

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS 12

The apostle in this chapter proceeds upon the same subject, in vindicating himself against the false teachers, and giving proof of his apostleship; he takes notice of a very remarkable and unusual vision he was favoured with; makes mention of an uncommon temptation of Satan, how he was delivered from it, and the use it was of to him; excuses his boasting to the Corinthians; lays the blame of it upon them who obliged him to do it, though they had such undeniable proofs of his apostleship among them; signifies he intended to come and see them, and expresses his strong affection for them, and good will towards them; removes the calumnies of covetousness, guile, and craftiness; reproveth them for their sins, and threatens them in case of impenitence. Though in some respects glorying was not so convenient, and quite disagreeable to the apostle himself, yet such were his circumstances, that it was become necessary for him to do it, and therefore goes on with it; and to his character, qualifications, labours, sufferings, and deliverances, adds the visions and revelations of the Lord he had been honoured with, ([4711-2](#) Corinthians 12:1) and singles out a very particular one, which he describes by the time when, about fourteen years ago; by the person who saw it, himself, whom he speaks of in the third person, that there might be as little appearance of boasting as possible; by the place where it was seen, the third heaven, into which he was caught; by the form or manner of the vision, or the circumstance and condition in which he was when he saw it, of which he could give no account; as whether in or out of the body, ([4712-2](#) Corinthians 12:2), which last circumstance is repeated to denote the certainty of it, and his ignorance as to this part of it; for the truth of which he appeals to God, ([4713-2](#) Corinthians 12:3), and affirms again, that such an one as he had described was caught up to paradise; by which he explains what he meant by the third heaven, and further declares, that being there he heard words unutterable, ([4714-2](#) Corinthians 12:4). Now though this vision was matter of glorying, yet since he was the person that was so highly honoured with it, he would not dwell any longer on it, but rather speak of his infirmities, as he afterwards does, ([4715-2](#) Corinthians 12:5), yet if he had shown a design of

boasting, it would not have been acting a foolish part; however, he thought it best to forbear, lest it should lead any into too high an opinion of him, (^{<47116>}2 Corinthians 12:6), and indeed, these high enjoyments were apt to fill himself with pride and vanity, wherefore God, in his infinite wisdom, thought fit to take some methods to humble him; which leads him to give an account of a sore temptation that befell him, which was grievous to him, and in which he was buffeted by Satan; the end of which was to keep down his pride, and hide it from him, (^{<47117>}2 Corinthians 12:7). The use this was of to him, and how he behaved under it, and the request he made to the Lord to be freed from it, are declared in (^{<47118>}2 Corinthians 12:8), to which he received an answer, which was full and satisfactory, gave him pleasure, and determined him to glory in his infirmities, (^{<47119>}2 Corinthians 12:9), which he does in (^{<47120>}2 Corinthians 12:10), and gives an enumeration of them, and his reason for glorying in them: and whereas he knew he should be chargeable with folly, in glorying in other things as he had done, he blames the Corinthians for it, who had obliged him to it; for had they engaged as they should have done in the vindication and commendation of him, there would have been no need of his own; and they were furnished with matter and arguments enough for such a purpose, since it must have been a plain case to them that he was not inferior to the chief of the apostles, (^{<47121>}2 Corinthians 12:11), of which they had a full demonstration, partly by the signs, wonders, and mighty deeds which were done in the midst of them by him, (^{<47122>}2 Corinthians 12:12), and partly by the gifts of grace bestowed on them through his ministry, on account of which they did not come short of any other churches; unless it was in this, that they had the Gospel preached without charge unto them, (^{<47123>}2 Corinthians 12:13), the apostle goes on to acquaint them that he had a third time intended to come and see them, when he would be no more burdensome and chargeable to them than he had been before; have no regard to theirs but to them, acting the part of a father that lays up for his children, but takes nothing from them, (^{<47124>}2 Corinthians 12:14), and expresses his strong affection for them, even though they should show but little to him, and his earnest desire to be serviceable to them, and the pleasure he should take therein, (^{<47125>}2 Corinthians 12:15), and whereas it was suggested by the false teachers, that though he did not take money of them in person, he had used some underhand crafty methods by the means of others to drain them of it, (^{<47126>}2 Corinthians 12:16), he replies and vindicates his innocence, by putting the question to them in general; whether he had made any gain by any persons he had sent to them, (^{<47127>}2 Corinthians 12:17), and particularly

inasmuch as he had sent Titus and another brother, whether he had made any gain of them, and whether the apostle and he were not of the same spirit; and whether they did not take the same steps, (^{<47128>}2 Corinthians 12:18), and then observes, that all the pains that he took in the vindication of himself, was not so much on his own account as theirs, even for their edification, that that might not be hindered, for whom he had the most endeared affection: and for the truth of all this he appeals to God, (^{<47129>}2 Corinthians 12:19), and closes this chapter with observing the many evils which were among them, which he feared he should find among them, when he came, unrepented of; and which would be matter of grief and humiliation to him, and oblige him to use that severity among them which would not be agreeable to them, (^{<47120>}2 Corinthians 12:20).

Ver. 1. *It is not expedient doubtless for me to glory*, etc.] Though it was lawful for him to glory, and was necessary in the present circumstances of things, in vindication of himself, and to preserve the Corinthians from being carried away with the insinuations of the false apostles; and so for the honour and interest of Christ and the Gospel; yet it was not expedient on some other accounts, or profitable and serviceable to himself; he might find that it tended to stir up pride, vanity, and elation of mind in him, and might be interpreted by others as proud boasting and vain glorying; wherefore he chose to drop it, and pass on to another subject; or rather though it was not expedient to proceed, yet, before he entirely quitted it, he thought it proper to say something of the extraordinary appearances of God unto him. Some copies, and the Vulgate Latin version, read, “if there was need of glorying, it is not indeed expedient”; the Syriac version, “there is need of glorying, but it is not expedient”; and the Arabic version, “neither have I need to glory, nor is it expedient for me: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord”; such as the Lord had made to him, and not man; and which were not the fruit of his own fancy, or the delusions of Satan; but were from the Lord Jesus Christ, and his glory. The apostle might very well speak of “visions” or heavenly appearances, since he was favoured with many; his conversion was owing to a vision or appearance of Christ to him, whom he saw with his bodily eyes, and heard him speaking to him, and which he calls “the heavenly vision”; at another time when at Troas, a vision appeared to him in the night, and a man of Macedonia stood and prayed him to come over and help them; and when at Corinth the Lord spoke to him by a vision, and bid him not be afraid, but go on preaching the Gospel, because he had much people there to be brought in through his

