

St. Paul and the Letters to the Corinthians

St. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, called by God's will (1 Corinthians 1:1) and specifically appointed for the Gospel of God (Romans 1:1), is the first theologian of the Church and a protector of the Church's unity. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are attributed to Paul. Along with St. Peter, Paul has been regarded as one of the pillars of the Church from its early beginnings. He is also known as the founder of the Christian Church.

Biography

Paul was born in Tarsus, one of the major cities in Cilicia (modern-day Turkey) (Acts 21:39; 22:3). He is believed to have been born between 1 and 10 AD. According to Paul's own words, he was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28). In 63 BC, Palestine and its surrounding areas came under Roman rule. Since Tarsus in Cilicia was under Roman dominion, Paul too acquired Roman citizenship. Religiously, Paul was a Jew. He was born into the tribe of Benjamin and circumcised on the eighth day. By law, he was a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5).

Paul grew up in the socio-cultural environment of the Greco-Roman Empire. His mastery of the Greek language reflects his Hellenistic education. The Greek language used in Paul's letters is of high academic standard. Tarsus, being a center for philosophers, had influences of Stoic philosophy. Paul received his religious education under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, studying the laws (Torah) of the fathers(ancestral law)(Acts 22:3). He adopted the Jewish rabbinical style of interpreting the Bible. Given his deep understanding of the law, Paul may have been a member of the Sanhedrin council. His profession was tent-making (Acts 18:3), which proved useful during his missionary travels (1 Corinthians 9:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Before receiving the "vision of Jesus" in Damascus, Paul was a religious persecutor (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2). He supported the stoning of Stephen, the deacon (Acts 7:58). Paul, originally known as Saul, then tried to destroy the Church, seeking out followers of "The Way" (Acts 9:2) to imprison them (Acts 8:3).

Paul's conversion occurred on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9), where he was transformed by the appearance of Christ (Acts 9:3). Through the laying of hands by Ananias, a disciple of Christ, Paul received the Holy Spirit, was baptized, and began proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah (Acts 9:10-22). The vision of the risen Christ turned Paul into a servant and a proclaimer of the Gospel.

After his conversion (around AD 32-33), Paul spent three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17), engaging in prayer and meditation. After this period, he began preaching the Gospel in Damascus and other regions. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion is believed to have taken place between AD 36-37. After a fifteen-day visit to Jerusalem, Paul preached in Syria and Cilicia (Galatians 1:21).

While it is difficult to determine the exact timeline of Paul's activities, it is generally believed that after his conversion, he undertook three missionary journeys:

1. First Missionary Journey: AD 46-49 (Acts 13:1 - 14:28), accompanied by Barnabas.
2. Second Missionary Journey: AD 50-52 (Acts 15:36 - 18:22), accompanied by Silas.
3. Third Missionary Journey: AD 53-58 (Acts 18:23 - 20:38), accompanied by Timothy.

In the First Missionary Journey, Paul travelled through regions like Antioch, Cyprus, Salamis, Perga, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Pamphylia, and Attalia. On the Sabbath days, Paul entered the synagogues and taught the people (Acts 13:14). He spoke powerfully about Jesus, whom God had sent as the Saviour of Israel, and Christ, the Word of Salvation. He boldly spoke about the risen Christ, encouraging the people to remain in God's grace (Acts 13:43). Paul had a strong conviction that he had been made a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47). Along with proclaiming God's Word, Paul also performed healing ministries (Acts 14:8-10).

Some preachers claimed, "According to the Law of Moses, it is not possible to be saved without circumcision" (Acts 15:1). Paul disagreed with this stance. He insisted that the issue be discussed with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. During the council held in Jerusalem around AD 49-50, Peter and James spoke officially, and the council decided that circumcision was not necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1-29). Peter taught that we are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus.

In the Second Missionary Journey, Paul travelled through Antioch, Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, and back to Antioch. During this journey, Paul clearly taught, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved" (Acts 16:31). He loudly proclaimed the truth that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:7).

