

# Study 15: Review

## **Introduction**

This study is intended to provide a reminder and a readable summary of the whole letter.

## **Body of the Study**

**Introduction (Introductory study)**  
**Background, Date, and Occasion of the letter**  
**Key Introductory thoughts (Chapter 1)**  
**Defence of his conduct**  
**Our guarantee as christians**  
**Forgiveness of the offender (Chapter 2)**  
**Apostolic Ministry**  
**Commendation or Condemnation for Paul? – Chapter 3**  
**The apostles competency for service**  
**Supremacy of the New Covenant**  
**Our dwelling place – Chapter 4**  
**Paul’s motivation**  
**The Corinthian’s responsibility – Chapter 6**  
**Making the application**  
**The changes required – Chapter 7**  
**Concern for the situation in Corinth**  
**Conclusions on the matter**  
**The churches in Macedonia – Chapter 8**  
**The nature of the contribution**  
**The problem in Corinth – Chapter 9**  
**The cheerful giver**  
**Paul’s appeal – Chapter 10**  
**The nature of the battle**  
**Direct comparison to the “enemies”**  
**In contrast to the enemies - Chapter 11**  
**The “other” apostles**  
**Boast #1: Paul’s credentials**  
**Boast #2: His devotion to the Corinthians**  
**Boast #3: Comparing myself to them**  
**Boast #4: Paul’s life of sacrifice**  
**Visions and Revelations – Chapter 12**  
**Paul’s “infirmities”**  
**The undisputable evidence**  
**Putting things in order with the visit**  
**Prepare for the visit - (Chapter 13)**  
**Putting faith into action**  
**Final greetings**

## **Homework and preparation for next week:**

- Read the notes as a review of the study.

## Notes for study 15: Review

### **Introduction (Introductory study)**

Some things had changed as a result of the first letter, but things in the church are still not a pretty picture. The factionalism had still not been resolved, and the Judaisers had arrived and had tried to discredit Paul. The second letter is intensely personal, and at times the connections between the first and second letters are hard to make. Both letters are full of “*doctrine*”, and it is as if the lid were taken off the congregation so that we can look at what is happening inside.

Like the first letter, we can see just how Paul dealt with such situations, and how he approached the issues as the Corinthian church is again put under the magnifying glass.

### **Background, Date, and Occasion of the letter**

After his stay in Ephesus, Paul had planned to move on. He sent Titus to Corinth to correct the problems, and was expecting to meet him at Troas. However he changed his plans, and went into Macedonia first. He responds to the Corinthians criticism of the change in the second letter (2:1:15- 24).

He was feeling very uneasy at the time, not knowing how Titus had been received in Corinth, nor how the Corinthians had responded.

*“For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. <sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, <sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.” (2:7:5-7 NIV)*

He is still quite concerned about what was happening in Corinth, and why Titus had not joined him at Troas. He finds Titus either in Thessalonica or Philippi (my guess is Philippi), where he gets the report from Corinth, and immediately writes the second letter.

This puts the date of the letter as late AD 57 during Paul’s third missionary journey, and only about 6 months after the first letter.

Whilst Titus had been received well, things were still not as they ought to have been. The factionalism had not been resolved, and despite Paul’s previous instruction, they had failed to have the collection ready. In addition, the Judaisers had arrived and were masquerading as the apostles of Christ.

Paul then sends the second letter in response to the news from Corinth, giving instructions to them to sort out the matters before he arrived in person to sort them out himself.

### **Key Introductory thoughts (Chapter 1)**

The introduction (2:1:1-7) and the conclusion (2:13:1-14) provide us with an insight to the key things that Paul wants the Corinthians to learn and apply from the letter.

He writes as *an apostle of Christ Jesus (2:1:1)*, when the Corinthians had been *demanding proof that Christ was speaking through him (2:13:3)*. As an apostle, he *had not failed the test (2:13:6)*, and he could not do anything that was *against the truth, but only (those things that were) for the truth (2:13:8)*. If there was any doubt about who Paul was, they themselves knew full well that *the Lord gave him the authority (of an apostle) (2:13:10)*.