ministry: and as for revelations, besides what are ordinary and common to all believers, he had extraordinary ones; the Gospel and the scheme of it, the knowledge of the several particular doctrines of it, were not attained to by him in the common way, but he had them by the revelation of Jesus Christ; the several mysterious parts of it, particularly that of the calling of the Gentiles, to which might be added, the change that will be upon the living saints at Christ's second coming, were made known to him by revelation; and sometimes in this extraordinary way he was directed to go to such or such a place, as at a certain time he went up to Jerusalem by "revelation", where he was to do or suffer many things for the sake of Christ: though he had no revelation of anything that was different from, and much less contrary to the Gospel, and as it was preached by the other apostles; for there was an entire agreement between him and them in their ministry; (see ^{<401>}Galatians 2:2,7-8), and these visions and revelations were for his instruction, direction, and encouragement in the ministration of the Gospel; and being of an extraordinary nature, were suitable to those extraordinary times, and not to be expected in an ordinary way, nor is there any need of them now; besides, these were visions and revelations of the Lord, and not the effects of enthusiasm, and a warm imagination, nor diabolical delusions, or the pretensions and cheats of designing men; and were for the confirmation and establishment of the Gospel, and not to countenance a new scheme, or introduce a new dispensation; wherefore all visions and revelations men pretend to, which are for such a purpose, are to be despised and rejected.

Ver. 2. *I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago*, etc..] Which is to be understood of himself, as appears from (^{<412>}2 Corinthians 12:7), where he speaks in the first person; and the reason why he here speaks in the third, is to show his modesty and humility, and how much he declined vain glory and popular applause; and whilst he is speaking of himself, studies as it were to conceal himself from being the person designed, and to draw off the mind of the reader from him to another person; though another cannot be intended, for it would not have been to his purpose, yea, quite beside it, when he proposes to come to visions and revelations he had of the Lord, to have instanced in the rapture of another. Moreover, the full and certain knowledge he had of this man, of the place he was caught up to, and of the things he there heard, best agrees with him; as also his attesting, in such a solemn way, his ignorance of the manner of this rapture, whether in the body or out of the body, and which he repeats and refers to the knowledge

of God, clearly shows he must mean himself; besides, it would otherwise have been no instance of any vision of his, nor would the rapture of another have at all affected his character, commendation, and praise, or given him any occasion of glorying as this did: though he did not choose to take it, as is clear by his saying that if he gloried of it he should not be a fool, yet forbore, lest others should entertain too high an opinion of him; and after all, he was in some danger of being elated with this vision along with others, that the following sore temptation was permitted, to prevent his being exalted with it above measure: and when he calls this person, meaning himself, a “man”, it is not to distinguish him from an angel, whose habitation is in the third heaven, and so no wonderful thing to be found there; or from any other creature; nor perhaps only to express his sex, a man, and not a woman, though the Syriac version uses the word *arbg*, peculiar to the masculine sex; but merely to design a person, and it is all one as if it had been said, I knew a person, or I knew one in Christ: and the phrase “in Christ”, is not to be connected with the word “know”, as if the sense was, that he called Christ to witness the truth of what he was about to say, and that what he should say was not with a view to his own glory, but to the glory and honour of Christ only; but it is to be connected with the word “man”, and denotes his being in Christ, and that either, as Dr. Hammond thinks, in a singular and extraordinary manner; as John is said to be “in the spirit”, (~~and~~ Revelation 1:10), that is, in an ecstasy; and so here this man was in the Spirit of Christ, and transported by him to see visions, and have revelations; or rather it intends a spiritual being in Christ, union to him, the effect of which is communion with him. The date of

fourteen years ago, may refer either to the time when the apostle first had the knowledge of his being in Christ, which was at his conversion; he was in Christ from all eternity, being given to him, chosen in him, loved by him; set as a seal upon his heart, as well as engraven on the palms of his hands, and represented by him, and in him, in the everlasting covenant; and so in time, at his crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God; in consequence of all which, when the set time was come, he became a new creature, was converted and believed in Christ, and then he knew himself to be in him; he was in him secretly before, now openly; and this was about fourteen years before the writing of this epistle; the exact time of his conversion might well be known and remembered by him, it being in such an extraordinary manner: or also this date may refer to the time of his rapture, which some have thought was some time within the

three days after his conversion, when he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank; some have thought it to be eight years after his conversion; but the most probable opinion is, that it was not at Damascus, but when he was come again to Jerusalem, and was praying in the temple, and was in a trance or ecstasy, (~~4027~~ Acts 22:17), though the difference there is among chronologers, and the uncertainty of their conjectures, both as to the time of the apostle's conversion, and the writing of this epistle, makes it very difficult to determine this point. They that make this rapture to be at the time of his conversion, seem to be furthest off of the truth of things; for whether his conversion be placed in the 34th year of Christ, as some, or in the 35th, as others, or in the 36th; and this epistle be thought to be written either in the 56th, or 58th, or 60th, the date of fourteen years will agree with neither: they indeed make things to agree together best, who place his conversion in the year 36, make this rapture to be eight years after, in the year 44, and this epistle to be written in the year 58. Dr. Lightfoot puts the conversion of the apostle in the year 34, the rapture of him into the third heaven, in the year 43, at the time of the famine in the reign of Claudius, (~~4118~~ Acts 11:28), when he was in a trance at Jerusalem, (~~4027~~ Acts 22:17), and the writing of this epistle in the year 57. That great chronologer, Bishop Usher, places Paul's conversion in the year 35, his rapture in the year 46, and the writing of this epistle in the year 60. So that upon the whole it is hard to say when this rapture was; and it may be, it was at neither of the visions recorded in the Scripture, which the apostle had, but at some other time nowhere else made mention of: when, as he here says,

such an one was caught up to the third heaven, the seat of the divine Majesty, and the residence of the holy angels; where the souls of departed saints go immediately upon their dissolution; and the bodies and souls of those who have been translated, caught up, and raised already, are; and where the glorified body of Christ is and will be, until his second coming. This is called the “third” heaven, in respect to the airy and starry heavens. The apostle refers to a distinction among the Jews of **yatt aymçw ya [xym aymçw yal y[aymç**, “the supreme heaven, the middle heaven, and the lower heaven”^{f126}; and who also make a like division of worlds, and which they call **l pçh µl w [hw y [xmah µl w [w ^wyl [µl w [**, “the supreme world, and the middle world, and the lower world”^{f127}; and sometimes^{f128} the world of angels, the world of the orbs, and the world of them below; and accordingly the Cabalistic doctors talk of three worlds; **hatyl t aml [**, “the third world”, they say^{f129}, is the supreme world,

hidden, treasured, and shut up, which none can know; as it is written, “eye hath not seen”, etc.. and is the same with the apostle's “third heaven”. The state and condition in which he was during this rapture is expressed by the following words, put into a parenthesis,

whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth: whether his soul remained in his body, and he was caught up soul and body into heaven, as Elijah was carried thither soul and body in a chariot with horses of fire; or whether his soul was out of his body, and he was disembodied for a time, as Philo the Jew^{f130} says that Moses was *ασωματον*, “without the body”, during his stay of forty days and as many nights in the mount; or whether this was not all in a visionary way, as John was “in the Spirit” on the Lord's day, and Ezekiel was taken by a lock of his head, and lifted up by the Spirit between earth and heaven, and brought “in the visions of God to Jerusalem”, cannot be said. The apostle did not know himself, and much less can any other be able to say how it was; it is best with him to refer and leave it to the omniscient God; one of the four persons the Jews say entered into paradise, who are hereafter mentioned in (see Gill on “~~αποκ~~2 Corinthians 12:4”), is said to have his mind snatched away in a divine rapture^{f131}; that is, he was not himself, he knew not where he was, or whether in the body or out, as says the apostle.