In the Third Missionary Journey, Paul travelled through Phrygia, Galatia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Corinth, Troas, Assos, Miletus, Samos, and Jerusalem. He baptized people in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid hands on the disciples, anointing them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:5-6). Paul preached about the Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8) and spoke against idol worship in the temple of Artemis (Acts 19:23-41). It was during this third journey that Paul gave his farewell speech (Acts 20:18-35).

The Jews accused Paul of teaching against the people, the law, and the holy temple. He was arrested and bound by the Roman commander and soldiers (Acts 21:27-30). Paul faced trials before both religious court (Sanhedrin) and secular courts multiple times. He was tried by Governor Felix (Acts 23:23-35), his successor Porcius Festus (Acts 25:1-12), and King Agrippa II (Acts 25:13-26:32). Since Paul, a Roman citizen, requested an appeal before Caesar, the authorities sent him to Rome.

Paul was sent to Rome as a prisoner, accompanied by the centurion Julius from the Sebaste regiment. After surviving a shipwreck, they arrived in Rome months later. Paul stayed under house arrest for two years, where he continued to preach about the Kingdom of God and teach boldly about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31). In AD 67, during the last phase of Emperor Nero's reign, Paul was martyred in Rome.

Key events in Paul's life:

01-10 AD: Born in Tarsus, in Cilicia (Acts 21:39)

22 AD: Studied Torah (Law of the Fathers) under the guidance of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

30 AD: The crucifixion of Jesus.

30-32 AD: Persecution of Christians (Acts 8:1, 9:1-2).

32-33 AD: Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:3-19).

33-36 AD: Paul's stay in Arabia (Galatians 1:15-17).

- 36-37 AD:** First journey to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17, Acts 9:26-29).
- 46-49 AD:** First missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14:28).
- 49-50 AD:** Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29).
- 50-52 AD:** Second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22).
- 51-52 AD:** Wrote 1st and 2nd letters to the Thessalonians.
- 51-52 AD:** Lived 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:1-11).
- 52 AD:** Trial before Gallio, deputy governor of Achaia (Acts 18:12-18).
- 53-58 AD:** Third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:26).
- 54 AD:** Wrote 1 Corinthians while in Ephesus.
- 55-56 AD:** Wrote Romans while in Macedonia.
- 57-58 AD:** Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 21:27-36).
- 59-60 AD:** Journey to Rome (Acts 27:1-44).
- 60-67 AD:** Lived under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).
- 60-63 AD:** Wrote the letters to Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians, and Colossians.
- 63-66 AD:** Wrote 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.
- 67 AD:** Martyrdom in Rome

Paul's 13 letters were officially declared authoritative by St. Athenagoras in AD 367. The Council of Carthage in AD 397 affirmed these 13 letters as an indispensable part of the Holy Bible. In his second letter, the apostle Peter refers to Paul's letters, saying that "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him" (2 Peter 3:15).

Paul's letters are generally classified into four categories:

1. **Major Epistles:** Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians.
2. **Prison Epistles:** Ephesians, Philemon, Philippians, Colossians.
3. **Pastoral Epistles:** 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus.
4. **Early Epistles:** 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

Paul's 13 letters are further categorized based on their authorship authenticity:

1. **Proto-Pauline Epistles**(Authentic Letters): Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon. These letters are considered to have been written by Paul himself.
2. **Deutero-Pauline Letters** (Not Authentically Pauline): 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus. These are believed to have been written by Paul's disciples.

Corinth and Paul's Letters to the Corinthians:

Corinth was a city located on a narrow strip of land connecting the Peloponnese region of southern Greece with the mainland. It was a densely populated city in Achaia and enjoyed the benefits of Greek culture. Corinth was known for its philosophy, knowledge centers, speech halls, arenas, and temples dedicated to Greek gods. The primary deity worshiped there was Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. There were also temples dedicated to Artemis, Apollo, and other gods in Corinth. Additionally, there was a synagogue for the Jews. Corinth was a city notorious for sexual immorality, and immoral activities were performed in the temple of Aphrodite as acts of worship. In this city, filled with all the characteristics of civilization, there were rich and poor, the intellectually powerful and the ordinary, and countless slaves.