God is a *God of comfort and compassion (2:1:3)*. Despite *all our troubles we ourselves are comforted by God (2:1:4)*. Just remember *the sufferings of Christ (2:1:5) who was*

*crucified in weakness, yet He lives by God's power (2:13:4). Though some might think we are weak, we display the same kind of weakness and power as Christ (2:13:3-4).*

It is time for the Corinthians to *examine and test themselves (2:13:5)* as *this is the third time* that he has had to correct them, and *he previously gave them a second warning (2:13:2)*. Even though *God is a God of compassion and comfort (2:1:3)* Paul will not hesitate to set things in order and *will not spare those who sinned earlier* when he comes (2:13:2). The reason that *he is writing the letter is so that he will not need to be harsh in the use of his authority* when he comes in person (2:13:10).

The first letter opens with a stern reproof, whilst the second letter opens with a strong message of comfort. In the introductory verses, Paul mentions “comfort”, “suffering”, “compassion”, “trouble” or “distress” 17 times. His deepest concern (certainly at the time he wrote) would have been for the church in Corinth.

### ***Defence of his conduct***

The Judaisers had arrived on the scene, and proceeded to try to discredit him. Paul responds with an appeal to his behaviour whilst he was with the Corinthians. They had full knowledge of the circumstances, “...*we are not writing anything that you didn't already know...*” (my paraphrase of 2:1:13).

In response to the accusations about his fickleness, Paul responds with some details concerning his plans. They are obviously different to the ones that he outlined in 1:16:3-8. Paul's response is that plans are made, but that does not mean that they must be kept at all costs. Sometimes the circumstances change. Nor does it mean that the planning was done lightly. The Corinthians ought to have known Paul's commitment, and that he was not a person who would change his mind willy-nilly.

### ***Our guarantee as christians***

God has not left us wondering who we are. He has given us adequate and full assurance of our relationship with Him. God is a promise-keeper, not a promise-breaker. The relationship between Paul and the Corinthians (and Timothy and Silas) was established only through Christ. Without Christ, there would be no relationship. Christ had anointed (and appointed) Paul as an apostle. Whilst he had that assurance, the Corinthians also had a similar assurance – one that was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. The sealing of the Holy Spirit (like a king sealing a letter with his signet ring) provides a guarantee (a deposit or down payment) against our inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the deposit, and the final payment is our eternal salvation.

### ***Forgiveness of the offender (Chapter 2)***

In the first letter, Paul gave instructions to disciplining the man who was openly involved in an inappropriate sexual relationship. Immoral relationships might be common practice in the world but were not to be tolerated in the church. The man was to be disfellowshipped, to force him to make a choice of continuing his relationship with the woman, or his relationship with the brethren (and God).

The discipline had been implemented with the desired effect, and he had repented. “...*the punishment inflicted by the many is sufficient...*” (2:2:6). The problem was, what to do now? Apparently, they were not willing to forgive him. So, Paul instructs them “...*you ought rather to forgive and comfort him...*” (2:2:7). There was a danger that if they didn't take him back, he would turn back into sin. He was given a choice: The relationship with the woman, or the relationship with God's people. He had made the right choice, but if the brethren were closing off the relationship with God's people, then what choice would he have? It's obvious that he would (most likely) ventured back to where he had been.

Paul adds that we need to be mindful of how Satan works. If we do not help and support one another as brethren, then we feed the opportunities for him to act and “...take advantage of us...” (2:2:11).

### ***Apostolic Ministry***

Paul commences a lengthy discussion on apostolic ministry that will continue through chapter 7. He was elated at the news from Titus when he finally received it in Macedonia. It was as if it was a victory of triumph through Christ had been achieved.