Ver. 3. *And I knew such a man*, etc..] The same man, namely himself, is here designed, and the same rapture spoken of, and the condition he was in expressed in the same words: which repetition is made for the more strong affirmation of what he delivered, and to signify the marvellousness of this vision, and how surprising and unaccountable it was.

Ver. 4. *How that he was caught up into paradise*, etc..] Not the earthly paradise in which our first parents were; this was destroyed by the flood, and the place where it was not now to be known; and to what purpose the apostle should be carried thither cannot be guessed at; though some have thought that this is here meant: but not this, nor any place distinct from the “third” heaven, or place of the blessed, is meant; which is the sense of many of the ancients, who suppose the third heaven and paradise to be two distinct places, and that the apostle had two separate raptures. Clemens Alexandrinus^{f132}, reads the words thus, “I knew a man in Christ caught up to the third heaven, *κακειψεν εις τον παραδεισον*, from thence to paradise”; and so Theophilact upon the place says, “from the third heaven he was immediately called up into paradise”; and so Oecumenius, “he was

caught up unto the third heaven, and so again from thence into paradise”; and some modern writers have been inclined to think there were two raptures, and the rather inasmuch as the apostle is said to be caught “up to” the one, and caught “up into” the other, and makes use of the words “caught up” twice; or otherwise he would be guilty of a tautology, both in that and in repeating his ignorance of the manner of the rapture; to which is added, that he proposed to speak of “visions” and “revelations” in the plural number, (~~4711~~ 2 Corinthians 12:1), and afterwards calls this vision an “abundance of revelations”, (~~4711~~ 2 Corinthians 12:7), but as it was at the same time that he was caught up to the third heaven, and into paradise, there being one and the same date of fourteen years ago to both; and as, in the account of the one and the other, he was equally ignorant of the manner how he was caught up, whether in the body, or out of the body; and seeing that there is no account of what he saw and heard in the third heaven, but only what he heard in paradise, which is referred to be told in the after account of this vision; and as the third heaven and paradise are one and the same place, it seems most reasonable to conclude, that not two raptures and two visions are here designed, but only one; and without any show of a vain repetition, the apostle having begun the account of this vision, might reassume what he had said, in order to give a more plain and clear account of it; and especially as there were some things he had not yet mentioned, and the whole was not easy to be understood and taken in, and the manner of it even unknown to himself; and this he might do to raise the attention the more unto it, as being something wonderful and extraordinary; besides, if his design had been to have given an account of two raptures, he would have distinguished them in a numerical way; and would have told us that he was twice caught up, as well as he afterwards says that he besought the Lord “thrice”, at another time; and this would have been necessary to have prevented a mistake, of taking the one and the other for the same rapture, as is generally done; heaven is called paradise, because as the garden of Eden, which bears that name, was of God’s planting, so is this made and prepared by him; as that was a delightful place, so is this; also because of Christ the tree of life, which is in the midst of it, besides an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, the pure and undefiled inhabitants of it; and because of the river of divine love, of endless pleasures, the saints there are made to drink of. It was usual with the Jews to call heaven $\hat{d}[\hat{g}$, “the garden of Eden”, or paradise; and which they ^{f133} sometimes speak of as upper and lower; the lower they suppose the souls of men are introduced into, immediately upon

their dissolution; where they stay a while, and then go up to the upper paradise, the world of souls, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are. The Jews ought not to object to the apostle's being had into paradise before his death, for they tell us of several that entered there whilst alive;

“nine (they say ^{f134}). **ˆd[ˆgb μhyyj b wsnkn**, “entered in their life time into the garden of Eden”, or paradise; and these are they, Enoch the son of Jared, and Elijah, and the Messiah, and Eliezer the servant of Abraham, and Hiram king of Tyre, and Ebed Melec the Ethiopian, and Jabez the son of Rabbi Judah the prince, and Bethiah the daughter of Pharaoh, and Sarah the daughter of Asher; and there are some that say also ^{f135} Rabbi Joshua ben Levi”; and in another place ^{f136},

“four **sdrpb wsnkn**, entered into paradise; and these are they, Ben Azzai, and Ben Zoma, another, and R. Akiba;”

upon which is ^{f137} added,

“they entered into paradise as it were by the hands of God, and they did not ascend up above really, but it seemed to them as if they ascended;”

how far this may serve to explain and illustrate the apostle's case, I leave, with this observation more concerning another use of the word paradise with them; which sometimes signifies a considerable share of knowledge of mysterious things, relating to the nature of God, angels, etc.. of which Maimonides having spoken, says ^{f138},

“these things the former wise men called **sdrp**, “paradise”, as they say, “four entered into paradise”: and although they were the greatest men of Israel, and exceeding wise men, yet they had not all of them power to know and comprehend all these things clearly; and I say, that he is not fit to walk **sdrpb**, “in paradise”, but he whose belly is filled with flesh and bread, and it is bread and flesh to know what is forbidden, and what is lawful, and the other precepts of a like nature;”

and again ^{f139},

“a man that is filled with all these virtues (meaning with wisdom, and understanding, and government of the passions and appetites)

is perfect in his body, as he that enters into paradise, and inclines himself to these things which are great and afar off:” once more ^{f140},

