again responsive to Paul's apostolic authority and had dealt with the man who was causing the trouble (2 Cor. 2:5–11; 7:5–13).

Paul's joy over this news and his continuing concern over the troubles of the church prompted him to write 2 Corinthians, probably from Philippi (see 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15). In it he defends his ministry and apostleship, encourages the Corinthians to finish raising funds for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and warns against false apostles. He also prepares them for his third visit. The letter was sent by Titus (8:6), probably in A.D. 56.¹

¹ Stanley Horton, *I & II Corinthians: A Logion Press Commentary*, Logion Press, 1999, p. 94. Horton's date here is up for debate among scholars. Not everyone agrees as to when Paul wrote this letter. [The Encyclopedia Britannica](#) dates this letter to 55 A.D. Richard Lloyd Anderson puts 1 Corinthians at 57, thus having 2 Corinthians coming after this letter. See: [New Testament: Sperry Symposium Classics](#), "Paul's Witness to the Historical Integrity of the Gospels," Deseret Book, 2006. I see dating this letter as problematic for a few reasons, one of which has to do with the proposed disunity of this letter. Several challenges have led commentators to consider the possibility that 2 Corinthians is a compilation of multiple pieces of correspondence. The mention of a "sorrowful letter" in 2:4, which does not align with the content of 1 Corinthians, indicates that Paul had written at least three letters to the Corinthians. It is reasonable to suggest that the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians (chapters 10-13) contain the mentioned "sorrowful letter."

2 Corinthians 8-9: Paul's Financial Request of the Corinthian Saints

In the context of fostering unity between Jewish and Gentile churches and addressing genuine poverty, Paul finds himself in the position of requesting funds, which is something he had been careful to avoid in his own ministry (see 1 Cor. 9.17-18). This makes his message in these two chapters difficult for him, as it is a contrast with his previous message, and must have been a challenge for him as he seems to desire to maintain consistency in his approach with the believers in Corinth. Previously, Paul had informed the Corinthians about the need for financial support for some other members (1 Cor. 16.1-3), but some of the people in Corinth may have perceived Paul's words as inconsistent. Some of the saints in Corinth had hoped that Paul would accept payment like a typical philosophical teacher, rather than supporting himself as a lower class craftperson² (see 2 Cor. 12.13-14)³. By aligning himself with the poor within the congregation, Paul took the risk of alienating the wealthier individuals who held artisans in disdain. To address these concerns and defend the collection, Paul provides a defense in chapters 8-9.

Paul's request to the Corinthian saints in 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9 revolves around a collection he is organizing for the hardship-stricken believers in Jerusalem. Many scholars refer to this as "The Jerusalem Donation." This collection was desperately needed to help the hungry saints in Jerusalem survive the famine that was happening there at that time.⁴ This collection that Paul is working on is actually

Additional evidence supports this perspective. Edgar J. Goodspeed highlights certain factors that indicate disunity in 2 Corinthians. He observes that chapters 1 to 9 convey a sense of harmony, reconciliation, and comfort, while chapters 10 onwards delve into personal misunderstandings and bitterness that persist until the end. This incongruity strongly suggests the presence of two letters instead of one: a conciliatory and gratifying letter in the first part, and an injured and incensed letter in the second part. Considering that the early section of 2 Corinthians references a painful and regretted letter, it is plausible that this letter is actually contained within chapters 10 to 13. See: Edgar J. Goodspeed, [An Introduction to the New Testament](#), University of Chicago Press, 1936, p. 58-59. Craig Keener also examines the disunity of the text and the scholarly analysis in his work [1-2 Corinthians](#), Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 146-151. After his examination of the arguments, Keener takes the position that 2 Corinthians is a unified work, stating "I currently favor reading the entire letter as a unity, but my conclusion and the situation it implies... remain a minority view. Because differences between the two major sections are not in dispute, one's conclusion depends on how heavily the burden of proof rests on specific hypothetical reconstructions (such as partition) or on those defying scholarly consensus (such as advocates of unity). I believe that the Ockham's Razor principle of the simplest solution warns against finding interpolations and additions without clear evidence."

² We read in Acts 18 about Paul: ἦσαν γὰρ σκηνοποιοὶ τὴν τέχνην "For they were skilled tentmakers." By this period, the term translated "tentmaker" was also applied to leatherworking in general; scholars debate which is intended here. Leatherworkers were artisans; Paul could have also carried his leatherworking tools from city to city. Artisans were typically proud of their work, despite the long hours they had to invest to succeed, and were higher than peasants in status and income; but they were despised by higher classes, who thought most labor with one's hands degrading. Keener, Background, p. 379.

³ 2 Cor. 12.13-14 can be translated as "How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children."

⁴ The largest, and indeed the only, attested fundraising effort by Early Christians was the Pauline churches' mass collection known as the 'Jerusalem Donation'. Some commentators see the germination of this collection in Paul's letter to the Galatians. This letter is dated between AD 48—two years after the famine began to be felt in Judea—and the early 50s, perhaps 53, meaning that potentially this germination began to take place just a few years after the famine began in Jerusalem. See: Daryn Graham, "[The Genesis of the Jerusalem Donation](#)," Themelios, Vol. 45, Issue 1, accessed 6.22.23.

discussed in several places in the New Testament, and once readers are clued in to what is happening historically, these passages have more meaning and help us to understand what Paul is really talking about. This collection spanned the course of years of Paul's missionary efforts, and was something which Paul was even prepared to die for. Paul knew that if he went back to Jerusalem, that there were individuals there who sought to kill him, and he was willing to risk it to help alleviate their suffering. Some of the references to Paul's "Jerusalem Collection" are as follows:

Acts 21.17-20: Paul brings the Jerusalem donation to the elders there to relieve their suffering during the famine:

And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

Acts 24.17: Paul explains that he came to deliver the funds:

Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

Romans 15.14-31: Paul explains that he has a service that needs to be accepted by those in Jerusalem:

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another... But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem...