Judging by Paul’s defense of himself throughout this letter we can infer that serious charges were levelled against him. Some were evidently accusing Paul of vacillating in his decisions (1:15-17); causing the Corinthians sorrow (2:2); not having appropriate credentials (3:1); being boastful (3:1-3; 10:15); restricting the Corinthians (6:12); being a coward (10:1, 10); being fleshly (10:2); not being an original apostle (11:5; 12:11, 12); demeaning himself and the Corinthians by working with his hands while amongst them (11:7-11; 12:13); being deceitful (12:16); and, perhaps, even intending to embezzle the funds being collected for Judea (8:20-23).

As an apostle his ministry was special, and totally focussed on Christ. Some regarded him Paul as an imposter, but those who really knew Paul knew things differently.

The definitive answer to the accusations is to look at what Paul taught, and his credentials. The contrast between the Judaisers and Paul (and the rest of the apostles) could not be stronger. Paul says “...*(we speak) as from God...in the sight of God in Christ...*” (2:2:17)

Anyone who knew Paul – and many (probably most) of the Corinthians did – would have no question of his motives or credentials! The miraculous gifts given through the laying on of Paul’s hands were the final proof. They ought then to listen to what he had to say.

### ***Commendation or Condemnation for Paul? – Chapter 3***

The Judaisers had brought with them letters of commendation from some (supposedly) of *reputation*, which gave them “credentials”. Paul needed no such letters. In fact, the Corinthians themselves could have provided such letters of reference to Paul!

The contrast between the Judaisers and Paul didn’t end there. They wanted to bind the Law of Moses, which was metaphorically represented by the writings tablets of stone. In contrast, the Law of Christ makes us free from such a law (the whole argument of the Roman letter). The Holy Spirit (and in this case, the miraculous manifestations which the Corinthians had) gives the assurance our salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice. He leaves it to the Corinthians to answer the obvious question of just how they managed to get the miraculous gifts. (Which came through the laying on of Paul’s own hands).

### ***The apostles competency for service***

The apostle’s relationship to Christ was not a self-commending one (as some of the Judaisers might have been suggesting). Rather, their ministry was one of service. Such service was given and demonstrated in the life of Jesus. It was Christ that motivated Paul, not self-motivation. The old and new covenants provide a contrast of Paul with the Judaisers. The contrast is further drawn between “...*the letter...*” (of the law that the Judaisers were insisting on) and “...*the Spirit...*” of which Paul was a minister, and he had imparted the gifts to them. The answer was plain and simple “...*the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life...*” (2:3:6 NKJV)

### ***Supremacy of the New Covenant***

“*The issue*” of the first century was whether you needed to be a Jew in order to be a christian. The Judaisers took the position that the Jews were God’s chosen people, and the Jewish religion was always God’s plan for reconciling people to Himself. Therefore, they

regarded christianity as just another sect of the Jews – if you want to become a christian, you have to first become a Jew! Almost every book of the New Testament touches on the issue from Acts onwards, particularly Romans and Galatians.

The Judaisers had arrived in Corinth, and were trying to bind the Law of Moses onto the christians. Paul brings a strong contrast between our freedom in Christ, and the bondage under the Old Covenant.

When Moses went up to the mountain to receive the Old Covenant, he was permitted to see the back of God whilst he was on the mountain. When he came down, his face shone so much that he needed to put a veil over it to protect the people because it was too bright for the Israelites to look at. In a direct comparison, the Israelites of Paul's day had the same kind of fuzzy understanding of the Old Testament. *"...until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament...even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart..."* (2:3:14-15 NKJV).

Whilst the Old Covenant was glorious, in relation to the New Covenant, there was no comparison between what Christ did, and what the Law offered (2:3:9-11).

To complete the irony, when Moses went into the presence of the Lord, he removed the veil. In exactly the same way, we enter into God's presence through Christ, and the veil is removed from our hearts.