“the words of the tradition are comprehended in the written law, and the exposition of them in the oral law; and the things which are called **sdrp**, paradise, are contained in the Talmud;”

this they ^{f141} call **hmkj h sdrp**, “the paradise of wisdom”; whether this sense and use of the word may be applied to the passage before us, and so be expressive of that large share of divine knowledge which was communicated in an extraordinary way to the apostle, may deserve some consideration: however, this is certain, that when he was caught up into paradise, he

heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter; to instance in particular things, which he then either saw or heard, as some have done, is bold and daring; as that he saw the divine Being with the eyes of his understanding, the several angelic forms, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, and the glory and beauty of the souls of departed saints; and heard the harmonious music of each of these happy creatures; had a view of the book of life, and was shown the order and method of divine predestination; was let into the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles, and the change that will be on living saints, and heard the whole account of the dispensation of things, in the church of Christ to the end of the world: the things were unspeakable, never yet related, and so not to be known: they were such things which the apostle himself, when out of the rapture, might have but very inadequate ideas of, and such as he was not able to put into proper words and language to be understood by others; and which as he heard them not from a mere man, but from the Lord, so no mere man was able to utter them, none but he of whom he had heard them: and besides, whatever conceptions the apostle might have of them himself, and how capable soever he was of expressing them; yet they were not fit and proper to be told in the present state of things, being no part of the counsel of God relating to man's salvation, the whole of which he faithfully declares; and yet were necessary to be heard by him, in order to establish his faith in the Gospel, to animate him in his ministry, and fortify his mind against all the afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, he was to meet with for the sake of Christ. The phrase seems to be the same with **wrmal rçpa ya**, “it is impossible to say it” ^{f142}; and of such like secret things in paradise, or the world of souls, the Jews say ^{f143} that

“they are hidden, and which **hbytkb twl [I μywar μnya**, “are not fit to produce in writing”;

and so these were such as were not lawful to speak out, **γλωσσαίς ανθρωπίναις**, “with human tongues”, as Justin Martyr says ^{f144}; they were not in such sense “unspeakable”, as not to be expressed by any; for they were expressed either by Christ himself, who was glorified in human nature, whom the apostle might now see and hear, or by some angel or angels, or they could not have been heard by the apostle as they were; but they were such as before never been spoken to any mortal man, and so could never have been spoken by any; and though they had been spoken to a mortal man, yet they could not be spoke by him to others; for though when he heard them, his human soul, for that present time, might conceive and take in much of the nature and meaning of them, yet they were such as he could not express by words, and represent to others by speech after the vision was over, and especially at this distance: not that it was sinful to have done it, if he could have done it; or that the things themselves were of such a nature, that it would have been criminal to have rehearsed them; but rather that it was impossible to do it, at least fully, since they might greatly regard the glory of the divine Being, and the worship paid him by the heavenly inhabitants: or could it be done in any tolerable manner, it might not be altogether convenient and proper in the present state of things; since the worship of the upper world lying in praise without prayer, might not be so fit to be related, lest it should be imitated by saints on earth: and seeing what the apostle heard was ineffable, and not to be spoken by himself; no credit is to be given to those spurious things called the Revelation and Ascension of Saint Paul, in which the author or authors of them pretend to tell us what these things were.

Ver. 5. *Of such an one will I glory*, etc..] The apostle in great modesty seems to speak of some other person, and not himself, as caught up into the third heaven, when he yet means himself; and does as it were distinguish himself from himself; himself in paradise from himself on earth; his sense is, that though he might lawfully glory of such a person so highly exalted and favoured, yet since this was his own case, he chose to forbear, and say no more of it:

yet of myself I will not glory; though he could, and might, and did glory in the Lord, who had done such great things for him; as that he was in Christ, and knew himself to be so, had been rapt up into heaven, and heard things

unutterable; yet he would not glory of these things as from himself, as owing to any merit or worthiness of his, but as instances of mere favour, grace, and goodness; if he gloried of anything of himself in his present state and condition, it should be of his weaknesses:

but in mine infirmities; not his sinful ones, for these he mourned over, and was humbled before God and man under a sense of; but his many pressing difficulties of life, heavy reproaches, very great afflictions, and violent persecutions he endured for Christ's sake; (see ~~47210~~ 2 Corinthians 12:10).

Ver. 6. *For though I would desire to glory*, etc..]. Had a mind to it, chose it, and was fond of it, thought fit to proceed in this way concerning this vision, or this with many others:

I shall not be a fool; in reality; though he might seem and be thought to be so by others; he does indeed before call his glorying “folly”, and “speaking foolishly”; but he means only as it might be interpreted by others, for in fact it was not: the reason is,

for I will say the truth; he said nothing but what was strictly true, in the account of himself in the preceding chapter, and appeals to God as his witness; nor anything in the relation of this vision, but what was entirely agreeable to truth; and to speak truth, though it be of a man's self, when he is called to it, cannot be deemed folly;

but now I forbear; he did not choose to go on, or say any more upon this head at this time; though he had many visions, and an abundance of revelations, yet he did not judge it proper to give a particular account of them:

lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me; should take him to be more than human, as before this the Lycaonians at Lystra did; who supposed that he and Barnabas were gods come down in the likeness of men, and brought out their oxen and garlands to do sacrifice to them; and as, after this, the inhabitants of Melita, seeing the viper drop from his hand without any hurt to him, said he was a god; to prevent such extravagant notions of him, he forbore to say any more of his extraordinary visions and revelations; but chose rather that men should form their judgments of him by what they saw in him and heard from him, as a minister of the Gospel.

Ver. 7. *And lest I should be exalted above measure*, etc..] Over much elated in his mind, and swelled with a vain conceit of himself:

through the abundance of the revelations; for he had not only one or two, or a few, but an abundance of them; and which, as everything does but grace, tended to lift up his mind, to stir up the pride of his heart, and to entertain too high and exalted thoughts of himself. Pride is naturally in every man's heart; converted persons are not without it; knowledge, gifts, and revelations are apt to puff up with spiritual pride, unless counterbalanced and over poised by the grace of God. This great apostle was not out of danger by them, for he was not already perfect; wherefore to prevent an excess of pride and vanity in him on account of them, he says,

there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me; many have been the thoughts and conjectures of men about what is here meant by the apostle. This ought to be allowed and taken for granted, that the thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan, design one and the same thing; the former is a figurative expression, the latter a literal one, and explanative of the former. Some have thought that corporeal afflictions are here designed, which may be compared to thorns: (see ^{<306>}Hosea 2:6), and which are not joyous, but grievous to the flesh, and come not by chance, but are by divine appointment, and are designed and made use of, to hide pride from men; and sometimes, by divine permission, Satan has an hand in inflicting them, as in the case of Job: whilst such a general sense is kept to, it is not to be despised, without entering into the particular bodily disorder with which the apostle was afflicted, as some do; some saying it was the choleic, others the gout, others a pain in the ear, and others the headache; which latter it is said he was much troubled with; but these are mere conjectures: others think that the corruptions of nature are intended which in regenerate persons are left, as the Canaanites were in the land, to be “thorns” in the eyes and sides of the Israelites, (^{<233>}Joshua 23:13 ^{<008>}Judges 2:3). These, to be sure, were felt by the apostle, and were very grievous and humbling to him, and were no doubt sometimes stirred up by Satan, which made him complain bitterly, and groan earnestly; and it may be observed, to strengthen this sense, that it was usual with the Jews to call concupiscence, or the vitiosity of nature, Satan; for so they ^{f145} often say, [rh rxy awh ḵ] ḥh, “Satan, he is the evil imagination”, or corruption of nature; and particularly they call the lust of uncleanness by this name; and it is said ^{f146} of a young man of Israel, being tempted by a young woman of

Midian, through the counsel of Balaam, that $\hat{j} \text{ } \text{ç h w b r [w b}$, “Satan burned in him”, and he turned aside after her; and that the evil imagination is the old serpent; yea, they call this “the messenger of hell”, a phrase very much like what is here used.