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

1 Corinthians 16.1-4: Paul tells the saints in Corinth to donate to the Church that is suffering in Jerusalem:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

He urges the Corinthians to demonstrate generous and sacrificial giving, drawing inspiration from the example of the Macedonian churches. He reminds them of their previous commitment and stresses the principle of equality, encouraging them to share from their abundance to support those in need. Paul emphasizes the importance of a willing and eager attitude in giving, assuring the Corinthians that God will bless them abundantly for their generosity. Ultimately, his request is for the Corinthians to actively participate in the collection with a heart of compassion and a recognition of the communal responsibility to support fellow believers.

Keener explains the request of the saints in Corinth:

Paul is eager to avoid the charge of charlatany (2:17; 4:2), and has refused to take money for himself (11:7–9; 12:16–18). Some of the Corinthians want to be his patrons or benefactors; but Paul is their benefactor (6:10; 12:14), and will allow them to be benefactors only for the needy of the Jerusalem church (9:12–13). Given the recent conflicts with the church, Paul is extremely cautious and gentle (cf. 10:1) in how he raises support for the collection in chapters. 8–9.

He thus avoids direct references to “money,” while offering a wide variety of terms that function as synonyms in Greco-Roman administrative documents, or terms that define the collection in terms of ministry. The collection is “grace” (*charis*, 8:1, 4, 6–7, 19; 9:14), modeled on that of Jesus (8:9) and the Father (9:8, 15). (Greco-Roman administrative texts also use *charis* for benefactors’ generosity, as well as for the gift itself and the beneficiary’s gratitude; cf. 8:16; 9:15.)... Paul uses the conventional rhetorical strategy of comparison (*synkrisis*), in this case competition, to spur the Corinthians to action (8:1–8, esp. 8:8). The proximity between Macedonia and Achaia made them natural rivals, and civic pride and rivalry were endemic in the Empire (cf. Acts 21:39).¹³¹ In this period such competition usually involved more friendly banter than hostility... Paul notes the sacrificial giving of the impoverished Macedonians (8:1–5) and invites Achaia to do likewise (8:6–8). Apparently before the conflict between Paul and the Corinthian church, he also boasted of Achaian zeal for the collection to the Macedonians (8:24–9:2); now he is anxious to ensure that the Corinthians follow through, lest he and they be embarrassed by the Macedonian delegation (9:3–4; cf. 8:11). Thus, he sends Titus back to make sure everything is in order (8:6; 9:5; cf. 8:16–23).



Although Philippi was relatively prosperous and Macedonia’s economy had been growing, the prosperity failed to affect most of the poor, many of whom were unemployed. Much of the urban proletariat depended on benefactors’ generosity for the grain dole.¹³³ Whether the Macedonian Christians’ poverty (8:2) is related to their persecution is unclear, but we know that they did face persecution (1 Thess 2:14; 3:4; Phil 1:29–30); their “affliction” is described much like Paul’s (cf. 1:8; 4:17; 6:4). Whatever its cause, it

provides a useful foil to the Corinthians’ own situation: they are not persecuted, and some are wealthy enough that their city would expect them to be benefactors at least on a small scale (see esp. Rom 16:23)...

Although the Corinthians committed themselves to this offering before the Macedonians did (some time in the past eighteen months, 8:10), after his conflict with them Paul has some reason for anxiety as to whether they are ready (8:6, 11; 9:3). Because he has Titus’s verbal report, his anxiety probably in fact indicates knowledge that they are not yet ready, though Titus must believe that they can still be prepared if encouraged (8:16–17). Many inscriptions honor benefactors for not merely pledging but “completing” an obligation.⁵

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians: New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 202-204.

2 Corinthians 8-9

I. Introduction

A. Context of the collection for the believers in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

B. Paul's purpose in writing about the collection (2 Corinthians 8:5)

II. The Example of the Macedonian Churches

A. Commendation of the Macedonian churches' generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)

B. Despite their own poverty, they gave willingly and beyond their means (2 Corinthians 8:3)

C. Encouragement for the Corinthians to follow their example (2 Corinthians 8:7)

III. Reminders of Commitment and Equality

A. Paul reminds the Corinthians of their previous commitment to participate in the collection (2 Corinthians 8:10-11)

B. Emphasis on the principle of equality in giving (2 Corinthians 8:13-15)

C. The goal is not to burden one group while relieving others, but to create fairness and support (2 Corinthians 8:14)

IV. Willing and Generous Giving

A. Paul urges the Corinthians to give willingly and with a generous spirit (2 Corinthians 9:5)

B. Giving should come from the heart, not out of compulsion or obligation (2 Corinthians 9:7)

C. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)

V. God's Blessings and Gratitude

A. Assurance of God's abundant blessings for generous giving (2 Corinthians 9:8-11)

B. Thankfulness to God resulting from the Corinthians' act of giving (2 Corinthians 9:12-15)

C. The impact of their generosity on the recipients and the glory it brings to God (2 Corinthians 9:13)

VI. Defense of the Collection and Addressing Concerns

A. Addressing potential objections or concerns about the collection (2 Corinthians 8:20-21)

In a culture obsessed with shame and honor, Greco-Roman writers were quick to emphasize that leaders and other beneficiaries of the public trust must be open and of irreproachable moral credentials.