### ***Our dwelling place – Chapter 4***

Even *"...if our earthy house, this tent, is destroyed..."* there is something better for us. Rather than a tent – a makeshift and temporary dwelling place, we have a building – something substantial and permanent – one that is *"...a house not made with hands..."*

The parallels of the transition from the Tabernacle (the temporary dwelling place of God during the wilderness wanderings) to the Temple (the permanent and glorious dwelling place in the promised land) cannot be lost. Yet, by comparison, this is nothing compared to the permanent home that God is preparing for us. Paul was between two homes – at home in the body where he could be of service to the brethren – and his eternal home with the Lord. We have a guarantee of our relationship with God, and the HS is given to us as that guarantee.

Paul was betwixt and between two desirous things – for him, the greatest desire was to die (probably be killed for the sake of the gospel) so that he could go to be with the Lord. However that would not be the best thing for the church. It was not just the brethren at Corinth who were strengthened by Paul's work, but all those who have read of his work over the centuries!

### ***Paul's motivation***

Regardless of the outcome of his sojourn on the earth, he had a very clear view of his ministry. It was totally summed up in *"...being well pleasing to God..."*

His motivation was also in recognition of the righteous and just judgement of God *"...for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ..."* We will face a true and righteous judge. We will have to give account of *"...the things done in the body...whether good or bad..."* (2:5:10).

The Corinthians could judge Paul's behaviour. It was *"...well known to God, and I also trust (we) are well known..."* to you.

He is responding to the criticism of the Judaisers trying to discredit him. The Corinthians had first hand knowledge of Paul, and ought to have had no doubts about his motivation.

In stark contrast to Paul's ministry and manner of life, the Judaisers were *"...glorying in appearance..."* whilst Paul's actions were totally motivated *"...from his heart..."* (2:5:12)

If the Corinthians rejected Paul, then they were rejecting God's workmen and His messengers. It would be a rejection of God. The work of reconciliation was done by Christ, and the apostles (including Paul) were ministers of that reconciliation. To reject Paul, was to reject Christ, and to reject Christ is to reject God's grace!

### ***The Corinthian's responsibility – Chapter 6***

As ministers appointed by God to do His work, the apostles delivered a message that had come straight from Him. In discharging his responsibility, Paul tried hard to make sure that no one was offended by his actions. Paul did not want to have the gospel suffer as a result of his ministry "...that our ministry will not be discredited..." (2:6:3 NIV)

In direct contrast to the blame and discredit that the Judaisers were levelling at him, Paul is able to give the self commendation as a faithful minister "...we commend ourselves as ministers of God..." (2:6:4 NKJV). He lists a range of trials and tribulations that he has gone through for the sake of the gospel.

It is not hard to imagine the tumults and sufferings that Paul has had to endure, and how those labours and tumults would have resulted in many sleepless nights! His fastings were often the result of the unavoidable hunger that came upon him because of his labour in the gospel. In contrast to the conditions that were thrust upon him, he exhibited personal qualities that were fitting of a minister of the gospel.

The Judaisers were saying that Paul's afflictions were a sign of his disapproval of God. However, the real driving force behind Paul was the power of God, and the manifestation of that power through the gospel (c/f Rom 1:16)

His ministry could be characterised by contrasts between the ways that he has been both accepted and rejected. Whilst some have accepted the things that he has done, others have rejected him for exactly the same actions. It presents a paradoxical contrast of his ministry.

### ***Making the application***

Paul now presses the application. The message is delivered "...with wide open hearts..." (2:6:11), not with a spirit of revenge or nastiness. The problem lies with them, not with the ministers of the gospel "...you are restricted by your own affections..." (2:6:12 NKJV) since they were the ones "...withholding affections from us..." (NIV).

Paul has not and will not be harmed by the actions that the Corinthians are displaying. He drives home the nail as he points out that they are the only ones who are being harmed by their actions. They need to change, and be open to change.