Paul in Corinth

Paul arrived in Corinth during the final part of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). In Corinth, the capital of the region of Achaia, Paul stayed for one and a half years and preached the Gospel. Additionally, Paul engaged in tent-making alongside Aquila and Priscilla. After establishing the church in Corinth, Paul travelled to Ephesus, but he maintained continuous contact with them. It was during this time in Ephesus that Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians.

1. Background of the First Letter to the Corinthians

Three representatives from Corinth -Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus- visited Paul and informed him about the theological and moral issues facing the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 16:17-18). Additionally, Chloe's household brought news of divisions and disputes within the church (1 Corinthians 1:11). The believers in Corinth wrote to Paul seeking clarification on various matters, such as marriage, the second coming of the Lord, food sacrificed to idols, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, resurrection, the Lord's Supper, church practices, and traditions (1 Corinthians 7:1). In response to these circumstances, Paul wrote the First Letter to the Corinthians.

2. Background of the Second Letter to the Corinthians

As indicated in the letter written from Ephesus, Paul visited Corinth for the second time on his way to Macedonia in A.D. 55 (1 Corinthians 16:1-5). During this time, false teachers from Jerusalem arrived in Corinth and questioned Paul's apostolic authority (2 Corinthians 2:12-14), accusing him of insincerity and selfish motives (2 Corinthians 1:17). This experience caused Paul great distress, and he later sent a letter through Titus to Corinth, known as the "Letter of Tears," which we no longer have.

Titus returned to Macedonia with news about the Corinthian church. The "Letter of Tears" caused sorrow among the believers, but it led them to repentance and salvation, bringing joy to Paul (2 Corinthians 7:2-16). Satisfied with the changes in the behaviour and attitude of the Corinthian believers, Paul wrote the Second Letter to the Corinthians in this context.

The content of the letter emphasizes Paul's apostolic authority and the significance of his mission rather than focusing solely on theological or moral instruction. Since Paul defends his ministry against false accusations, this letter is considered an apologetic letter. Paul's aim in writing was to avoid using his authority harshly during his upcoming third visit to Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:10). He hoped that unity and harmony would prevail between the church and himself before his arrival (2 Corinthians 5:20). In this letter, Paul appeals to the rebellious individuals in the church to reconcile and re-join the community. He also encourages generous contributions for the collection being made for the believers in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15).

One of the main purposes of this letter is to defend Paul's gospel ministry and his personal life of service. The final section (2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10) is Paul's response to personal criticisms and opposition.

Structure of the Letter

The general structure seen in all of Paul's letters is also present in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: introduction, thanksgiving, prayer, presentation of key theological (doctrinal) and moral (ethical) themes, and conclusion. The main content of this letter focuses on Paul's apostolic ministry, and it interweaves theological reflections with ethical instructions.

1:1-11 Introduction

- 1:1-2 Greeting
- 1:3-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer

1:12-7:16 Paul's Ministry and Its Authenticity

- 1:12-2:13 Ministry of Suffering and Patience
- 2:14-5:21 Ministry of the Covenant, Ministry of Reconciliation
- 6:1-7:16 Untainted Ministry, Holy Ministry

8:1-9:15 The Ministry of Generous Giving

- 8:1-24 Collection for Jerusalem
- 9:1-15 Generous Giving for the Saints

10:1-13:10 Defense of Paul's Ministry

- 10:1-18 Ministry of Gentleness and Calm
- 11:1-15 Ministry of Righteousness
- 11:16-33 Ministry of Suffering
- 12:1-21 Ministry of Weakness, Paul's Anxiety
- 13:1-10 Warnings to the Church in Corinth

13:11-13 Conclusion

- 13:11 Final Greetings
- 13:12-13 Blessing

Commentary - Opening Verses (2 Corinthians 1:1-2)

At the beginning of the letter, Paul identifies himself as an apostle. The Greek word "apostolos" means "one who is sent." Timothy, a native of Lystra, helped Paul write this letter. Timothy was a bishop in Ephesus. In Paul's introductory greeting, two important words stand out: *grace* and *peace*. The Greek word "charis" refers to the love and protection God bestows upon us, and "eirēnē," meaning peace, refers to the goodness, holiness, and righteousness attained through Jesus Christ. This word is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "shalom" (peace).

Commentary on Chapters 7-13

Chapter 7

Those who questioned Paul's apostolic authority and disregarded his teachings eventually accepted his instructions and changed their attitudes. Reconciliation was achieved between

Paul and the Corinthians, and their relationship was restored. Paul was greatly relieved when Titus brought the news that the Corinthians had repented of their wrongdoing (7:6-7). Paul calls on believers to walk in holiness and not return to wickedness (7:1), emphasizing that holiness should be maintained in both body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

In response to accusations that he was selfish, deceitful, and exploitative, Paul defended himself, stating, “we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one” (2 Corinthians 7:2). Paul firmly declares that his ministry is one of sincere service.

He also teaches that some sorrows can lead to repentance and salvation. The letter he had written, referred to as the "Letter of Tears," initially caused sorrow among the Corinthians. The Greek word "lupē" (meaning ‘grief’) refers to mental distress or affliction. However, this grief led them to a godly repentance that brought salvation (7:9-10). The Corinthians were now willing to correct their mistakes, reject false teachers, and accept Paul's leadership. For this reason, Paul says, ‘Worldly sorrow brings death, but godly sorrow produces earnestness, eagerness, zeal, and righteousness in a person’ (7:11).

Chapter 8

Helping Christian brothers and sisters in distress during times of hardship was characteristic of Paul's approach. When there was a severe famine during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-45), all the disciples sent relief to the brothers living in Judea through Paul, according to their ability (Acts 11:27-30).

In the period of AD 53-58, during his third missionary journey, Paul organized a collection of funds for the churches in Jerusalem. Despite not being wealthy, the churches of Macedonia generously contributed to this cause. Paul highlights this in the early part of Chapter 8 (8:1-7), presenting the generosity of the Macedonian churches as an example. Macedonia, a Roman province in northern Greece, included the churches in Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea.

Paul urges the Corinthians to follow the example of the Macedonians in giving generously. After mentioning the generosity of the Macedonians, Paul presents the selflessness of Jesus Christ as the ultimate example (8:8-15). The incarnation of Jesus is portrayed as an act of great generosity, as He emptied Himself of His glory to make us rich (Philippians 2:6-8).

Giving should be done willingly and not under compulsion. What matters is not how much is given but the attitude with which it is given. Everyone should give according to their means. Paul encourages the Corinthians to fulfill their desire to give, which they had expressed a year earlier (8:11-12).

Titus was the main person Paul appointed to oversee this collection for the churches in Jerusalem (8:6,16-17). Two other brothers were also chosen to assist in this ministry (8:18-19). These two individuals were apostles, meaning they were sent by the churches specifically for this mission (8:23).

Chapter 9

In this chapter, Paul reminds the Corinthians once again about the collection for the saints (9:1-5) and encourages them to give with joy and generosity (9:6-15). Instead of using the word "money," Paul uses the word "diakonia" (9:1), which means "service."

Paul had already spoken to the Macedonians about the generosity of the Corinthians. Hearing that the Corinthians were prepared for this act of charity, the Macedonians also eagerly participated in giving. However, due to the conflict between the Corinthians and Paul, their contributions were affected. Although the disagreement was resolved, the collection was not yet completed. Paul urged the Corinthians to take this task seriously to avoid embarrassment when the Macedonians come to Corinth. Paul refers to the generous gift as "eulogia" (blessing) in 9:5, which means grace or favor.

Paul conveys the message of generosity to the Corinthians through a well-known Greek proverb: "the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (9:6). Those who give generously will reap greater blessings, while those who give reluctantly or out of compulsion will not experience the same fulfillment.

As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever" (9:9). It is a reference to Psalm 112:9. The Greek word "dikaiosynē" is used for righteousness, referring to one's moral excellence.

This section emphasizes the importance of generous giving as a reflection of the believer's commitment to the welfare of others and the righteousness of God.

