



2 Corinthians - Chapter Two

- I. 2 Corinthians 1:1-7:16 - Paul's Defence of His Legitimacy as an Apostle (continues)
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Summary of Chapter Two

Paul concludes his reasoning for his change of plans by outlining the need for him not to come to them again at that time. He speaks of the letter that he wrote disciplining them for their attitude towards him and their lack of action against those stirring up trouble against him. As their apostle, Paul was acting out of love for Corinth and not for any desire to have power over them.

However, he is also clear that those who needed to be disciplined by the church for their actions should also be reconciled in love. It is the corporate responsibility of the church to punish wrongdoing, to excommunicate in the case of persistent sin and to reinstate the repentant.

Instead of travelling back to Corinth, Paul went instead to Troas to minister there. This change of plan was in response to the changing situation in Corinth and Paul's overwhelming desire to avoid causing them any further pain. Instead of going personally, he had sent Titus to them and was awaiting his return before writing this letter to them ahead of a further visit by Paul. However, he cut short his ministry in Troas due to his concerns for Corinth, heading on to Macedonia to be reunited with Titus as soon as possible.

¹ So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained?

2 Corinthians 2:1-2

I made up my mind is literally 'I judged this for myself', indicating a settled and carefully weighed decision on Paul's part.

Painful visit. Before he wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, Paul had sent Timothy to Corinth in order to encourage them and to find out how they were progressing: *<<For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church>>* (1 Corinthians 4:17). This may have been in relation to the letter he had received from Corinth or the oral report he had received, both of which he addressed in 1 Corinthians. When Timothy returned to Paul, he reported that the church was in turmoil and many were rebelling against Paul's apostolic authority and teaching. Paul immediately went to Corinth but met with such a hostile reception that he decided to withdraw rather than inflame the situation further, which would have caused them additional pain. This is the background to vv.1-2 and what follows.

If I cause you pain. Paul had clearly applied church discipline that had not been well received and yet it is biblically based, for God often disciplines his children: *<<Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you>>* (Deuteronomy 8:5), and: *<<My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights>>* (Proverbs 3:11-12). God expects his anointed church leaders to act appropriately, no matter what personal anguish that may cause, just as it did to God: *<<How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath>>* (Hosea 11:8-9).

³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you.

2 Corinthians 2:3

I wrote as I did refers to a letter written between 1 and 2 Corinthians that is now lost. Since it appears that its content was strongly worded concerning what Paul had encountered in Corinth, it is quite likely that it was destroyed shortly after it was received.

There are some claims that this third letter that Paul wrote has been appended to 2 Corinthians, his fourth letter to them, and forms chapters 10-13. However, there is no evidence to support this and most scholars accept 2 Corinthians as a single document, as did the early church fathers.

I might not suffer pain. So intimately was Paul's own happiness bound up with theirs that he refrained from coming until it would be a time of gladness and nurture for both parties. Paul had been clearly hurt by the attitude of the church on his recent visit. The problem was mainly caused by outsiders who had come in

opposition to Paul (v.6), and those who were ‘puffed up’ with their own self esteem: <<*I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, ‘Nothing beyond what is written’, so that none of you will be puffed up in favour of one against another*>> (1 Corinthians 4:6).

I am confident about all of you. Despite the severe problems that Paul had encountered in Corinth, he had not given up hope of retrieving the situation and once again stabilising the church that he loved. Paul expressed similar confidence in others: <<*I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty*>> (Galatians 5:10), <<*And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:4), and: <<*Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say*>> (Philemon 21).

⁴ For I wrote to you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

2 Corinthians 2:4

Paul wrote them a severe letter out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears. *Thlipsis* (distress) and *synoche* (anguish) are virtual synonyms for personal pain brought about by oppressive circumstances. Here, they refer to the deep emotional turmoil that Paul experienced as he wrote this letter to the Corinthians, very much like the anxiety a parent feels when faced with the prospect of exercising discipline.

As an expression of his love, the letter called the Corinthians to repentance in no uncertain terms: <<*For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly). Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us*>> (2 Corinthians 7:8-9).