The Judaisers profess to be God's people, but their actions betray them! Paul says, *don't engage with them – come out from among them – don't be unequally yoked together*

### ***The changes required – Chapter 7***

The chapter begins with the bridge "...therefore..." – because – we have these promises – then – this is what our behaviour ought to be. It is not just physical changes that are required, but also spiritual changes in our lives.

The changes need to lead us towards God "...perfecting holiness in the fear of God..." (2:7:1 NKJV). Holiness means *separate* – we need to be different than those in the world around us. Paul uses a verb to describe our holiness as *perfecting* – that is that we continually move towards achieving that complete holiness.

### ***Concern for the situation in Corinth***

Titus had been sent to Corinth to try to straighten out some of the problems there. He was to come to back to Ephesus (most likely) to give Paul the news of how things were going there. However, the riot that erupted in Ephesus caused Paul to leave unexpectedly, and so he came to Troas, hoping to find Titus there.

He was most disappointed when he couldn't find him, and so he came across to Macedonia (most likely Philippi, or Thessalonica) looking for him (2:2:12-13).

The journey to Macedonia was filled with fear and trepidation as to what he might find. Would Titus bring positive or negative response from Corinth? "...we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears..." (2:7:5 NKJV)

Titus was apparently not there when he arrived, but came whilst Paul was there. The news that he brought was good news, and Paul was comforted not only by the news, but also by Titus' arrival. (2:7:7).

Titus brought news good. Paul was fearful that the Corinthians might have rejected him because of his firm response to them, yet they had embraced the things that he taught. They had mourned for their actions and repented.

By their action they were "...vindicated ... in all things they had proved themselves to be clear in the matter..." (2:7:11)

Paul was concerned to see that they had acted diligently in carrying out the discipline of the incestuous man, as indeed they had. The point wasn't to do harm to the man, but to bring about Godly repentance.

### **Conclusions on the matter**

Paul had dealt harshly with the Corinthians, but he had achieved the desired outcome, and he was delighted to hear the news with the arrival of Titus.

Paul says he has confidence in them in everything. By implication, he is forward casting his anticipation of the response that they will implement towards the Judaisers.

### **The churches in Macedonia – Chapter 8**

The Macedonians are held up as an example, for they had given *liberally*, and *beyond their own means*. This was despite the fact that they were in abject poverty.

Their giving was not something that they were forced to do, and "...they were freely willing..." (2:8:3) to give. Paul was very mindful of their poverty, however their hearts were so turned towards participating with the other saints in the gospel that they "...implored us with much urgency that we would receive the gift..." (2:8:4 NKJV)

They had not only given abundantly, but "...they first gave themselves to the Lord..." (2:8:5 NKJV). Their motivation because of a genuine love and bonding relationship with the Lord.

When sending Titus off to Corinth, Paul had instructed him to *sort out the collection*. The Corinthians had been instructed a year earlier to get it ready (1:16:1-2). Titus has returned from Corinth and met Paul in Macedonia *minus the collection!* Paul now has to instruct them again – embarrass them – into action.

Paul is about to send Titus back with the second letter. Along with Titus, Paul sends two other brothers "...the one whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches..." (2:8:18). (Most likely Luke). Along with them, another "...brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things..." (2:8:22 NKJV). We have no information as to who this brother may have been.

### **The nature of the contribution**

The contribution is motivated by *love*, not by the *necessity* of giving *because we have to*. Paul says "...I am testing the sincerity of your love..." (2:8:8). In exactly the same way that God showed His love towards us, so we should show our love to others – in this case, the poor brethren in Jerusalem "...for though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, the we might become rich through His poverty..." (2:8:9)

Paul explicitly does not give commandments here. He wants to motivate them to give out of love and a good heart, not because he has commanded them to do so (even though he had previously given such instruction "...by order..." (1:16:1-2))

As an example of how things were supposed to work, Paul draws their attention to God's supply of manna in the wilderness. (Ex 16:13-36). Every one gathered what he needed.