Chapter 10

In chapters 10 to 13, Paul justifies his apostolic ministry, defending his mission and actions against criticisms from some people in Corinth. He takes a firm stand against evil but also handles the situation with patience and compassion. Paul addresses the accusations raised by his opponents, responding to them directly.

Some people in Corinth accused Paul of being "worldly" (10:2), using the Greek word "sarx" which means flesh, body, or earthly life. These accusations were made by those who did not understand Paul's true spirituality. He calmly responds, clarifying that although he lives in the flesh, his warfare is not according to the flesh (10:3). While they live in the world, their actions are not worldly; instead, they are divinely empowered.

Paul urges the Corinthians to show true obedience to Christ, using the Greek word "hypakoē", meaning obedience, particularly in the context of submission to church authority. Paul also warns that those who disobey may face consequences (10:6).

He asserts his apostolic authority, explaining that the Lord has given him this authority not to destroy but to build up the community (10:9). The Greek word "oikodomē" is used here to signify the building up of the church spiritually. Paul emphasizes that his divine authority comes from Christ, who has appointed him to establish churches, and this authority is meant to strengthen the community.

Chapter 11

After Paul's missionary journeys, certain preachers came to Corinth and spoke ill of Paul. Recognizing that these preachers had defamed him in various ways, Paul describes the true characteristics of an apostle. He addresses their objections by adopting an ironic style, saying that he speaks "foolishly" as he defends himself (11:1). The method Paul adopts to defend himself amid criticisms is self-praise. The Greek word "kaukeisis" means "self-praise" or "self-exaltation." Although Paul knows that this self-praise may seem foolish in the eyes of the world, he uses this style solely to justify his position.

Paul approaches self-defense with great reluctance, as self-praise is considered foolishness. Though Paul recognizes that self-praise may appear foolish to others, he uses this approach to defend his position. He reluctantly engages in boasting, something he does not typically do, but he feels compelled to explain his side. In his life, it is something that should ordinarily not be necessary, which is why he often apologizes for it. The Greek word "anacheste" means "do bear with," "endure patiently." Even when he speaks foolishly, this apology indicates the purity of Paul's mind.

Paul's remark, "I have a divine jealousy for you" (11:20), indicates a deep spiritual intensity or zeal. This divine jealousy reflects his strong commitment to the well-being and purity of the Corinthian believers, showcasing his concern for their faithfulness to Christ amidst various influences. The Greek word "zelos," which translates to "jealousy," carries nuanced meanings, including "intensity" and "deep love." When Paul expresses "divine jealousy" or "intensity" in relation to the Corinthians, he reflects God's attitude toward the Israelites in the Old Testament. Just as God viewed Israel as His chosen people, unwilling to allow them to be claimed by anyone else, Paul sees the Corinthians as his spiritual children, emphasizing his protective stance. He will not permit them to be led astray by false apostles, demonstrating his passionate concern for their faith and well-being.

Paul emphasizes the relationship between the church and Christ by comparing it to the marriage between a bride and her husband. He notes, "I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2b). This analogy is rooted in Jewish wedding customs, where the betrothal (engagement) is the first stage of marriage. The wedding ceremony occurs sometime later. Once the betrothal is complete, the bride is considered married in a legal sense, assuming responsibilities associated with being a wife. However, the bride does not move to her husband's house until the wedding ceremony is conducted. Until that time, it is the duty of her father to protect and care for her. In this context, Paul sees the church, represented as a virgin bride, as his responsibility to keep pure and unblemished for Christ, her groom. His deep concern is to guard the church against false teachings and apostolic rivals, ensuring that it remains faithful to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Paul presents his lineage and background to highlight his superiority as a Jew (2 Corinthians 11:21). He declares himself a Hebrew, an Israelite, and a descendant of Abraham. However, above all these distinctions, Paul identifies himself as "a servant of Christ." With pride, he claims to be a greater servant than others (2 Corinthians 11:23). Paul emphasizes the sufferings he has endured for the sake of Christ. He recounts his experiences, including being imprisoned, beaten with rods, and receiving lashes from the Jews—five times receiving thirty-nine stripes (2 Corinthians 11:23-25). Additionally, he mentions being stoned and shipwrecked. Through these accounts, Paul shares the hardships he has faced in his ministry. Paul emphasizes that his true mark as an apostle is seen in the hardships and sacrifices, he has endured for Christ's mission.