“R. Hona ^{f147}, as he was preaching to the children of men to take warning, said unto them, children, beware $\mu \text{ n h y g l } \text{ç a j y l } \text{ç m}$, “of the messenger of hell”; but who is this? the evil imagination, or concupiscence, is that which is “the messenger of hell”;

and this sense is agreeable, provided the particular corruption the apostle was harassed with is not pretended to, as is by some, who pitch upon the lust of uncleanness, and spare not to mention the person by name, one Tecla, who, they say, travelled with him, and was a snare to him; but this is to do injury to the character of so holy an apostle, and to represent him as exposing himself to the false apostles, against whom he was guarding: others think that a variety of afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, for Christ's sake and the Gospel, are here meant, which were as pricking briars and grieving thorns to him; (see ²³⁰⁴Ezekiel 28:24), and which were given and ordered by divine appointment for his good; this sense, (²¹¹⁰2 Corinthians 12:9-10), lead unto, and seem to confirm: others are of opinion that the temptations of Satan are designed, which, as they are called “fiery darts”, which the archers of Satan, and his principalities and powers, shoot thick and fast at the saints, to their great annoyance; so may be here called, especially some very particular, eminent, and sore temptation, a “thorn in the flesh”, very pungent, and giving a great deal of pain and uneasiness; others suppose that some particular emissary of Satan, either some one of the false apostles and teachers, who greatly opposed him, as Alexander the coppersmith, who did him much harm; or such an one as Hymenaeus or Philetus, that blasphemed and spoke evil of him; or some violent persecutor of him is intended. But, after all, I see not but that the devil himself may be meant; for, as before observed, the phrase “a thorn in the flesh” is metaphorical, and the other, a “messenger of Satan”, is literal, and explains it; and the whole may be read thus, “there was given to me a thorn in the flesh”, namely, $\alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omicron \varsigma \text{ } \sigma \alpha \tau \alpha \nu$, “the angel Satan to buffet me”; so that Satan, who was once an angel of light, now of darkness, is the “thorn in the flesh”; and might be suffered to appear visibly to him from time to time, in a very terrible manner, and which was very grievous to be borne; he might by permission have great power over his body, as he had over

Job's, to use it ill, to beat and buffet it; for this also may be taken literally: and he might likewise in other ways greatly distress him by stirring up the corruptions of his heart; by following him with his satanical injections, suggestions, and temptations; by raising violent persecutions, and instigating many of his emissaries against him; and this sense is the rather to be chosen, because it includes all others that have any show of truth. The Jews ^{f148} sometimes make mention of the angel or messenger of Satan mocking at the righteous, and buffeting them; so God is by them said ^{f149} to deliver Nebuchadnezzar םִי אֱלֹהֵי שָׂטָן , “to a messenger of Satan”. This sore exercise befell the apostle for his good, to keep down the pride of his nature;

lest, adds he again, *I should be exalted above measure*; for such ends and purposes does the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, deal with his people. The ^{f150} Jews have a notion that this was one reason of God's tempting or trying Abraham with the sacrifice of his Son, to depress that pride that was likely to arise in him because of his greatness.

“This temptation (they say) was necessary at that time, because above, the grandeur of Abraham is declared how great it was before his enemies made peace with him; and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, and Phichol, the chief captain of his host, were obliged to enter into a covenant with him, and asked him to show favour to them, and to the land in which he sojourned; and perhaps hereby wbl hbg, “his heart was lifted up”, in the ways of God; wyny[wmrw, “and his eyes were lofty”; when he saw himself blessed with riches, and with children, and with grandeur and glory, as the glory of kings; wherefore God was “willing to try him”: with a wall of iron, (this great difficulty) to see if there was any dross left in him.”

Ver. 8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice*, etc..] With respect to the thorn in the flesh, the messenger Satan, who gave him so much continual disturbance. This sent him to the throne of grace, to request of the Lord,

that it, or rather, “he might”

depart from me: this request greatly confirms the above sense, for it can hardly be thought the apostle would be so importunate about the removal of a common bodily affliction; and he knew that the corruption of his nature would remain with him as long as he was in the body; and as for

afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions for the Gospel's sake, he was well apprized they would abide him wherever he went; but that so troublesome an adversary might depart, as it must be greatly desirable, so it was a very proper request: and it is made to a very proper person, to the “Lord” Jesus Christ; who in the days of his flesh had such power over the devils, as to dispossess them from the bodies of men by a word speaking, and held them in subjection, and in a panic fear of him; and when upon the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, and in the latter day will bind Satan with a chain, and shut him up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. This request was made thrice, not with any view to the three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit; nor to the three usual times of prayer in a day, morning, noon, and night; nor is any exact number of times intended; but the sense is, that he frequently besought the Lord on this account.

Ver. 9. *And he said unto me*, etc..] Either by what the Jews call **l wq tb**, “Bath Kol”, a voice from heaven, an articulate audible one; or by some extraordinary revelation of the Spirit of God; or by a divine impression upon his mind; whereby he was assured of what follows,

my grace is sufficient for thee; the Lord always hears and answers his people sooner or later, in one form or another, though not always in the way and manner they desire; but yet in such a way as is most for his glory and their good: the apostle had not his request granted, that Satan might immediately depart from him, only he is assured of a sufficiency of grace to support him under the exercise, so long as it should last. There seems to be an allusion to the word **ydc**, “Shaddai”, an appellation of God, (⁽¹⁷⁷⁾Genesis 17:1), and signifies, “which is sufficient”: for God is all sufficient, and is a name that belongs to the Messiah. The angel whom God promised to the Israelites, to go before them in the wilderness, (⁽¹⁷⁸⁾Exodus 23:23), the Jews say ^{f151} is “Metatron” (which is a corruption of the word “mediator”), whose name is as the name of his master. “Metatron” by gematry is “Shaddai, one that is sufficient”: however, certain it is, that the grace of Christ is alone sufficient for all his people, to all saving purposes, in all their times of need. It is alone sufficient, not to the exclusion of the grace of the Father or the Spirit; but in opposition and distinction to anything else, that may be rightly or wrongly called grace; what men generally call common or sufficient grace, which, they say, is given to all men, is a mere chimera; no grace is sufficient but what is effectual, and that