Love, which stands in an emphatic position in the clause, is the primary reason he gives for writing. It is all too easy to allow personal feelings to get in the way of ministry. But this was not the case with Paul. He could have used this letter to vent his anger and disappointment with his spiritual children. Instead, he saw past his own pain to what was required from the pastoral standpoint.

I.c.ii 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 - Forgiveness for the Offender

The majority in Corinth had expressed their repentance by punishing the leader(s) of the rebellion against Paul. Paul now calls them to follow his own Christ-like example toward them by extending mercy to the offender(s), lest Satan have his way once again in the church.

⁵ But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent – not to exaggerate it – to all of you.

2 Corinthians 2:5

If anyone has caused pain, he has caused it, to all of you. Paul could have named the perpetrator(s) of the dissent but with good pastoral love he simply makes his statement generic by writing anyone. Such dissent in the church is painful for the church is the body of Christ. Therefore, if one member feels pain then all feel it: *<<If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it>>* (1 Corinthians 12:26).

⁶ This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; ⁷ so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

2 Corinthians 2:6-7

Punishment is most likely excommunication from the fellowship of the church, just as Paul had recommended in the case of the man who had slept with his father's wife: *<<When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord>>* (1 Corinthians 5:4b-5).

The person or people in view here though are probably the Corinthian leader(s) of the opposition against Paul, not the offender from 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, as is often suggested, since the content of the sin was different.

You should forgive and console him indicates that the action against such a person has been effective in bringing them to repentance for any wrongdoing. The purpose of such discipline should always be correction and not punishment, for that could cause them to be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. That is, the individual concerned should not be driven to consuming guilt or to an over-preoccupation with his own sin. They should certainly never be driven away from their faith in Jesus!

Paul's style of writing seems to imply that the church initially did not take any disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) of the animosity against him that had caused pain and division in the church. Following his tearful letter it then seems as if some of them had reacted too severely in the disciplinary action they subsequently took. Paul is calling for discipline to be corrective not punitive, and always administered in genuine love for all.

⁸ So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything.

¹⁰ Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:8-10

I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. They may be required to remove those responsible from a position of influence for the benefit of the church or from the

whole fellowship. However, they are still to reach out to them in a spirit of reconciliation. This is a theme that Paul consistently wrote about: <<*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted*>> (Galatians 6:1), <<*and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you*>> (Ephesians 4:32), and: <<*Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive*>> (Colossians 3:13).

The verb to reaffirm, Greek *kyrosai*, means to confirm or ratify. It was commonly used in Paul's day with regard to a will, treaty, law, decree, bill of sale or other legal document coming into force. Paul was probably thinking of a public reinstatement as a means of reassuring the individuals of the congregation's love. That they are to confirm their love for them shows that Christian discipline is always intended to be remedial, never merely punitive. The Corinthians had to be reminded of this. However, it is not so different today. Many churches have equal difficulty knowing when to discipline and when to forgive.

To test you. Paul needed to see whether the church would repent of their ways and turn again to the Gospel teaching they had received. If they did so they would prove that they were indeed obedient in everything.

This is not obedience to Paul as a power-seeking individual, it is obedience to God and Christ in accordance with the Gospel that Paul had faithfully taught.

Anyone whom you forgive is a positive statement showing that Paul expects the church to accept his advice. By going on to say I also forgive, Paul puts into practice what he is teaching. He is as much a member of the body as they are and believes in the principles he is laying down for them, which he qualifies by it has been for your sake. He also understates the seriousness of the offense in his qualification if I have forgiven anything.

Forgiveness is a key grace in the Christian life. It is also a two-way street: by releasing the other person from guilt, people release themselves from being crippled by the other person's actions. In Paul's case it seems that he can actually forgive and forget! It also shows the calibre of person one is dealing with when reading Paul. It demonstrates the astonishing standard he is setting for the community that follows Jesus, then and now.

Instead of *aphiemi*, the customary word in the Gospels for forgiveness, Paul uses *charizomai*, which means to give freely and so to forgive on the basis of one's gracious attitude toward a person. Christians are to forgive because they have been forgiven: <<*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*>> (Matthew 6:14-15), <<*So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart*>> (Matthew 18:35), and: <<*Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive*>> (Colossians 3:13).

Paul offers his own forgiveness in the presence of Christ. At the start of his defence he invoked God as a witness to his wanting to spare the church further pain by a return visit (1:23). Now, as he concludes this part of his argument, he calls on Christ as a witness to the genuineness of his forgiveness of those who had caused him pain on the previous visit. Paul's personal forgiveness of an individual who had deeply hurt and publicly humiliated him provides an important model both for the Corinthians and for the church today. It is a further reminder of what Jesus teaches his disciples about forgiveness: <<***And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial***>> (Luke 11:4).

Paul was only too aware that what the church did and does today is in the presence of Christ, i.e. under his watchful gaze. The church has to remain focused on the overall story of the Gospel, rather than a single instance in time, by not avoiding discipline for the sake of avoiding upset, and not being too harsh in its discipline, potentially losing people from the faith in doing so. Both of these actions diminish the witness of the church in the world, much to Satan's delight as seen in the next verses.

¹¹ And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 Corinthians 2:11

We may not be outwitted by Satan. Outwit is *pleonekteo*, and means to take advantage of someone with the intent to cheat or exploit them. Inappropriate levels of discipline can provide Satan with just the foothold into the life of a congregation that he covets. During his temptation in the wilderness, Jesus showed how Satan should be dealt with: <<***Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him"'***>> (Matthew 4:10). Ultimately, victory over evil was won on the Cross. Yet its overwhelming message was love and that is what Paul expects the Corinthians to show in any action the church may take.

The Greek is literally, 'we are not unmindful of his mind', which in the case of Satan is a scheming, plotting mind. What kind of plotting is in view? It is possible that Paul was thinking of how Satan can take advantage of the disciplinary process to alienate a person from the church or even from Christianity. The presence of the plural, that we may not be outwitted suggests, however, that the whole congregation is in mind. Paul could well be thinking of how Satan can take advantage of an unforgiving, overly legalistic attitude to sow division and dissension in the church.

Satan's designs are to destroy the mutual forgiveness, love and unity that is meant to characterise God's people as those who have been reconciled to God through Christ: <<***Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour***>> (1 Peter 5:8); refer also to 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2. In this way, Satan aims to dishonour God's own glory revealed in Jesus as the Son of God: <<***For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not 'Yes and No'; but in him it is always 'Yes.' For in him every one of God's promises***>>

is a 'Yes.' For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen', to the glory of God>> (2 Corinthians 1:19-20).

I.c.iii 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 - Paul's Anxiety in Troas

These paragraphs mark a turning point in Paul's argument as he shifts his attention from the past to the present. They explain some of Paul's actions behind writing 2 Corinthians (vv.12-13), then later 7:5-16, and reintroduce the main theme of the letter (vv.14-17).

¹² When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³ but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

Troas was a major Aegean port city 14 miles or 23 km south of ancient Troy, and the primary Asian harbour for ships destined for Macedonia. Founded as Antigonía in 334BC, it was renamed Alexandria Troas in 300BC in honour of Alexander the Great. The harbour of Troas is still visible, although it is silted over. Ongoing excavations at the site of Troas have yielded a pagan temple and an adjacent agora or marketplace from the time of Paul. Although not very distant in nautical miles, Macedonia was a different part of the world, for it lay in Europe. Strabo, a 1st Century geographer, called Troas one of the notable cities of the world.

Paul came to Troas after he left Ephesus for Macedonia in anticipation of meeting up sooner with his co-worker and brother in the faith Titus, whom he had sent to Corinth to present his 'tearful letter' (vv.3-4). Despite the receptivity for the Gospel in Troas, a door was opened for me in the Lord, when Titus failed to show up, Paul's spirit was not at rest, i.e. my mind could not rest, a reference to his inward anxiety over the welfare of Titus and the church in Corinth: <<*For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way – disputes without and fears within. But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more*>> (2 Corinthians 7:5-7). This is yet another example of the emotional suffering Paul endured as an apostle: <<*And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches*>> (2 Corinthians 11:28).

My mind could not rest indicates that Paul was concerned, not just for Titus, but for the Corinthian church. Therefore, he cut short his ministry in Troas and headed for Macedonia earlier than planned. For Paul it was always a question of priorities to go where he was needed most, despite the evangelical opportunity that had presented itself to him in Troas.