The problem is, that the Corinthians had made a commitment a year ago, and had failed to make good on their promises (2:8:10-11).

To reinforce honorable intentions with the gift, the three people who were sent to Corinth to collect the gift were of the highest credentials. The first (Luke) had "...praise...throughout all the churches..." (2:8:18), the unknown brother who had "...often proved diligent in many things..." (2:8:22), and Titus.

Paul writes a reference for Titus, although he really doesn't need one, as he is well known to the Corinthians. "...he is my partner and fellow worker among you..." (2:8:23). Likewise, the two brethren "...are messengers of the churches..." (2:8:23).

### ***The problem in Corinth – Chapter 9***

The Corinthians had made a promise a year ago for the collection, and consequently Paul had "...boasted about [them] to the Macedonians..." (2:9:2) with the result that the Macedonians had been "...stirred up..." into action (2:9:2). But the Corinthians had not delivered on that promise. The situation presents a double embarrassment. Both the Corinthians **AND** Paul would be severely embarrassed by the circumstances.

To act prudently, Paul thought it would be a *good idea* to make sure that things were right before he came, and so sent Titus back with the two other representatives.

The Corinthians may well have felt that they were required to give as a matter of *obligation*. However Paul reminds and instructs them that this is not the case, and nothing could be further from the truth. It is not "...a matter of *grudging obligation*, but rather a matter of *generosity*..." (2:9:5). "...if we sow sparingly, that we shall also reap sparingly, but if we sow bountifully we shall also reap bountifully..." (2:9:6). We cannot expect to be bountifully rewarded with God's blessings if we only give sparingly.

### ***The cheerful giver***

God expects us to give cheerfully. How much we give is up to us. The only thing that God expects is that we will do it *freely* and *cheerfully*. Everything that we have in this world is only because God allows us to have it. When we give a gift back to God, we are only giving back the things that He has already given to us!

If we trust in God, then He will reward us, and make sure that we have everything that we need. We need to learn to trust God, and not rely on what we have. The natural consequences are that we will give to the aid of the needy, even when it *costs us*. Our trust must be in Him, not in our riches!

### ***Paul's appeal – Chapter 10***

Whilst Paul's approach might at times have seemed harsh, that was not really his intention. He tried to follow Christ's approach of always being humble and gentle. Paul had a reputation "...For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."..." (2:10:10 NIV).

However Paul would not shun taking a strong and bold stand if and when it was needed. His enemies – the Judaisers – had been destroying his work in many places. That situation could not be allowed to continue. If the Corinthians had not put the matter right before Paul arrived, then he would see to it – in the strongest possible terms – when he arrived "...I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh..." (2:10:2 NKJV)



### ***The nature of the battle***

The Roman Empire was a mighty and strong force. A force to be reckoned with. The armies would come and overthrow their enemies, pulling down the strongholds that had been raised in defence.

In just the same way, the mighty power of God would be brought against those who were putting up a defence against the gospel. The strongholds would be pulled down and the protagonists would be left with no where to hide. “...*for our weapons...are mighty in God for demolishing strongholds...*” (2:10:4)

Whilst we often judge people based on the outward appearance, God looks on the inside. The Judaisers had a preconceived idea of Paul’s motivations and had pre-judged him. They had put two and two together and came up with “five”.

The one thing that the Judaisers were forgetting (and must have side tracked the Corinthians onto) was Paul’s authority as an apostle. Having the authority is one thing, and using it appropriately is quite another. It was given by the Lord “...*for edification and not for your destruction...*” (2:10: 8)

### ***Direct comparison to the “enemies”***

The Judaisers had been making self-commendation. They were each saying how important the others of them were, and were “...*measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves...*” (2:10:12 NKJV). Truly self-commendation is no recommendation, and Paul says of them that they “...*are not wise...*”.