Chapter 12

After sharing his life experiences and challenges, Paul now writes about the divine visions and revelations he received. Despite having many reasons to boast, Paul emphasizes that boasting serves no purpose. Instead, he shares a deeply personal spiritual experience he had around 41-42 A.D., when he was taken to the "third heaven." From a Jewish perspective, the "third heaven" refers to paradise. The first heaven is associated with the birds and clouds, while the second heaven pertains to the sun and stars. "Paradise" signifies a state of union between humanity and God. The third heaven is the dwelling place of God; it is the divine presence (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Paul, despite claiming to have received divine revelations, emphasizes his personal weaknesses. Although Paul could boast about these divine visions, he chooses instead to highlight his weaknesses. He mentions that to prevent him from becoming overly proud because of the "abundance of revelations," a "thorn in the flesh" was given to him (2 Corinthians 12:7). The Greek word "skolops" means thorn or stake, but what exactly this "thorn" represents is unclear. It has been interpreted in various ways, including:

1. A physical ailment (such as headaches, stomach issues, or poor eyesight),
2. A form of bodily temptation,
3. Opponents or adversaries who persecuted Paul.

Paul calls this thorn "a messenger of Satan" sent to torment him. Despite praying three times for its removal, God's answer to him was, "My grace is sufficient for you" (12:9). This response highlights the idea that while life may have its challenges, God's grace is enough to sustain a person through them. In human weakness, God's power is made perfect and revealed.

Paul does not accept the authority of the so-called "super-apostles" in Corinth. While he acknowledges his humility, he insists that he is not inferior to these leaders. The divine power manifested through Paul's work—such as signs, wonders, and miracles—is proof of his apostolic authority (12:12). The three Greek words used here for God's power are: (a) "Semeion" = sign, (b) "Teras" = wonder, (c), "Dynamis" = power. These miraculous works are the clear marks of Paul's apostolic ministry.

Paul's primary goal in serving the Corinthians was their "oikodomē" (spiritual edification or building up) (12:19). All his actions, teachings, and efforts were aimed at their growth and well-being, not their destruction.

He expresses his sorrow over those in Corinth who have not repented of their sins. Sexual immorality was widespread in Corinth, and Paul mentions three specific sins: (a) Impurity, (b) Sexual immorality, (c) Licentiousness. These are signs of moral decay, and Paul is distressed that some in Corinth have not yet changed their ways. He lists eight moral failings present among the Corinthians, which include: quarrelling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder (12:20). Paul's sadness reflects his deep concern for their spiritual well-being.

Chapter 13

In this final chapter, Paul reiterates themes he has touched upon earlier, offering concluding thoughts and warnings. He emphasizes that those in Corinth who have sinned will face just punishment according to the law, a clear warning to the false apostles and those who continue in wrongdoing (13:1-2).

Paul once again discusses his weaknesses, using the Greek word "astheneia" (which means weakness, frailty, or lack of strength) to describe the struggles he has faced for the sake of Christ (11:30; 12:9; 12:10; 13:4). He draws a comparison between his own weakness and Christ's crucifixion. Though Christ was crucified in weakness, He now lives by the power of God, and similarly, though Paul appears weak, he lives by God's power.

Some people in Corinth wished to examine and test Paul's life. Paul responds by urging them to examine whether they have truly understood Christ. Paul encourages them to test whether Christ truly lives in them. If Jesus Christ is not within them, they have failed the test of genuine faith, according to Paul. He calls them to turn away from evil and be eager to do good (13:5-7).

Paul concludes with a brief blessing and farewell, calling on the Corinthians to mend their ways, live in unity, encourage one another, and strive for peace (13:11). He invites them to greet each other with a "holy kiss," a symbol of Christian love and fellowship (13:12). The letter ends with a blessing invoking the Trinity—the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (13:13).

Fr. Thomas Vadakkal