is only the grace of Christ: the light of nature is insufficient to any saving purpose; the Gospel, which is called grace, and is the means of grace, is insufficient of itself to salvation, without the powerful and efficacious grace of Christ going along with it; and so are gifts, whether ordinary or extraordinary: nothing short of the grace of Christ is sufficient grace; and this is sufficient for all the elect of God, Jews and Gentiles, Old and New Testament saints, the family in heaven and in earth, the people of God that are already called, and are to be called, and for the worst and vilest of sinners; and it is sufficient to all saving purposes, to the acceptance of their persons before God, to their justification in his sight, to their pardon and cleansing, to their regeneration and sanctification, to the supply of all their wants, and to their perseverance in grace unto glory; and it is sufficient in all their times of need, in times of bodily affliction, of violent persecution, soul desertion, Satan's temptations, and at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. The reason given to support this answer, and to strengthen the apostle's faith in it, is,

for my strength is made perfect in weakness; by the “strength” of Christ is meant, not his strength as the mighty God, but that communicative strength which he has, and is in him as Mediator, and which saints look to him for, and receive from him; this is “made perfect in” their “weakness”; not that their weakness can add perfection to his strength, for his strength is perfect in itself, not to say anything of the contradiction such a sense carries in it; but the meaning is, that the strength of Christ is made to appear, is illustrated and shines forth in its perfection and glory, in supplying, supporting, and strengthening his people under all their weakness; and if they were not left to some weaknesses in themselves, his strength would not be so manifest; (see ³⁰²²James 2:22). The answer to the apostle's request, supported with this reason, was wonderfully satisfactory to him; wherefore he concludes,

most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities; in the weaknesses which attended either his body or soul, through the buffetings of the angel Satan, rather than in his visions and revelations; or rather than insist upon his departure from him, he is content things should be as they were, since he had such a promise of a sufficiency of grace to bear him up, under and through whatever was the pleasure of God concerning him; and since the strength of Christ was made illustrious through his weakness, so that Satan was not able to make any advantage over him, he is willing to remain in the same posture and condition:

that the power of Christ, says he,

may rest upon me, or “tabernacle over me”; he considered himself as a poor weak feeble creature, and the power of Christ as a tabernacle over him, as the power of God is represented as a garrison about the believer, (⁴⁰⁰⁶1 Peter 1:5), sheltering, preserving, and protecting him from the insults of Satan, in every form and shape; (see ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 4:6), where Christ is said to be a tabernacle, for a place of refuge, and for a covert.

Ver. 10. *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities*, etc..] Not in them simply considered, but as they were made use of to his advantage, for the exercise of his grace, and for his more abundant consolation; and especially as they tended to the glory of Christ, and made his grace, power, and strength the more conspicuous: by infirmities are meant all outward troubles, everything that is mean and abject, distressing and afflicting, whether from Satan or the world; it seems to be a general term, which includes and is explained by the following particulars:

in reproaches; of Satan, the accuser of the brethren, who sometimes reproachfully insinuates that they are hypocrites, and serve God and Christ with mercenary views and selfish ends; and of the men of the world, who traduce them as deceivers, treat them with opprobrious language, and lead them with revilings and contumelies, endeavour to take away their characters, credit, and reputation; the faithful servants of Christ must go through bad report, and suffer shame for the name of Christ; but these reproaches with Moses are esteemed by them greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:

in necessities; not of the soul, the better part, there being a sufficiency of grace in Christ to relieve all its wants; but of the body, the apostle was sometimes reduced to very necessitous circumstances, wanting the common necessities of life, being hungry, thirsty, and naked, and yet cheerful:

in persecutions; from place to place by the enemies of the Gospel, by whom he was severely handled by beating, scourging, and imprisonment; but his stripes were the marks of the Lord Jesus; his chains were his crown, and his prison a palace to him:

in distresses, or “straits”; both as to body and mind, encompassed with such difficulties that he knew not what way to take, or course to steer: and all

for Christ's sake; not for any real crime done by him, but for a profession of Christ, preaching his Gospel, and for the glory of his name; and which made all these afflictions so delightful to him, having in the midst of them the love of God to comfort him, the power and strength of Christ to support him, and the grace of the Spirit to assist him, and the presence of all the three Persons with him; this he suggests to be the ground and reason of his delight and pleasure, in such otherwise disagreeable circumstances:

for when I am weak, then am I strong; when he was attended with all the above mentioned infirmities, when laden with reproaches, surrounded with necessities, followed with persecutions, and brought into the utmost straits and difficulties, and was most sensible of his weakness in himself to bear and go through all these things; then was he upheld by the divine arm, and strengthened by the power of Christ; so that he was not only able to sustain the conflict, but became more than a conqueror, and even to triumph in the midst of these adversities; he could and did readily take the advice in (^{<248D>}Joel 3:10), and express himself in the same language there directed to, and to which he seems to refer, "let the weak say I am strong"; for he that is weak in himself, and sees himself to be so, is strong in Christ, and has a comfortable experience of renewed strength from him, as his day is. The Jews have a saying ^{f152} somewhat like this,

"the righteous even $\mu\upsilon\alpha\zeta\eta\ \tau\mu\ \mu\upsilon\epsilon\lambda\ \eta\ \hat{\eta}\chi\kappa$, "when they are weak strengthen themselves"; as it is said, (^{<048D>}Genesis 48:2), and the wicked, though in their strength, fall, according to (^{<100B>}Esther 7:8)."

Ver. 11. *I am become a fool in glorying*, etc..] This is either to be understood conditionally, if he had acted as a fool in commending himself, or was to be reckoned and called so by others, for glorying of himself, his visions and revelations; or as an ironical concession, allowing himself to be a fool for so doing, as he knew he should be traduced by his enemies; which concession he makes with a view to remove the blame from himself, and cast it upon the Corinthians: ye have compelled me: they were not only the occasion of his glorying, but they had forced him to it by their conduct; for he was obliged either to take this method for the vindication of his character, and preserve his future usefulness, or else to suffer the false apostles to triumph over him, to the great detriment of the Gospel, and of this church at Corinth particularly; whereas both might have been prevented, had they acted the part that became them:

for I ought to have been commended of you; when the false apostles reproached him, and insinuated things among them to his disadvantage, they ought not only to have turned a deaf ear to them, and to have checked and reprov'd them, and so have put a stop to their calumnies; but they should have spoke in commendation of him, and have declared how faithfully he had preached the Gospel to them; how useful he had been to their souls, for conviction, conversion, edification, and comfort; how laborious and indefatigable he had been in his ministry; what success attended him, and what wonderful things were done by him in proof of his divine mission; all which they were conscious of, and could with the utmost safety have affirmed of him:

for in nothing, says he,

am I behind the very chiefest apostles; meaning either the false apostles, who set themselves upon an equality with the true ones, and above him; or rather the real apostles of Christ, and those that were of the greatest note among them, as Peter, James, and John; for though he was behind them in time, yet not in gifts, labour, and usefulness: but lest this should be thought to savour of vain boasting, he adds,

though I be nothing; which may be considered either as a declaration of his own thoughts of himself, and an humble acknowledgment of his own nothingness; that he was nothing as a man, as an Hebrew, a Pharisee, with respect to his external privileges and righteousness, not more and better than others; and nothing as an apostle and a Christian of himself, but was wholly and entirely what he was by the grace of God; or as the judgment and opinion of the false apostles concerning him, who spoke of him, and treated him as a worthless man, of no account, and not to be regarded.

Ver. 12. *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you*, etc..] Not only the doctrine which he preached, the power that attended it, and the success it met with among them, were clear signs and evident proofs of his being sent by Christ; not only they themselves, who were converted under his ministry, were testimonials and seals of his apostleship, but also the many other wonderful works done by him confirmed the same, and showed him to be an apostle, and that he was not a whit behind, but equal to the chiefest of them: nor does he refer them to signs that were wrought by him, among others, and in other places, which were many; but to those which they themselves were witnesses of, and therefore might and ought to have

spoken of them in defence of him; and in order to stop the mouths of the false apostles, a particular enumeration of these signs follows:

in all patience; it is one sign, and what is here mentioned in the first place of an apostle and minister of Christ, that he patiently bears all injuries and indignities, reproaches, persecutions, and all manner of afflictions, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's; and this the apostle did; and had he not been sent by Christ, it is not reasonable to imagine that he would have exposed himself to so many evils and dangers; or would have bore with so much patience the ill usage of men, and particularly the unkindness and ingratitude he met with at Corinth; but he took all patiently, having their good and the glory of Christ at heart:

in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds; meaning preternatural and miraculous performances; such as raising the dead, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, speaking with divers tongues, and the like, which were confirming evidences of apostleship; so *yrwbgw ysn*, “wonders and powers”, or “mighty deeds”, are mentioned together by the Jews^{f153}, as the same things.

Ver. 13. *For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches*, etc..] The apostle here suggests, and appeals to themselves for the truth of it, that in nothing they came short of other churches; that as he was not behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and so they had no reason to be ashamed of him and despise him; neither were they inferior in gifts, grace, and knowledge, to other churches, all which were through his ministry; wherefore they ought to have spoken well of him, and not to have taken the part of the false apostles against him; since all the honour and credit they were in as a church were owing to him as an instrument. The Gospel was first preached to them by an apostle; they were converted under the ministry of an apostle; they were planted and settled as a church by the means of an apostle; and in which respects no church could go beyond them, or boast of more; they had the same Gospel preached to them, and with as much power and purity as other churches; they had received the same Spirit, the same graces, and the same gifts of the Spirit, both ordinary and extraordinary; so that they came behind others in no gift whatever; (see ~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 1:7), and had the same miraculous works done among them, as were in other places, for the confirmation of the Gospel. There was not one thing the apostle could think of, in which they differed from others, and which he mentions;

except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? because he freely preached the Gospel to them, took no wages of them, but chose rather to work with his own hands, and supply his necessities, than to be troublesome to them; in this, indeed, they differed from other churches, who liberally contributed to their ministers, and honourably maintained them:

forgive me this wrong; not that the apostle seriously desired this, or thought that he had done them any real injury, and so acknowledges it; for if any wrong was done hereby, it was to himself, and not them; but it is an ironical way of speaking, and was a sharp rebuke to them, for their ignorance, ingratitude, and negligence.

Ver. 14. *Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you,* etc..] Not that he had been twice at Corinth, and was now about to come a third time; for as yet he had been but once there, when he first preached to them, was the means of their conversion, and settled them in a church state; he had promised them to come a second time, but as yet was prevented; (see ⁴⁴¹⁵1 Corinthians 16:5, ⁴⁰¹⁵2 Corinthians 1:15), and now a third time he had purposed it in his mind, and had prepared for it, and was just ready to come unto them; when he assures them he had not altered his mind, nor should he change his conduct, but steer the same course he had:

and I will not be burdensome to you; he signifies he would preach the Gospel freely to them, and take nothing of them; and this he says lest they should think with themselves, that though he took no stipend of them before, yet when he came again he would:

for I seek not yours; their money and substance, as did the false apostles:

but you; they themselves, their spiritual good and welfare, the comfort, edification, instruction, and salvation of their immortal souls; like a good and faithful shepherd, who sought not the fleece, but the good of the flock; or rather like a loving tender father, that was affectionately concerned for the good of his children:

for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children; not but that children ought to take care of, and provide for their aged and indigent parents, and churches ought to maintain their faithful ministers; but the apostle argues from a common fact which nature and affection direct unto, and have formed into a sort of a law, that parents not only care for their children, bring them up, and provide for them food and

raiment; but as they are blessed by Providence, lay up treasures for them for tithe to come, and not children for their parents; this is neither usual nor necessary, for however, as the case may be, children may be obliged to maintain their parents when grown old and in want, yet not to lay up substance for them for futurity; and by it the apostle suggests, that he was a spiritual father to these Corinthians, and they were his children; for whose spiritual welfare he had the highest concern, and whatever he did was out of no disrespect to them, but from the strongest affection for them.

Ver. 15. *And I will gladly spend*, etc..] Meaning all his time, talents, and strength, which God had bestowed upon him for their spiritual profit and advantage; yea, all that small pittance of worldly goods that he enjoyed: he not only determined to take nothing from them, but was willing to communicate his little substance to them, or spend it in their service; and not only so, but be spent for them:

and be spent for you, or “for your souls”: for the good of them; his sense is, either that he was willing to have his whole substance expended, if it would be of any use to them; or his whole strength exhausted, in laborious preaching to them; or even his life to be laid down for them, was it necessary; which sense is favoured by the Syriac and Arabic versions; all which expressed his tender affection as a spiritual father for them: adding,

though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved; though he loved them more than he did other churches, or than the false apostles loved them, and yet were loved by them less than he was by other churches; or by them, than the false apostles were; or rather the meaning is, that though he increased in his love, and in the expressions of it to them, and they grew colder and more indifferent to him, yet this should not hinder his warmest desires and most earnest endeavours after their spiritual and eternal welfare. This way of speaking strongly expresses his love to them, and tacitly implies the lukewarmness of theirs to him; and yet that it should be no discouragement to him to proceed in doing them all the service he was capable of.

Ver. 16. *But be it so, I did not burden you*, etc..] These words are not spoken by the apostle in his own person of himself, but in the person of his adversaries, and contain a concession and an objection of theirs, but be it so; they granted that he had not burdened the Corinthians, that he had took nothing of them himself for preaching the Gospel; they owned that he had preached it freely; this was so clear a point, and so flagrant a case, that they

could not deny it; yet they insinuated to the Corinthians, and objected to the apostle, that though he did not receive anything from them with his own hands, yet he craftily and cunningly made use of others to drain their purses, and receive it for him; and which is suggested in the next clause:

nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile; so say the false apostles of me; for these are not the words of the apostle in his own person; nor to be understood of any spiritual craft, or lawful cunning and prudent artifices used by him, to allure and draw the Corinthians into a good liking and opinion of the Gospel and of his ministry, and so caught them, and was the happy means of their conversion; but they are spoken in the person of the false apostles, charging him with a wicked and criminal craftiness, by making use of other persons in a sly underhanded way, to get this church's money, when he pretended to preach the Gospel freely; to which he answers in the next verse.

Ver. 17. *Did I make a gain of you*, etc..] He appeals to the Corinthians against such calumnies and false insinuations, whether ever he had circumvented them in such a manner, or had ever used such artful methods to pillage them; or whether ever he had discovered any covetous disposition towards anything of theirs; or had employed any persons to draw out their substance from them, and get it for himself: he owns he had sent some persons to them on different errands, and asks if he had dealt fraudulently with them,

by any of them whom, says he,

I have sent to you: he desires them to name one single person of the many who came to them from him, that had received any money from them for him; or that they had any reason to believe he had employed for such purposes; and if they could not pitch on a single instance, they ought therefore to look upon this as a downright slander and calumny.

Ver. 18. *I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother*, etc..] The apostle proceeds to mention one or two persons that he had sent unto them, and desires to know whether they could charge them with any such practices. He had desired, exhorted, and encouraged Titus to go unto them, and collect money from them; but not for either of themselves, but for the poor saints at Jerusalem; and he sent another brother along with him, who is by some supposed to be Luke, to be a companion of him, and an assistant to

him; and who was a witness of what he did, and for what purpose he was sent, and how he behaved:

did Titus make a gain of you? did he greedily desire your substance? did he show an avaricious temper, or a covetous inclination after your money? did he by any methods extort it from you? say if Titus, or the brother with him, received anything from you, either on their own, or my account?

walked we not in the same Spirit? in the same Spirit of God, being directed and influenced by him; or in the same disposition of mind, being agreed and determined to preach the Gospel freely, and receive nothing for it:

walked we not in the same steps? took the same methods, lived the same course of life, working with their own hands to supply their wants, rather than be burdensome to others: the apostle suggests, that where are the same Spirit, temper, disposition, and principles, there will be the same works and actions; and as for covetousness, it is neither agreeable to the Spirit of God, nor to the spirit of a Christian.

Ver. 19. *Again, think you that we excuse ourselves to you?* etc..] The apostle would not have the Corinthians imagine, that by what he had said once and again in this epistle, he meant to excuse himself from coming to them, for he really and sincerely intended it; or that by this long defence of himself against the false apostles, he designed so much an apology for himself, or that he used any feigned words, or artful methods, to exculpate himself from any charge against him, particularly that of covetousness just mentioned; for he had no view to cover himself by studied apologies, and set orations, and evade anything exhibited against him, and make himself look innocent when guilty; it was not with any such intention he had dwelt so long on this subject:

we speak before God in Christ; in all sincerity and uprightness of soul, without colour, guile, or deceit, calling God and Christ to witness the truth of what was said; the apostle spoke all he did, as in the presence of the omniscient God; and as one in Christ, and a preacher of his Gospel, that would not deliver an untruth knowingly, for the whole world:

but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edification; it was not for himself so much, for his own credit, reputation, and glory, he did what he did; had this been the case, he would not have said the half part of what he had; but it was for their sake, out of love to them, that they might be built

up and established in the faith of the Gospel, and not be carried away with the error of the wicked.

Ver. 20. *For I fear lest when I come*, etc..] This fear arose from his fatherly affection for them, and care of them:

I shall not find you such as I would; truly penitent for former sins, thoroughly reformed in life and manners, zealous for God, Christ, and the Gospel, and hearty lovers of one another:

and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; sharp in his reproofs and admonitions, severe in his corrections and censures, and lawfully using the authority he had from Christ, to punish incorrigible offenders:

lest there be debates; or “strifes”, or contentions among them, about words to no profit, or about their ministers, as before; one being for Paul, and another for Apollos, and another for Cephas:

envyings: at each other's gifts, or “jealousies” of one another, and evil surmisings:

wraths; breaking out into words and actions, which discover hatred of mind, a malignant spirit, quite contrary to that of the Gospel:

strifes: law suits before heathen magistrates; contentions in the church who shall be greatest; or about lesser matters of religion, or things indifferent, vain, and trifling, and kept up merely for the sake of victory:

backbitings; speaking evil of one another, detracting from, hurting, or taking away each other's character and good name:

whisperings; secretly sowing discords among friends, and privately suggesting evil things of each other:

swellings; with pride and conceit of themselves, because of their riches, learning, and eloquence, and looking with disdain upon others:

tumults; at church meetings, interrupting one another, going into parties, and making rents and schisms.

Ver. 21. *And lest when I come again*, etc..] Another thing which he feared would be the case when he came again to them, that he himself should be afflicted and distressed, seeing them in a disorderly and dissolute course of

life, be obliged to punish them, which would be an humiliation and matter of grief to him:

my God will humble me; instead of rejoicing in the fruit of his labours, that they were not in vain, he signifies that he should have great sorrow of heart; and whereas he had promised himself much pleasure and comfort in visiting them, it would be the reverse; and inasmuch as he had boasted of them to others, he should be ashamed:

and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, or “before”; not before conversion, but before the writing of this or the former epistle; for nothing was more grieving, and occasioned more sorrow and humiliation to the apostle, than the unbecoming walk of professors; and nothing more sensibly affects a faithful minister of the Gospel:

and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed. The city of Corinth was famous, or rather infamous, for unclean practices; as fornication, adultery, lasciviousness in words and deeds, and other unnatural lusts; “Corinthian whores” was a common proverb; nor was it proper for persons to go to Corinth, there were so many snares for lust and uncleanness; there were said to be above a thousand prostitutes in the temple of Venus there^{f154}; hence the very great impurities and wickedness, which many of the members of this church were guilty of, may be accounted for; some of them had repented, others not, which was the great concern of the apostle: and from hence we may learn, that gracious souls may be suffered to fall into great sins; and that when they are truly brought to repentance, they ought to be restored to communion with the church; but impenitent ones are to be cut off, and remain so, till brought to a due sense of their evils.