In contrast, Paul had been given authority by God. He had been appointed as the apostle to the Gentiles. His *sphere of appointment* was to take the gospel to them, and as such specifically included going to Corinth (2:10:13).

In carrying out his role, Paul did not in the least way exceed his authority or his call. But, why would Judaisers want to come to the furthestmost parts of the world to insist on making the christians become Jews, and bind on them the Law of Moses? This is a complete reversal of the roles as proclaimed by the Judaisers!

Paul’s commission necessarily meant taking it to the furthestmost parts of the (then known) world. He could not possibly stay in Jerusalem and hope to fulfil his ministry just by converting Gentiles there. He had to go out. As we read of the places that Paul went to, we can see the diligence that he had in delivering his accountabilities.

It wasn’t just spiritual growth that Paul had in mind here. Paul did not *build on another man’s foundation, but went where the gospel of Christ was not so much as named* (Rom 15:19-20). He hoped that Corinth would become a springboard for outreach into other areas – *to the regions beyond Corinth*.

### ***In contrast to the enemies - Chapter 11***

Paul *plays out* the type of accusations that are made against him. It’s as if he says “OK, lets put these things to the test” And of course, when they are tested, the position of the Judaisers is found to be wanting.

Paul is concerned that his enemies – the Judaisers – have deceived the Corinthians in just the same way that Eve was deceived by the serpent. The doctrine of Christ is simple – it is not hard to understand. But the Judaisers had tried to pervert it and make it more complex than it really is. They had tried to bind some elements from the Law of Moses into christianity when Christ has freed us from that Law. Just like the story that the serpent gave Eve, it sounds plausible, but has an outcome that leads to death and destruction.

## **The “other” apostles**

He discusses the “...most eminent apostles...” and makes it clear in subsequent verses that it is not the real apostles that he is discussing here “...For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ...” (2:11:13 NKJV). They “...desire opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things that they boast about...” (2:11:12). The Judaisers had come to Corinth claiming that they were in fact apostles of Christ. Paul says that whoever they are, he is not the least bit inferior to any of them, and he is a long way ahead of them in every direction!

### **Boast #1: Paul’s credentials**

Paul’s knowledge of God came from several sources:

- His extensive training in the Jewish religion (Gal 1:14)
- The three years that he spent in Arabia where the Lord imparted knowledge to him (Gal 1:16-18)
- The Holy Spirit guided him into all truth, just as He did for the other apostles (Jn 16:13)

By contrast, the false apostles had none of these things, although they might have had a smattering in the Jewish religion, they were no where near as well versed in it as Paul was!

Further, his credentials were well demonstrated to the Corinthians, and it had “...been thoroughly revealed to you in every way...” (2:11:6).

### **Boast #2: His devotion to the Corinthians**

Paul confirms his love for the brethren in Corinth. He proposes a rhetorical question to them in the negative, which essentially says *God knows that I do these things because of my love for you all* (2:11:10). The Corinthians knew Paul. They knew what he did (think of miracles and the spiritual gifts here). They knew how hard he worked. They knew what he stood for. The surprising outcome is that the Corinthians had taken any notice of the Judaisers whatsoever! In embracing the them, and siding against Paul, the Corinthians had betrayed their friend! They should have known better!

### **Boast #3: Comparing myself to them**

Paul’s adversaries had made boasting *the order of the day*, and so Paul says *OK, let’s just play along here for a bit*. “...if anyone thinks me foolish for doing this, then that’s OK – he can think that...” (2:11:16). “...Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast...” (2:11:18 NKJV)

Paul says *since you are happy to listen to fools, then listen to me as I take a foolish position!* “...For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!...” (2:11:19 NKJV)

They had not recognised where the Judaisers were taking them. They were being taken back into bondage (of the Law of Moses, from which they had been made free by the blood of Christ). In a real twist of irony, Paul says (in his flippant way) that the reason that he didn’t lead the Corinthians astray was *because he was too weak!* “...To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!...” (2:11:21)

### **Boast #4: Paul’s life of sacrifice**

Paul gives a detailed picture of his life, presented like nowhere else in the scriptures remembering that he is only about half way through his life of ministry. The Judaisers must have claimed a life of service, but anything they had done could have been no comparison to Paul!