Judaism also stressed that charity collectors must act irreproachably to prevent even false accusations.

Verse 21 echoes the Septuagint of Proverbs 3:4 and the proverbial saying that grew out of it. Jewish teachers stressed doing what was good in the sight of both God and people. The term in 8:21 translated

“intend” (nrsv), “providing for” (kjb) or “have regard” (nasb) applied in inscriptions to benefactors’ foresight; sometimes this involved sending honorable representatives.⁶

B. Paul defends the consistency of his actions and intentions (2 Corinthians 8:22-23)

C. Clarification of his identification with the poor, risking alienation from the wealthy (2 Corinthians 8:9)

VII. Conclusion and Encouragement

A. Closing remarks on the importance and impact of their participation (2 Corinthians 9:12-13)

B. Encouragement to complete what they had started with enthusiasm (2 Corinthians 9:2)

C. The significance of their support in strengthening the unity of the church (2 Corinthians 9:14)

2 Corinthians 10: Paul’s Authority

The main message of 2 Corinthians 10 is centered around Paul's defense of his authority as an apostle and his admonition against false teachers who were undermining his authority and spreading false teachings among the Corinthians. In this chapter, Paul addresses the accusations and challenges made against him, asserting his spiritual authority and the legitimacy of his ministry. He emphasizes the use of spiritual weapons rather than relying on worldly methods to combat opposition, highlighting the power and authority that comes from God. Paul's intention is to assert his apostolic authority, restore the Corinthians' confidence in him, and protect them from false teachings.

I. Introduction

A. Addressing challenges to Paul's authority (2 Corinthians 10:1-2)

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. (2 Cor. 10.1-2 KJV)

This passage may be a bit confusing. Another translation renders it thus:

I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away! I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards (2 Cor. 10.1-2 Keener translation).

And I, Paul, myself, do call upon you -- through the meekness and gentleness of the Christ -- who in presence, indeed [am] humble among you, and being absent, have courage toward you, and I beseech [you], that, being present, I may not have courage, with the confidence with which I reckon to be bold against certain ⁷reckoning us as walking according to the flesh (2 Cor. 10.1-2 YLT).

Whether or not the final part of 2 Corinthians (Chapters 10-13) was originally part of the same letter, the break here is the most abrupt in the letter. Granted, Paul nowhere else begins a discrete section with

⁶ Keener, *Background*, p. 513.

“and I” (elsewhere such a phrase normally picks up in the middle of a thought); but Paul introduces a new train of thought here with no transition. He presupposes here an assault on his meekness when present, that is, his failure to carry through on his discipline threatened in letters (1 Cor 4:18–21; cf. 2 Cor 10:1–2, 10; 13:2–3; or other promises, cf. 1:17). That is, the reason for the new subject (as in 1 Cor 7:1; 12:1; 15:1) lies primarily in the situation rather than in Paul’s logic.

Going on the offensive was a standard part of defense speeches, pervasive in forensic rhetoric. Only portions of this section, however (those directed against the opponents, not the Corinthians), are pure invective rhetoric, the emotions of which were mostly hostile. Paul reserves the expression “I, Paul” (10:1) for emphatic remarks (Gal 5:2; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19; Col 1:23; Eph 3:1); the reflexive pronoun “myself” underlines it all the more.⁸ Paul is gentle toward them, and sent them a firm letter rather than disciplining them more harshly in person, only because he loves them (10:1–2, 9–11; cf. 1:23–2:1; 13:2–3, 10). They, however, view such gentleness as weak by the leadership criteria of their culture; in Paul’s language, they evaluate him by purely human standards (cf. 5:12, 16; 1 Cor 2:14–16; 4:3–5)... Paul’s reference to “human standards” (10:2–3) probably responds to Corinthian charges about his unreliability. Paul did not make his plans “according to human standards” (1:17; cf. 5:16); if he chose to spare them a harsh visit for their sake (1:23–2:1), this did not make him timid (10:1)! By contrast, his accusers do boast according to human values, as he will demonstrate (11:18). Far from being weak as alleged (cf. 10:1–2), Paul is powerful, but for fighting the Corinthians’ false ideas, rather than for being harsh with the Corinthians themselves (10:4–6); his authority was only to build them up (10:8). Paul’s weapons and warfare are not human (cf. 10:2–3)... This is not Paul’s first use of military imagery in his Corinthian correspondence (2:14; 6:7; 1 Cor 9:7); he used it often (Rom 13:12; 1 Thess 5:8; cf. Phil 2:25; Phlm 2; Eph 6:10–20). Because the obstacles oppose “the knowledge of God” that also appears in God’s (military) triumphal procession (2:14) through the gospel (4:6), Paul may be thinking about knowing God’s character through the message of the cross.⁹

II. Spiritual Warfare and the Use of Spiritual Weapons

A. Rejecting worldly methods and embracing spiritual weapons (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

B. The power and authority derived from God (2 Corinthians 10:4-6)

C. Demolishing arguments and taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

III. Paul's Authority and Ministry

A. Asserting his apostolic authority, Paul blasts his accusers in Corinth (2 Corinthians 10:7-8)

Paul here may be attacking his unnamed opponents in Corinth. He writes: εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι τοῦτο **λογιζέσθω** πάλιν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ **οὕτως καὶ** ἡμεῖς Χριστοῦ “If any man trusts that in *his mind*¹⁰ that he is of Christ, **he must recalculate** this again, in order that as he is of Christ, **even so** we are of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10.7b, my translation)

⁸ Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος “And I Paul, myself” (2 Cor. 10.1a).

⁹ Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, p. 216-217.

¹⁰ I have rendered εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ “if anyone trusts to himself” as someone thinking in their mind. The idea of “mind” here in the Greek is implied in my opinion. I am working to render a plainer translation to the modern reader.

According to Paul's accusers, they proclaim themselves as servants of Christ (10:7). However, Paul counters their claim by asserting that he too is a servant of Christ, and later he goes on to assert that he is even more dedicated (11:23) while implying that they are actually serving Satan (11:13–15). Moreover, Paul emphasizes that if necessary, he is capable of boasting further (10:8; compare with Philippians 3:4), as he substantiates through his actions.

B. Addressing accusations of weakness in person and powerlessness in writing (2 Corinthians 10:9-11)

“That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10.9-10).

Paul's (literally) “bodily presence” (kjv, nrsv) was unimpressive; socially respectable speakers were strong in their appearance, gestures and intonation, as well as having the right Greek accent Unfortunately, Paul was a better writer than public speaker.¹¹

“Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present” (2 Cor. 10.11).

Philosophers and Jewish teachers often contrasted words and deeds; deeds weighed more heavily. Even if Paul was an inferior speaker, his life backed up everything he said.¹²

C. Affirming his authority to build up and not tear down (2 Corinthians 10:8)

IV. False Teachers and Their Influence

A. Warning against false apostles who distort the truth (2 Corinthians 10:12-15)

2 Cor. 10.12-15 alternate translation:

10:12: We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. 10:13: We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. 10:14: For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ. 10:15: We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged.¹³

Paul's use of the term "some" may align with the common practice in ancient literature of concealing opponents through anonymity. Employing the rhetorical technique of "comparison," Paul ridicules his adversaries, highlighting their foolishness in attempting to compare themselves with themselves. In Greek culture, higher-class patrons typically wrote commendation letters for socially inferior clients, but in certain circumstances, individuals had to promote themselves. Self-commendation was acceptable if done discreetly, yet Paul portrays his opponents as ostentatious, a behavior frowned upon in Greek society.

¹¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 516.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, p. 215.

B. Differentiating between those who commend themselves and those approved by the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17-18)

V. Conclusion and Exhortation

A. Boasting only in the Lord and not in human achievements (2 Corinthians 10:17)

B. Encouraging the Corinthians to remain steadfast and obedient (2 Corinthians 10:6, 15)

2 Corinthians 11: Paul warns the Corinthians of False Teachers

The main message of 2 Corinthians 11 revolves around Paul's concern for the Corinthians' vulnerability to false apostles and their deceptive teachings. In this chapter, Paul defends his apostolic authority, exposes the deceitful tactics of these false teachers, and highlights the genuine hardships he has endured in his ministry. He warns the Corinthians about the dangers of being led astray by false apostles and encourages them to remain steadfast in their commitment to Christ. The overarching message is a plea for the Corinthians to discern the true apostolic ministry and to remain faithful to the authentic Gospel message that Paul had preached to them.

I. Introduction

A. Concern for the Corinthians' vulnerability to false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:1-4)

“The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (2 Cor. 11.3).

There have been many negative presentations of Eve throughout history.

[Ben Sira 25.24](#), for example, claims:

“With a woman sin had a beginning, and because of her we all die.”¹⁴

1 Timothy 2.13-14 reads:

“For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Ben Sira, also called Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach, is a book that resembles the Book of Proverbs in many ways, although it is nearly twice as long and provides practical advice on how to cope with daily life. Ben Sira, the wise and sage teacher, instructs younger students on how to become wise. This book is an anthology of many short proverbs and practical subjects and was very influential on the early Christian Church and was translated into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic. Many of the Greek and Latin Church fathers quoted directly from Ben Sira in their sermons and commentaries. This text was written before Jesus in either the first or second century BCE. See: Jeff Anderson, *The Internal Diversification of Second Temple Judaism*, University Press of America, 2002, p. 151-152. Anderson gives an approximate date of “late first century B.C.E.” while others suggest a date of approximately 200-175 BCE. See: [Book of Sirach, Wikipedia](#). See also Margaret Finley, “[The Amazing Book of Sirach](#),” Catholic Answers. Accessed 6.26.23.

¹⁵ Many scholars have laid out persuasive arguments for 1 Timothy to have been written by another author coming in a much later time than Paul. Some of their arguments deal with the language of the text, as well as how key terms such as “faith” and “works” were used in 1 Timothy in ways that Paul did not use them. The author of 1 Timothy is also dealing with different issues in a different historical situation than what Paul faced. Scholars point out that these letters seem to reflect a more developed ecclesiastical structure and hierarchy, which is believed to have emerged later in the early Christian communities. Additionally, certain theological concepts found in the

In the text *The Life of Adam and Eve*, which dates from the turn of the Common Era, Eve willingly confesses that she, not Adam, sinned first:

Eve said to Adam: "Long may you live, my lord to you is my life submitted, since you did not take part in either the first or second collusion. But I conspired and was seduced, because I did not keep the commandment of God. Now separate me from the light of this life. I will go to the west and I will be there until I die. She then began to walk toward the western regions and began to wail and weep bitterly with great moaning. She made there a dwelling, being three months pregnant. ([Life of Adam and Eve](#) 18.1-3)

On the other hand, other sources indicate that Adam is the chief culprit introducing sin into the world. The Book of 2 Esdras¹⁶ lays the charge to Adam, but also adds that both good and evil exist inside Adam's heart:

And yet tookest thou not away from them a wicked heart, that thy law might bring forth fruit in them. For the first Adam bearing a wicked heart transgressed, and was overcome; and so be all they that are born of him. Thus the disease was made permanent; and the law was in the heart of the people along with the evil root; so that the good departed away, and the evil abode still. ([2 Esdras 3.20-22](#))

In the book of 2 Baruch, Adam is held responsible for the origin of sin in the world. However, the text introduces a qualification by acknowledging that human beings had genuine freedom of choice and willingly participated in their actions. This perspective implies that while Adam is attributed with the initial act of sin, individuals were not coerced but exercised their own volition in making choices. It reads:

For though Adam first sinned, and brought untimely death upon all, yet of those who were born from him. Each one of them has prepared for his own soul torment to come, and again each one of them has chosen for himself glories to come. For assuredly he who believeth will receive reward. ([2 Baruch 54.15-16](#))

One scholar notes that the difficulty of the issue regarding Adam and Eve and the origins of sin:

"Early Christians grappled with thorny issues. The New Testament addresses the origins of human sinfulness with ambivalence. On the one hand, Eve is the first to succumb to the Devil's wiles, while on the other hand sin's actual entrance into the world is through the man, Adam. Thus, the blame falls on both Adam and Eve... The book of Romans adds:

Pastorals, such as the qualifications for church leaders, appear more developed and specific compared to Paul's other writings. For a brief overview of these arguments, see: Bart Ehrman, [Forged: Writing in the Name of God – Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are](#), HarperOne, 2011, p. 96-105.

¹⁶ 2 Esdras, also known as 4 Esdras, Latin Esdras, or Latin Ezra, is an apocalyptic book found in certain English versions of the Bible. According to tradition, it is attributed to Ezra, a scribe and priest from the fifth century BCE. However, based on scholarly analysis, its composition is believed to have occurred between 70 and 218 CE. While 2 Esdras is considered part of the apocrypha by Roman Catholics, Protestants, and the majority of Eastern Orthodox Christians, it was excluded by Jerome from his Vulgate translation of the Old Testament. However, starting from the 9th century, the Latin text began to appear sporadically as an appendix to the Vulgate, and its inclusion became more widespread after the 13th century.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5.12, 18)¹⁷

I would add to these ancient texts the writings of Lehi. I see father Lehi as a Jew who clearly not in agreement with the establishment among the powerful Jews in the 6th century during the reforms of Josiah. I see Jacob's words reflecting a divergent Jewish opinion regarding Adam and Eve. In 2 Nephi 2 Lehi writes:

And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth... And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men care, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2.17-19, 22-25)

However one reads these words in 2 Corinthians reading Eve, we must remember that she represents all women as Adam represents all men. We also need to read 2 Corinthians 11.3 through the lens of Restoration texts like 2 Nephi 2 and the recent changes in the temple to see how things "really are" regarding Eve, women, and all of humanity. In the text of Genesis, Eve can be interpreted as symbolically representing all of humanity. Some interpretations suggest that Eve's role can be understood as representing one aspect of humanity, specifically the physical or embodied nature of human beings. This perspective highlights the idea that Eve's actions and experiences reflect the inherent connection between the body and the human experience. By seeing Eve as a representation of the physical aspect of humanity, it allows for a deeper exploration of the complexities and challenges inherent in the human condition.

Suzanne Evertsen Lundquist writes:

Traditional interpretations of Genesis 1-3 have had a powerful impact on the lives of men and women, and, for the most part, these interpretations come from negative misreadings. Any review of the criticism available on the Adam and Eve story would require a seminar. Indeed, universities such as Princeton offer a semester's study of Adam and Eve literature. Biblical scholars everywhere are revising, literally giving a new vision to, the meaning of the text. Those

¹⁷ Jeff Anderson, [*The Internal Diversification of Second Temple Judaism*](#), University Press of American, 2002, p. 184-185.

looking for the correct version will be at a loss to find it. Even within the Latter-day Saint faith, there are four (Genesis, Abraham, Moses, and the endowment text); each, however, illuminates the others in very meaningful ways. Perhaps this is what the Savior did when He expounded "all the scriptures in one." (3 Nephi 23:14.) Through proof-texting, comparing the available sacred literature written by Saints from the beginning, Christ was able to help the Nephites come to more correct notions about the nature of mortality. The familiar rabbinic formula for such exegesis would be: "you have heard it said, . . . but I say unto you. . . ." (See Matthew 5.) During Christ's ministry on earth, He was constantly turning His audience to correct interpretations of familiar, standard works.

believe this same spirit of correction is moving many twentieth-century men and women to reevaluate the Adam and Eve story. This reappraisal is a result of the fact that, among other things, the notions of patriarchy, the origins of evil, and the nature of male-female relationships stem from this narrative. As both men and women move towards new understandings of what it means to be whole (a creation partaking in Gods' image), the idea that the Gods created woman to be ruled over by man, that she is a secondary creation, is no longer acceptable. Nor is the notion that Eve's seduction (with all the attending sexual overtones) was an experience exposing womankind's weakness for the flesh. What, really, did Eve do? What transgression did she make that requires repentance? Why is what happened to Eve in the Garden an event we ritually repeat in order to move towards salvation? As Carl G. Vaught so rightly suggests, "the quest for wholeness moves in two directions": "forward toward a larger, more inclusive unity [and] back to the origins of our individual existence."...

Despite the Savior's redemption of mankind from the Fall, and from the notions that men and women are punished for the sins of Adam and Eve, the New Testament epistles reflect typically negative attitudes towards women. In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns the early-day Saints: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3.) Paul also appears to uphold the implications of the Genesis narrative by claiming that "the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." (1 Corinthians 11:8-9.) Timothy claims: "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." (1 Timothy 2:12-15.) This is an offensive image of women; these scriptures even cause anger, frustration, and loss of self-esteem among righteous women.

In his book, *The Image*, Kenneth Bolding warns modern man that "behavior depends on the image." 15 If cultures and societies have become inured to the negative image of Eve and of women, what behavior can be expected from women? How can each woman continue to strive when she is seen as an appendage to man? What woman wants to be expendable, used, controlled, defined by men who seem unable to discern her spirit, men who are essentially, biologically, emotionally, and spiritually different from her?

In one of *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, Adam and Eve are outside Eden in a dark cave. There is some humor in the work. Adam assumes that earth life will be lived in blackness. He is

overwhelmed by the thought and cries out to the Lord. The Lord, however, gently explains to Adam that he is merely enduring what is called night; in twelve hours, day will come. In this same passage, however, a very telling exchange occurs between the Lord and Adam. Adam explains:

"For, so long as we were in the garden, we neither saw nor even knew what darkness is. I was not hidden from Eve, neither was she hidden from me, until now that she cannot see me; and no darkness came upon us, to separate us from each other. . . . [N]ow since we came into this cave, darkness has come upon us, and parted us asunder, so that I do not see her, and she does not see me."

Is this what the Fall, in part, is really about? Is this the pain of mortality: that men and women cannot see each other? Are we failing to understand the very essence of the male and female relations the Lord intended?¹⁸

B. Paul's desire to present the Corinthians as a pure bride to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2)

II. Defense of Paul's Apostolic Authority

A. Warning against accepting a different gospel or a different Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

Elder Maxwell said, "John and Paul both bemoaned the rise of false Apostles (see 2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). The Church was clearly under siege. Some not only fell away but then openly opposed. In one circumstance, Paul stood alone and lamented that 'all men forsook me' (2 Tim. 4:16). He also decried those who 'subvert[ed] whole houses' (Titus 1:11).

¹⁸ Suzanne Evertsen Lundquist, "The Repentance of Eve," [As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences](#), Deseret Book, 1989. Her entire message is powerful. Her concluding remarks are worth entering here: The story of the Garden of Eden, as far as the man and woman are concerned, is a metaphor of great significance. There we are instructed how to become one flesh. Hugh Nibley explains the tale as a metaphor for a condition of checks and balances that must exist in male-female covenant relationships. Adam is to obey Christ as Eve is to obey Adam, through covenant. The discrimination being made here is not as evident as interpreters have indicated. Adam seems to be given a superior, legislative position in relationship to Eve with the words "rule over." The phrase, however, is modified by a qualifier: "in righteousness." Dr. Nibley explains that Adam and Eve are to "supervise each other. Adam is given no arbitrary power; Eve is to heed him only insofar as he obeys their Father—and who decides that? She must keep check on him as much as he does on her." The law of opposition, so necessary to creation and completion, finds powerful definition in this episode. Knowledge, wisdom, Godhood become possible only through relationship, through the resolution of contraries. In conclusion, I can say that in my experience with creation stories, one character must adhere to the given pattern—all of the commandments—while the other character challenges the pattern. This is part of the law of opposition. And Adam and Eve are symbols for this essential order in the universe. Throughout Genesis, this reality is made manifest. Abraham, in his desire to keep the law of the firstborn, chooses Ishmael to inherit the covenant blessings; Sarah challenges that rule because she understands the spirit of the law and Isaac's ability to fulfill the covenant. The same holds true in the case of Esau and Jacob. The Pharisees are perfect examples of men's using God's laws without understanding their intent. Man is not saved by law, especially when it is used to burden, abuse, and suppress. When God commanded that Adam and Eve not partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, He allowed first man and first woman to become accountable for their choices, He established agency and the opportunity for us to create our own natures in God's complete image. *In love, we can journey to the Tree of Life, hand in hand, with divine connections, in relationship.*

"Some local leaders rebelled, as when one, who loved his preeminence, refused to receive the brethren (see 3 Jn. 1:9-10). No wonder President Brigham Young observed: 'It is said the Priesthood was taken from the Church, but it is not so, the Church went from the Priesthood' (in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:69)."¹⁹

B. Emphasizing his genuine calling as an apostle (2 Corinthians 11:5)

C. His "rude" speech (2 Corinthians 11:6)

Rhetoric was important in Greco-Roman society, including in Corinth. By skilled rhetoric a speaker showed that he was educated and truly worthy of being heard by the well-to-do. Philosophers, however, stressed their genuine knowledge rather than others' persuasive speech; Paul appeals to the ideal of knowledge to defend himself. Speakers would sometimes concede a secondary weakness to emphasize a more important strength. Paul's statement that he is "unskilled in speech" (nasb) need not mean that he is a terrible speaker; even the best speakers played down their oratorical skills to lower audience expectations (e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 12.15). He seems to have been accused of inadequate rhetorical skill by others, however; his writings attest a higher level of rhetorical sophistication than possessed by most people of his day, but no matter how hard he worked at it, he did not have the early rhetorical training of an aristocrat, and some elements of delivery would not come to him as naturally as they might to others.²⁰

D. Boasting as a necessary response to the false apostles' boasting (2 Corinthians 11:16-21)

III. Exposing the Deceitful Tactics of False Teachers

A. Unmasking the false apostles as servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)

"And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about" (2 Cor. 11.12, Keener translation).

Paul presents a rationale behind his boasting, aiming to silence his adversaries who falsely assert themselves as equals (2 Cor. 11.12). In the ancient world, it was considered acceptable to boast in order to silence such rivals. Another justification for boasting could be the removal of any excuses for failing to follow one's advice. Similarly, Paul denies his opponents an opportunity to criticize him in 2 Corinthians 11.12. These opponents claim to be on the same level as Paul, boasting about their apostleship (2 Cor. 11.13), and yet they do not endure the same sacrifices and sufferings as he does. In Greek literature, there existed a category of fools who were oblivious to their own limitations and engaged in excessive self-praise.

"Transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ... Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11.13-14).

In some Jewish traditions Satan disguised himself as an angel or in other ways (e.g., as a beautiful woman to some rabbis or as a beggar to Job's wife); Judaism regarded Satan as a deceiver. Although Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 do not in context refer specifically to Satan (against a common view today), a

¹⁹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "From the Beginning," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993.

²⁰ Keener, *Background*, p. 517.

large body of Jewish tradition taught that Satan and other evil spirits were originally angels who had fallen in Genesis 6:1-3.²¹

Joseph Smith taught:

“If Satan should appear as one in glory, who can tell his color, his signs, his appearance, his glory-or what is the manner of his manifestation? Who can drag into daylight and develop the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latter-day Saints? We answer that no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which spirits are governed; for as 'no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God,' so no man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God, together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb, which are so characteristic of his proceedings and his mysterious windings. A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God.”²²

B. Highlighting their deceptive tactics and manipulations (2 Corinthians 11:20)

IV. Paul's Endurance of Genuine Hardships

A. Recounting his sufferings and trials in ministry (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)

Boasting in his Suffering

Aristocrats typically boasted in their heritage, their accomplishments and so forth; but they did not normally boast in their sufferings. For example, the emperor Augustus boasted at length of his exploits (in his famous *Res Gestae*), though never his setbacks. Some philosophers listed the sufferings they endured as a model for emulation. (In other contexts, lists of sufferings could prove one's devotion to another cause; e.g., generals boasting of what they suffered for the state; in romance novels, lovers recounting what they had suffered for their beloved.) But those who list sufferings to prove endurance do so to boast in their strength, not in their weakness. For Paul, if one boasts, one should boast in the values of the kingdom (10:17), humbling oneself for God's honor.²³

B. Demonstrating his commitment to the gospel through his endurance (2 Corinthians 11:23-33)

Comparing Joseph Smith to Paul

Brother Richard Lloyd Anderson taught:

“Joseph Smith also proved his sincerity by sacrifice. Writing to the Church during unfair arrest attempts that kept him in hiding in and out of Nauvoo for months, he also looked back: 'The envy and wrath of man have been my common lot all the days of my life ... and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation.' (D&C

²¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 517-518.

²² *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Alma P. Burton, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 113.

²³ Keener, *Background*, p. 518.

127:2.) Indeed, although the Prophet didn't summarize all his trials, any historian could easily take Paul's format and adapt it to Joseph Smith's life, as Joseph himself did in Liberty Jail in alluding to his lifetime burdens. (See D&C 122:5) For instance, a number of times professing Christians leveled guns at him with the threat of death. Once he was beaten, tarred and feathered, and left unconscious. Twice he was endangered by stagecoach runaways when on the Lord's business. He took back roads and waded through swamps to escape his enemies. He endured years of inconvenient travel on land for the kingdom, as well as risking many steamboat journeys on waterways. He faced years of unjust legal harassment, which made his own home unsafe, and he was imprisoned for a long winter in a filthy jail on unverified charges. Through all, he maintained the responsibility of leading the Church, worrying, praying, and planning for the welfare of his family and his fellow Saints.

Why did Paul and Joseph Smith do these things? Because they positively knew the truth of the gospel, the Resurrection, and the Judgment. Joseph explained that his lifelong persecutions for telling his visions made him feel 'much like Paul. ... [T]here were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise ... though they should persecute him unto death ... So it was with me.' (JS-H 1:24-25.)"²⁴

2 Corinthians 12: Being made perfect in weakness

The main message of 2 Corinthians 12 revolves around Paul's personal experiences of a divine revelation and his understanding of God's grace in the midst of his weaknesses. In this chapter, Paul shares his account of being caught up to the third heaven and hearing ineffable words. However, he also mentions a thorn in the flesh, a physical affliction that humbled him. Through this, Paul highlights the concept of God's power being made perfect in weakness and his reliance on God's grace. He emphasizes that boasting in weaknesses allows the power of Christ to rest upon him. The overarching message is the recognition of human frailty and the sufficiency of God's grace, ultimately demonstrating that true strength is found in surrendering to God's power rather than relying on one's own abilities.

I. Introduction

A. Reference to Paul's vision and revelation of the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

2 Cor. 12.1 Greek: *Καυχᾶσθαι* δὴ οὐ συμφέρει μοι· ἐλεύσομαι γὰρ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου. “*To boast*, really is not profitable to me. I will come into the visions and revealed *mysteries* of the Lord” (2 Cor. 12.1, my translation).

To me (Mike Day), this verse sets up the rest of the chapter. Paul is talking about his experiences, his visions, but he is not going to say that it is his personal experience. But he wants to emphasize that he has had visions, I believe to make his case stronger against those he is against and has been railing against in the previous chapter.

B. Acknowledgment of the potential for boasting but emphasis on the necessity of humility (2 Corinthians 12:5)

²⁴ Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Parallel Prophets: Paul and Joseph Smith," *Ensign*, Apr. 1985.

II. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

A. Mention of a thorn in the flesh given to Paul to keep him from becoming conceited (2 Corinthians 12:7)

In 2 Corinthians 12.7, Paul mentions having a "thorn in the flesh," which refers to a personal affliction or hardship that he experiences. The exact nature of this "thorn" is not explicitly stated in the text, leaving it open to interpretation and speculation. Throughout history, there have been various interpretations and theories regarding what the thorn in the flesh might represent. Some of the commonly suggested possibilities include physical illness, a specific temptation or struggle, opposition from adversaries, or even a metaphorical representation of a spiritual or psychological affliction.²⁵

B. Paul's plea to the Lord to remove the thorn (2 Corinthians 12:8)

C. The Lord's response, highlighting the purpose of the thorn and the sufficiency of His grace (2 Corinthians 12:9)

III. Boasting in Weakness

A. Paul's acceptance of weakness and his delight in boasting in his weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

B. Acknowledgment that in weakness, God's power is made perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9)

C. Paul's determination to boast in his weaknesses to exalt the power of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

IV. Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

A. Fear of the Corinthians misunderstanding his boasting (2 Corinthians 12:11)

B. Reiteration of Paul's credibility and the demonstration of signs, wonders, and miracles among them (2 Corinthians 12:12)

C. Paul is not what the Corinthians want or expect, but is what they need (2 Corinthians 12.13)

For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. (2 Cor. 12.13 KJV)

The affluent members of the Corinthian community desire an apostle who aligns with their expectations of a morally upright professional teacher. They wish for Paul to cease his labor and rely on their financial support, essentially becoming their dependent or client (refer to 1 Corinthians 9.18). However, Paul tactfully avoids falling into the hands of this influential faction within the church. Instead, he chooses to accept support from other sources.²⁶ In a somewhat ironic tone, he responds by saying, "Forgive me!" as a way of highlighting the absurdity of their expectations and maintaining his independence.

²⁵ For a thorough survey, see Margaret Thrall, [2 Corinthians](#), T&T Clark, 2001.

²⁶ In the New Testament, there are several instances that suggest Paul received financial support from others. Some of these instances are:

1. Philippians 4.14-18: In his letter to the Philippians, Paul expresses gratitude for their financial support. He acknowledges that they were the only church to share in his ministry by sending him financial assistance on multiple occasions.

D. Expressing his desire for the Corinthians' spiritual growth and unity (2 Corinthians 12:19-21)

V. Paul's request for financial help of the poor and ailing Jerusalem Church (2 Corinthians 12:16-18)

Let it be assumed that I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? (2 Cor. 12:16-18, Keener translation)

Speakers sometimes challenged their detractors to prove any wrongdoing on the speakers' part (e.g., 1 Sam 12:3-5; Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 21.47). The same people who criticize Paul for not accepting their support—so their faith could appear more respectable to their social peers—also apparently accept his opponents' arguments against his offering for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8–9). Occurring this close to the end of Paul's argument, his request for funds for the poor may have been at the center of his opponents' accusations against him: this Paul would not accept your support when it was socially appropriate, but now he wants money to help others you do not know!²⁷

VI. Final Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

A. Preparation for Paul's upcoming visit to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:14)

B. Exhortation to examine themselves and seek reconciliation (2 Corinthians 12:20-21)

2 Corinthians 13: Examine Yourself

The main message of 2 Corinthians 13 centers around Paul's final exhortation and warning to the Corinthians regarding their spiritual condition and the need for self-examination. In this chapter, Paul emphasizes the importance of living in accordance with the truth of the Gospel and demonstrates his apostolic authority. He encourages the Corinthians to examine themselves to ensure that they are truly in the faith and to repent from any sinful behavior. Paul warns them of the consequences if they persist in unrepentance and urges them to strive for restoration and unity. The overarching message is a call to genuine repentance, a reaffirmation of Paul's authority as an apostle, and a plea for the Corinthians to embrace godly living and pursue reconciliation among themselves.

I. Introduction

A. Paul's intention to visit the Corinthians for the third time (2 Corinthians 13:1)

B. Reiteration of his authority as an apostle (2 Corinthians 13:2-3)

II. Exhortation to Self-Examination

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2. 2 Corinthians 11:8-9: Paul mentions receiving support from other churches while in Corinth. He states that he took financial assistance from them in order to serve the Corinthian church without charge, avoiding burdening them financially.
 3. Acts 18:3: When Paul arrived in Corinth, he joined Aquila and Priscilla, who were tentmakers by trade. This suggests that Paul engaged in his tentmaking occupation to support himself while ministering in Corinth.
 4. Acts 16:1-3: Paul met Timothy in Lystra and decided to take him along on his missionary journeys. Timothy's family background suggests that they may have provided financial support for Paul's ministry.

²⁷ Keener, *Background*, p. 521.

A. Encouragement for the Corinthians to examine themselves to ensure their faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)

B. Emphasis on the need for self-reflection and repentance (2 Corinthians 13:5)

III. Paul's Desire for the Corinthians' Restoration

A. Expressing his hope that the Corinthians will do what is right (2 Corinthians 13:6)

B. Praying for their restoration and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 13:7-9)

IV. Warning and Consequences of Unrepentant Behavior

A. Warning against tolerating wrongdoing and false teachings (2 Corinthians 13:10)

B. Indicating the consequences if the Corinthians persist in unrepentance (2 Corinthians 13:2, 10)

V. Final Exhortation and Benediction

A. Encouragement to pursue what is good and seek reconciliation (2 Corinthians 13:11)

B. Closing remarks with a prayer for the Corinthians' spiritual growth and peace (2 Corinthians 13:11-14)