The NT elsewhere mentions various feelings or perceptions experienced by a person's mind, heart or spirit, the nonmaterial part of a person, in effect the conscious self: <<*At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do*

you raise such questions in your hearts?>> (Mark 2:8), <<and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour>> (Luke 1:47), <<After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me’>> (John 13:21), <<While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols>> (Acts 17:16), <<it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God>> (Romans 8:16), <<And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband>> (1 Corinthians 7:34b), <<Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God>> (2 Corinthians 7:1), and: <<In this we find comfort. In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by all of you>> (2 Corinthians 7:13).

So I said farewell to them is literally ‘to take leave of’ and suggests a reluctant departure. The reference to them indicates that Paul was at Troas long enough to establish a church, or strengthen an existing one at least. His previous recorded visit there had only been brief, for he had a vision during his first night of the man from Macedonia calling him to minister there, so the next day they boarded a ship for Philippi. Refer to Acts 16:8-12.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Thanks be to God is a characteristic thanksgiving formula that, like 2 Corinthians 1:3, sets the tone and introduces the themes to come: <<*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (1 Corinthians 15:57), and: <<*But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have*>> (2 Corinthians 8:16).

The passage here marks a shift in emphasis in the letter and some believe that 2:14-7:4 was a later scribal insert to the original letter. However, there is no historical evidence for such an insertion and early church fathers accepted the letter, as it appears today, to be a faithful copy of the original written by Paul.

A look at the broader context of the letter shows that this kind of mood shift is part and parcel of Paul’s repeated emphasis on God’s ability to triumph over the frailties and fallibility of the Gospel preacher. God’s power is able to overcome any and all human weakness.

God, who in Christ is again affirmation of the deity of Jesus and the oneness of the Trinity: <<*Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’>> (John 14:9).*

Leads us in triumphal procession.

Most interpreters see this as a reference to the lavish victory parades celebrated in Rome after great battles. God is depicted as the sovereign victor, with Christ as the general leading the victory procession with Paul captured by Christ but now joyfully following after him. Images of such parades are still visible in some ancient works of art, such as in the reliefs on the late 1st Century Arch of Titus in Rome commemorating the emperor's victory over Jerusalem. See the images.

The picture here reflects a recurring theme throughout 2 Corinthians, namely, the contrast between the believer's apparent temporal defeat and the believer's actual spiritual victory. Refer to the supplementary material on the website.

Another view is that the triumphal procession is an expression of Paul's praise to God for leading him, like a prisoner in a Roman triumphal procession, into situations of suffering

such as he experienced in Troas. Thus through Paul's suffering God spreads the fragrance that comes from knowing him. This assertion indicates the personal relationship that comes from knowing Christ that leads believers to give off a fragrant odour to those around them.

The fragrance that comes from knowing him is an allusion to the pleasing aroma presented to God through sacrificial offerings: <<As a pleasing odour I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations>> (Ezekiel 20:41), <<and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God>> (Ephesians 5:2), and: <<I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God>> (Philippians 4:18). Refer also to the comments made on vv.15-16a.

Paul's point is that, as God's triumphal procession makes its way through the world following the victory of Jesus the Christ over death and sin, people like himself, who are in the procession, are wafting the smell of victory, the smell of triumph, to people all around. To those who are being grasped by the love and power of the Gospel and who are responding to it, the smell is sweet: it means victory, joy, hope and peace even in the middle of present troubles.



The Arch of Titus



A relief on the Arch of Titus

To those who are setting their faces against the Gospel and all that it means, the same smell reminds them that the victory God won in the Messiah means victory over all the forces that oppose his healing rule of justice and peace; in other words, that those who oppose are signing their own death warrant.

Comes from knowing him is about the knowledge of God that comes through knowing Christ: <<*The Father and I are one*>> (John 10:30).

¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ^{16a} to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

2 Corinthians 2:15-16a

Aroma, fragrance are taken by some as a reference to the incense spread along the streets during the triumphal procession. However, the terms used here are Greek *euōdia*, ‘a pleasant fragrance or aroma’ and *osmē*, ‘aroma or odour’, which can be either good or bad. They are used frequently in the Greek OT to refer to the aroma of a sacrifice pleasing to God: <<*And when the Lord smelt the pleasing odour, the Lord said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done*>> (Genesis 8:21), <<*Then you shall take them from their hands, and turn them into smoke on the altar on top of the burnt-offering of pleasing odour before the Lord; it is an offering by fire to the Lord*>> (Exodus 29:25), <<*but the entrails and the legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall offer the whole and turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odour to the Lord*>> (Leviticus 1:13), <<*and you make an offering by fire to the Lord from the herd or from the flock – whether a burnt-offering or a sacrifice, to fulfil a vow or as a freewill-offering or at your appointed festivals – to make a pleasing odour for the Lord*>> (Numbers 15:3). With Christ pictured as the primary sacrifice, Paul’s offering of his entire life to God: <<*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship*>> (Romans 12:1), and: <<*Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God*>> (Hebrews 13:15-16), including his suffering for the sake of Christ, can then be seen as an extension of Christ’s death in the world: <<*For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ*>> (2 Corinthians 1:5), as the aroma of Christ to God.

Among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. The world was once seen as divided between the Jews and the Gentiles, now it is similarly divided between those who have accepted the Gospel of Jesus and those who have not: <<*Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too’*>> (Luke 2:34-35), and: <<*Whoever*

believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath>> (John 3:36).

From death to death, from life to life. Some encounter Paul's life and message and dislike it, leading to their own condemnation. Others are attracted by the Christ-like beauty seen in Paul and his message, and they accept it, leading to their own reward of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

^{16b} Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

2 Corinthians 2:16b-17

Who is sufficient for these things? Who can rise to this challenge? Who can possibly live up to it? The implied answer clearly is 'no one'. Given the life and death nature of the Gospel, Paul is very aware that his competency as a Gospel teacher does not and cannot reside within himself but in God alone. The work of the Gospel, and the Christian life as a whole, can never be carried out on the basis of human ability or by human means. As Paul goes on to explain, **sufficiency** comes only **from God** by means of his grace.

Sufficient translates the Greek *hikanos*, which can also mean competent or qualified; the same term and its related noun occur three times in: ***<<Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life>> (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).*** There are further examples of equipping leaders, such as: ***<<But Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak'>> (Exodus 4:10-12),*** where God promised to equip Moses to accomplish the work that he had called him to do.

In contrast to his **many** opponents, some of whom at least demanded payment for their ministries, as if they were retail **peddlers of God's word**, refer also to 2 Corinthians 11:7-15 and 12:13-16, Paul's commitment to support himself brought with it many hardships: ***<<To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day>> (1 Corinthians 4:11-13), <<What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel>> (1 Corinthians 9:18), <<But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them – though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me>> (1 Corinthians 15:10), <<but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,***

beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger>> (2 Corinthians 6:4-5), and: <<*Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman – I am a better one: with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death*>> (2 Corinthians 11:23); as such it is yet another example of his willing, Christ-like suffering on behalf of his churches.

One of the criticisms that appears to have been made against Paul was his reluctance to take money for his work as an apostle. The travelling philosophers of the day made a good living from their proclamations and some doubted Paul's authenticity as Christ's representative because he was not like the others. Hence the statement we are not peddlers of God's word like so many.

It is not getting paid for teaching per se that is at issue. Paul argues at length in 1 Corinthians 9 for the right of the itinerant teacher to receive financial support, even though it was a privilege that he himself forwent. What he is concerned about is why one preaches the Gospel. The motivation of many was money. Like the Sophists of that era, there were many who showed more interest in lining their pockets than in preaching the truth. By doing so, they were, in effect, treating God's message like so much cheap merchandise.

We speak as persons of sincerity is Paul's response to the criticism and is the reason why he teaches the truth of the Gospel: <<*If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!*>> (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Standing in his presence. This is the highest accolade that can be afforded to any believer in Jesus, to be permitted into the very presence of God the Father. It is a place for both faithful servants and angels: <<*My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings to him*>> (2 Chronicles 29:11), <<*The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news*>> (Luke 1:19), and: <<*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing*>> (Jude 24).

Paul provides a warning to the Corinthians and to the church today that congregations are to give more heed to the message than they are to the art of delivering it!