The dangers from false brethren were the most heartless of all, as Paul would find himself in the situation of not knowing whom he could trust. This is a deliberate comment towards the Judaisers who had deceived the Corinthians!

## ***Visions and Revelations – Chapter 12***

Paul speaks about *visions and revelations* that he had received. Whether the visions occurred like many of the others revealed in scriptures, Paul is not sure. In this case, Paul does not know whether it was an *in body* or *out of body* experience, but that is not important. In the visions, Paul is caught up into the *third heaven*, the dwelling place of God.

### ***Paul's "infirmities"***

Paul had some kind of physical weakness, which is usually considered to be poor eyesight. At first it seems strange that Paul would want to boast about his weaknesses! But his weaknesses remind him of his humanity “...lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me...” (2:12:6 NKJV). He had prayed three times to the Lord to remove this *thorn in the flesh* but the answer was “no”. The Lord’s answer was “...My grace is sufficient ... My strength is made perfect in weakness...” (2:12:9). The Lord knew that Paul could live with the infirmity, and that it would continue to remind him of his humanity and his dependence on God.

The Judaisers had (apparently) been saying that the things Paul suffered were evidence of the fact that God was not with him. However, Paul clearly shows that that is not the case, and in fact the contrary applies. Because of his weaknesses, he is able to say “...when I am weak, then I am strong...” (2:12:10)

### ***The undisputable evidence***

The Corinthians should have had absolutely no doubt as to Paul’s credentials. Paul does not leave them there without the evidence to support what he says (as if the evidence that he has already presented is not enough!). The undisputable evidence comes from the things that Paul did “...the signs of an apostle...” – and those signs are revealed in the “...signs and wonders and mighty deeds...” (2:12:12).

That Paul was able to not only perform the signs and wonders and mighty deeds (as he did on many occasions), but he was also able to pass on the ability to do so to others.

In contrast however, the Judaisers had no such powers. The Corinthians ought to have known better!

### ***Putting things in order with the visit***

Paul is about to visit them “...for the third time...” (2:12:14). The church was split. Most of the brethren had accepted Paul, however there were some who were still hard lined to the Judaisers. What was Paul going to find when he came?

“...For I fear, when I come, I shall not find you as I wish ... (but rather will find what I don’t want)... and you will see the side of me that you won’t want to see...” (2:12:20).

Whilst he would rectify the matters and put them in order, it would not be done out of a haughty spirit, but would happen with great sorrow “...I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented...” (2:12:21 NKJV). These people continue in their sinful practices of “...uncleaness, fornication, licentiousness...” (2:12:21)

### ***Prepare for the visit - (Chapter 13)***

Paul’s patience has reached its limit. It is time for the Corinthians to act and put into practice the changes that they have been called to make “...On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others...” (2:13:2 NIV).

The proof of his authority would be very evident when he arrives, and he puts the disorderly into order!

### ***Putting faith into action***

Paul exhorts them to put their faith into action, and do something about it. They were (unjustly) criticising him, in exactly the same way that Jesus had been unjustly judged and criticised. They need to take a good hard look at themselves! “...*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith...*” (2:13:5 NKJV). He wants them to strive for perfection “...*be complete...*” and be united in the things of the gospel.

### ***Final greetings***

From the first letter, we can see the strong factions that had developed in the church. Although much of the dissension had been brought to order, there was still clearly some factionalism remaining. They needed to get back together and stand united for the truth.

In the final benediction, Paul cites all three facets of the Godhead:

- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
- The love of God
- The communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit