

THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT  
OF CHRIST IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

by

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The subject of the Judgment Seat of Christ is one which has always tantalized students of the Word of God. Many fine works have been written on the topic, usually centering around the material found in 2 Corinthians 5:10. However, it is the conviction of this author that the primary thrust of 2 Corinthians 5:10 is not the Judgment Seat of Christ for all believers, but an evaluation of the life and ministry of ministers of the Gospel. In an effort to determine the central thought which rested in Paul's mind as he wrote the verse, this thesis will examine the scope of the Judgment Seat by means of an evaluation of the context of the verse and the grammatical and syntactical features of the verse. Secondly, this thesis will examine the nature of the Judgment Seat by means of an evaluation of the terminology which Paul used.

The matter of contextual analysis becomes quite involved in the Corinthian epistles because of the large number of contacts which the Apostle had with the church. It is necessary to notice the situation surrounding the writing of the first canonical epistle, with the contacts which preceded that writing. Then it is necessary to evaluate the setting in which the second canonical epistle was written, again noticing the contacts which preceded its writing. Without properly understanding this important background material one cannot enter into the mind of Paul and understand his reason for writing 2 Corinthians 5:10. As a further aid in examining the background of the verse in question, one must examine the immediate context. In 2 Corinthians one notices an extensive section dealing with the ministry (2:14-6:10), and it is within this discussion that Paul mentions the accountability of 2 Corinthians 5:10. With a full view of the contextual situation of both 1 and 2 Corinthians, and with a full understanding of the immediate context of 2 Corinthians 5:10, it will be seen that Paul is dealing, not with believers in general, but with ministers of the Gospel.

The nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ, as it applies to those whose lives are given over to ministering the Word of God, is determined through an analysis of the terminology of the verse. In the first place, this evaluation will be of a revelatory nature. That is, it will be a total unveiling of the works and service of the minister. Secondly, it will be an evaluation which will include even the most minute details. One's attitudes, motives, and goals will be included. Finally, this examination will involve reward. From the terms used by Paul it may be observed that this will include both positive and negative rewards.

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## INTRODUCTION

The proper interpretation of any passage of Scripture will be determined by the careful application of sound hermeneutical principles which the student of the Word of God should have learned in his formal training. These hermeneutical principles will include a careful exegesis of the passage in question with proper attention being given to the etymology of the words and their syntax within the passage; and, sound hermeneutics will include an analysis of the history and culture involved in the background of the passage. Further, the careful student of the Bible will want to give diligent consideration to the matter of context. The study of any portion of Scripture which ignores these principles in their specific application is in danger of being woefully inadequate, or even erroneous.

2 Corinthians 5:10 is an example of a passage which has been the victim of an inadequate application of proper hermeneutical principles. Much has been done over the years in the areas of exegesis and background studies in relationship to 2 Corinthians 5:10, but the area of context has been largely ignored. The result of this lack of attention to the matter of context has been a loss of the original thrust which the Apostle Paul was making as he wrote this verse. It will be the purpose of this thesis to reevaluate 2 Corinthians 5:10 by building upon the fine exegetical work which has been done, and by examining the context of the verse to determine Paul's original purpose in writing it.

The traditional interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:10, which has been accepted by the vast majority of students of Scripture, is summed up in the following statement: "We must all, apostles and the rest, whether living or dead at Christ's coming, be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Nearly every commentator who has written on this verse takes the view that Paul is here referring to the eschatological event during which every believer will be examined by the Lord concerning his works. The examination will not involve the question of salvation but of reward for faithful service and loss for worthless service. Though not speaking directly concerning 2 Corinthians 5:10, Gromacki presents a fine summary of the traditional view of the verse when he says:

Every Christian will be praised at the judgment seat of Christ, which occurs just after Christ returns to take Christians into heaven (1 Co 4:5). . . . Rewards are given for quality work and life-character built upon the saving foundation of Christ. Valueless works will be burned up, and the person will suffer the loss of reward.<sup>2</sup>

While the above evaluation of the Judgment Seat of Christ may be valid and accurate, certain questions need to be raised concerning the applicability of 2 Corinthians 5:10 to such a view.

The purpose of this thesis is not to discredit the teaching of the Judgment Seat of Christ, but to examine the contribution which 2 Corinthians 5:10 makes to that doctrine. There will be a time of

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in the New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 179-180.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Glenn Gromacki, Salvation is Forever (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 95.

accountability for believers, based on such passages as: Romans 14:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 5:9, and many others. However, 2 Corinthians 5:10 does not have reference to an accountability of all believers, but of those involved in a ministry of the gospel. The plan of this thesis, then, will be to examine the text and the context to determine the scope of the Judgment Seat of Christ as presented in 2 Corinthians 5:10; and, having determined the scope of the event mentioned, to move to an analysis of the nature of the judgment.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCOPE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

#### IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

The discussion of the Judgment Seat of Christ which has been completed in the past has centered around the subject of the judgment which is involved. The question of the persons involved has been, for the most part, overlooked. Therefore, it will be the purpose of this first chapter to evaluate the scope of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10 in order to determine to whom Paul was making reference before any discussion is conducted in regard to the nature of the event.

#### A Contextual Analysis

The greatest area of failure in the various interpretations of 2 Corinthians 5:10 lies in the area of context. The question of why Paul wrote this verse will be determined, to a large degree, by an examination of not only the immediate context, but also the broad context of 2 Corinthians and the purpose for the writing of 1 Corinthians. To ignore the preceding verses and 1 Corinthians, as has been done, is to miss the thrust of Paul's thought.

#### The Immediate Predecessor To The Epistle

The study of a portion of 2 Corinthians requires, by its very nature, a study of the situation surrounding the first canonical epistle

written to the church in Corinth. The student of the Word of God finds a wealth of information in the Book of Acts and in the two epistles to the Corinthians concerning the church in that city and with a little effort is able to reconstruct the situation and background of these two important epistles. The purpose of this section is to explore Corinth, learn of her people, witness the founding of the church there and finally, trace the purpose for which Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

#### The city of Corinth

The ancient city of Corinth was located on a narrow isthmus which connected the Peloponnesian peninsula with the continent. On the eastern side of the isthmus lay the Saronic Gulf and on the western side lay the Corinthian Gulf. This position between these two gulfs provided Corinth with a very strategic location commercially as merchants often preferred to carry their goods across the four mile wide isthmus to ships waiting on the other side rather than to hazard the treacherous waters south of the Peloponnesus. In addition, the trip around the southern tip of the Peloponnesus was much longer and thus more expensive than the overland journey. The ships were hauled across the land by means of tracks and rollers which were constructed for that purpose. Nero began a water canal across the isthmus, but it was not until late in the nineteenth century that the canal was completed.

The advantageous position of the city of Corinth provided her with the opportunity to handle much of the trade between Italy and Asia. Further, Corinth, because of her location at the head of the Corinthian isthmus, controlled the commerce to and from the peninsula and mainland

Greece. The commerce of the city, because of its location near three major harbors (Cenchrae, Schoenus, and Lechaenum), made it a thriving metropolis.

In Paul's day there were approximately two hundred thousand free citizens in Corinth, plus a half million slaves.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the free citizens were Greeks who were lovers of wisdom and who possessed a factious spirit. The Roman contingent was a minority, but because Corinth was a Roman colony the Roman population was dominant. The inhabitants of the city, as a whole, were bent on pleasure and the satisfaction of their own desires. Because of the influence of the heavy commercial traffic and the seaports there was a wide variety of ethnic and cultural background present at any given time, and the result was a city of great sin. Hiebert quotes Shaw as saying:

At night its streets were hideous with the brawls and lewd songs of drunken revelry. In the daytime its markets and squares swarmed with Jewish pedlars, foreign tradors, sailors, soldiers, athletes in training, boxers, wrestlers, charioteers, racing-men, betting-men, courtesans, slaves, idlers, and parasites of every description--a veritable pandemonium!<sup>2</sup>

The condition of Corinth morally was so bad that it became customary to refer to a great sinner as a Corinthian, and in dramatic productions an actor playing the part of a Corinthian always came on stage drunk.<sup>3</sup> Though the Corinthians prided themselves on their interest in

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<sup>1</sup>Steven Barabas, "Corinth," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction To The Pauline Epistles (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

knowledge, their greater interest in pleasure and self-indulgence resulted in a very shallow and superficial intellectualism.

The city of Corinth, in addition to being a center of commerce, was also a religious center. In the old city of Corinth, atop the nearly two-thousand feet high Acrocorinthus, was a huge temple to the goddess Aphrodite, and a thousand female prostitutes called Hieroduli were employed in the worship of this pagan goddess. There were also temples of Athena, Apollo, Poseidon, Hermes. Far from being a quieting and steady-ing influence on the inhabitants of Corinth, the worship of these gods and goddesses, especially Aphrodite, caused the city to abound even more in sin. Even as the term Corinthian meant to be a great sinner, the term to Corinthianize meant to engage in prostitution.

The city of Corinth, with her great commerce and materialism, the people of Corinth, with their pleasure seeking, and the morals of Corinth, with the horrible sin of the temples, provided a striking mission field for the Apostle Paul who lived there for more than a year and a half. The city of Corinth was in desperate need of the gospel message, and in God's providence Paul was able to proclaim that message.

#### The church at Corinth

The church at Corinth was founded by Paul [1 Cor. 3:6; 3:10; 4:15] on his second missionary journey. After the dispute which occasioned the council at Jerusalem was settled, Paul departed with Silas to revisit the churches he had established previously in order to strengthen and comfort them, and in order to relay the findings of the council at Jerusalem.

On Paul's second journey he passed through Derbe and Lystra, where he added Timothy to his group. Following the direct leading of the Holy Spirit concerning the field of ministry the three missionaries made their way from Troas to Philippi where they ministered for a time with both favorable results and some persecution. Leaving Philippi they came to Thessalonica where they experienced great opposition and had to leave the city. Fleeing Thessalonica by night they came to Berea where many believed as a result of their preaching and teaching. However, the Jews who had opposed Paul in Thessalonica came to Berea as soon as they heard that he was still preaching in the synagogue. Leaving Silas and Timothy in Berea, Paul went to Athens where he ministered both in the synagogue and in the market place. While in Athens Paul preached his important, though interrupted, sermon on Mars' Hill.

The next step on Paul's journey was the city of Corinth, fifty-three miles west of Athens at the end of the Corinthian isthmus. When Paul arrived in Corinth, or shortly thereafter, he met Aquila, a Jew from Rome, and his wife Priscilla. Aquila and Priscilla had been forced to leave Rome because of the edict of Claudius, and had settled in Corinth where they practiced their tent-making trade. Paul was able to stay with them and to help in the business because he too was a tentmaker. During his stay in Corinth Paul was not content to work merely as a tentmaker, but began faithfully to minister the Word of God in the synagogue. He proclaimed the gospel every sabbath until Silas and Timothy came to him from Madeconia bearing a gift from the church at Philippi. With the gift available to meet his financial needs, Paul was able to concentrate his efforts on proclaiming the gospel in the synagogue. However, with Paul's

increased missionary activity came opposition from the Jews. This opposition forced Paul to move to a house adjacent to the synagogue which was owned by Titus Justus. From his new headquarters Paul was able to preach and teach effectively, especially after being assured by the Lord of his safety, and many were saved including Crispus, the leader of the synagogue.

The Jews refused to give up their opposition to Paul and had him taken before Gallio, the new proconsul of Achaia, who threw the case out of court. The refusal of Gallio to hear the case against Paul opened the door for an extended ministry of over one and a half years. During this lengthy stay Paul founded the church and taught the Word of God to the infant assembly.

The church at Corinth was made up primarily of Greeks, although there were a few Jews (e.g., Crispus), and Romans. Within the ranks of the Corinthian church there were slaves as well as freemen (1 Cor. 7: 21-22; 12:13), but the majority were no doubt from very humble backgrounds (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

The life-style from which most of these Corinthians had come had a great effect on their lives even after their conversion. Their fondness for disputes and factions led to the difficulties discussed by Paul in chapter one, verse 11 and following. Also, their deep involvement in the sinful practices of the general populace of Corinth gave them difficulty in their new life. Of their condition Hodge says:

A church composed of people of these characteristics, with a large infusion of Jewish converts, educated in the midst of refined heathenism, surrounded by all the incentives to indulgence, taught to consider pleasure, if not the chief good, yet in any form a good, plied on every hand by philosophers and false teachers, might

be expected to exhibit the very characteristics which in this epistle are brought so clearly into view.<sup>1</sup>

The church was plagued by party spirit, by immorality, by confusion regarding foods offered to idols, and by a "turbulent and independent spirit."<sup>2</sup> Such was the state of this new body of believers at Corinth. Yet, Paul commends them and calls them the ones "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2), because they were, in fact, believers. However, because of the problems which existed in Corinth, Paul was to have many additional contacts with this church beyond his founding and initial ministry.

#### The contacts with Corinth

Acts 18:18-22 details the movements of Paul following the ministry in Corinth and reveals that he left Corinth, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him, and sailed to Ephesus. After reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue for a short time Paul journeyed to Jerusalem, and then returned to Ephesus where he enjoyed a ministry of three years duration (Acts 19:10; 20:31). Due to the close contact between Ephesus and Corinth by means of the ship communications, Paul was able to keep in close contact with the church he had founded in Corinth. The result of this close contact was that Paul had at least two written contacts with the church in Corinth and several verbal contacts prior to the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

first canonical letter. These contacts are difficult to arrange chronologically and therefore the order proposed here is not dogmatic but only a suggestion of the order of Paul's contacts with Corinth prior to 1 Corinthians.

The first contact which Paul had with Corinth following his ministry there was probably the letter to which he makes reference in 1 Corinthians 5:9 when he says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators . . . ." The precise details of this letter have not been preserved though some scholars believe that 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 make up the contents of that letter. The purpose of this thesis is not to solve this question but merely to make note of the fact that the text does make reference to a previous letter. Whether or not the section in 2 Corinthians is, in fact, the letter in question, Paul does give some hint as to its contents in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. Evidently he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians warning them against close association with their lost, pagan neighbors. The problems of former relationships and associations were a real dilemma for the Corinthians and Paul was concerned that they make a clean break. However, the Corinthians misunderstood Paul's message in the first letter and were making it a policy to have no contact at all with unbelievers. Thus, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 explains that he meant that they were not to keep company with Christians who were living immoral lives because they had not made the break, not to break off all contacts with unbelievers.

About the time Paul received word that the Corinthians had misunderstood the purpose of his first letter he also received word from members of the household of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11) that there are

factions and divisions among the believers in the church. And, about this time, Paul received a visit by Fortunatus, Stephanas, and Achaicus [1 Cor. 16:17] who no doubt brought Paul a letter from the Corinthians containing many questions which they desired Paul to answer. Also, during this period Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). 1 Corinthians 4:17 shows that Timothy, at least, also went to Corinth, though he did not carry 1 Corinthians [1 Cor. 16:10].

With the news that the Corinthians had misunderstood his first letter, and with the information concerning the factions and problems of immorality taking place in the Corinthian church, Paul sets himself to write the first canonical letter to Corinth. The church at Corinth was, indeed, a needy church and her problems and struggles occupied a great deal of the apostle's time and energy.

#### The first canonical letter to Corinth

The report from the household of Chloe, coupled with the report brought by Fortunatus, Stephanas, and Achaicus and the general concern which the apostle felt for the Corinthian church prompted him to pen the epistle which appears in Scripture as 1 Corinthians. Paul was greatly concerned for the spiritual welfare of these new believers and could not stand by and allow serious problems to develop in their midst without attempting to propose a solution.

The variety of outlines suggested for 1 Corinthians is amazing and reveals the unusual style of the epistle. Paul is not delivering a doctrinal treatise, but is attempting to solve some very practical problems which have arisen in the church in Corinth. However, though

a precise outline will not be suggested, a general breakdown of the contents of the epistle needs to be given. In the first six chapters Paul deals with the matters which have been brought to his attention in the report from the household of Chloe. In this first broad section Paul deals with the matters of factions, incest and lawsuits. Because of their propensity to divide and argue these Corinthians found themselves easily slipping into factions even in their Christian lives. They grouped themselves around certain human leaders and began to cause divisions. Also, Paul heard reports of the immorality which was taking place in the church and immediately set forth the proper action to be taken. In addition, it had come to the attention of Paul that these believers were not trying to solve their differences within the assembly but were taking their disputes before heathen courts. All of these issues demanded prompt attention and Paul was not negligent in his duty.

Chapters seven through sixteen give Paul's answers to the questions put forth in the letter brought to him by the three visitors from Corinth. The fact that Paul is answering these questions is seen by the form which begins each of the sections in the last half of the epistle. In 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, and 16:1 Paul uses the phrase "now concerning" or a close equivalent to show a new subdivision in his reply to the questions of the Corinthians. In this section he deals with the matters of marriage, meats offered to idols, disorders in the public worship, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. The matters which plagued the Corinthian believers were very practical and Paul provides very practical answers.

A word needs to be said concerning the matter of leadership in the Corinthian church, as it is this problem which will surface later in the discussion concerning the purpose of 2 Corinthians. Tenney suggests, as a cause for the problems in the church, "Apollos and Cephas had removed to other fields, and the church, bereft of adequate leadership, had fallen into confusion."<sup>1</sup> This problem was acute and led to more serious problems later when those in Corinth began to question Paul's apostleship. The Corinthians, because they lacked good leadership, began to be self-satisfied in their own ruling and ceased to respect the authority which Paul had over them. This fact will be a primary consideration concerning the question of Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians. After rehearsing the reasons for Paul's writing 1 Corinthians, Kling makes the following parenthetical comment, "to these we may add, to reestablish his own authority and vindicate his own character and style of preaching from the attacks of enemies who had crept into the church during his absence, and assailed his Apostleship."<sup>2</sup>

The problem of an absence of sound leadership opened the door for those whose purpose and motives were less than adequate to come into the assembly and begin to take charge. Concerning these new leaders, who were causing the division, Calvin says

In Paul's absence false apostles had infiltrated into the place. They did not come [in my opinion at any rate] to upset the Church

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<sup>1</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Survey (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Friedrich Kling, "Corinthians," trans. by Philip Schaff, in Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 14.

with obviously unorthodox teaching, or to damage the orthodox teaching intentionally, as it were. There were three reasons for their coming. First of all, being proud of their brilliant and showy oratory, one should rather say, being swollen-headed about their empty and bombastic language, they were out to treat the simplicity of Paul and even the very Gospel, with contempt. Secondly, because of their ambition, they aimed at breaking the Church up into different factions. Finally, indifferent to everything except the good opinion they wanted people to have of them, they came in order to make it their business to increase their own reputation, rather than to promote the Kingdom of Christ and the well-being of the people.<sup>1</sup>

Against the backdrop of leaders seeking self-glory and the praise of men, Paul wrote concerning the true test of a man's ministry in 1 Corinthians chapter three. Then in chapter four, he explained that, as a minister of the gospel, he is not concerned with the praise or judgment of men but only of God. This concept will be key to a proper understanding of what he writes in 2 Corinthians.

The Corinthian church was filled with people who were new believers and who had a very sordid background. The result of this background was that they were susceptible to many kinds of problems in their new lives as Christians. When the false teachers came into their midst and began to promote division and faction they easily slipped into the factious frame of mind which characterized them before their salvation; and, their immoral background also led them quickly into areas of conduct which were unbecoming for a believer. When Paul heard of these problems and when he learned of their questions regarding the Christian life he immediately wrote 1 Corinthians in order to straighten out some of the difficulties and in order to answer their questions. However,

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. by John W. Fraser, in vol. IX of Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960], p. 7.

in Paul's absence certain men had come into the church and were causing problems among the believers. These men would ultimately create an unwholesome attitude toward the very ministry of the apostle Paul. This attitude of not respecting his teaching or authority would result in a continued contact with the church and finally with the writing of 2 Corinthians.

#### The Important Thrust of the Epistle

The first canonical epistle of Paul to the Corinthians does not exist in isolation. As was mentioned above, further contacts with these believers were necessary and were undertaken prior to the second canonical epistle. It will be the purpose of this section to examine the contacts which Paul had with the Corinthian church between 1 and 2 Corinthians, and to examine the purpose of 2 Corinthians.

#### The contacts prior to the epistle

Scholars are divided in their interpretation of the visits and contacts which Paul had with Corinth between 1 and 2 Corinthians. For the purposes of this thesis the view which has been termed the modern or "critical"<sup>1</sup> view will be followed. However, for the sake of clarity, the contrasting views will be surveyed.

The questions center around two areas: 1) the so-called painful visit; and 2) the so-called severe letter. In regard to the painful visit Guthrie suggests that there are only three positions which may be

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<sup>1</sup>Hiebert, An Introduction To The Pauline Epistles, p. 136.

taken: 1) the view that the visit did not take place at all; 2) the view that the visit took place prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians; 3) the view that the visit took place after the writing of 1 Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> The first view, that the visit did not take place at all, is based on a faulty interpretation of the phrase "the third time I am coming to you" (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1). Those who hold this view believe that Paul was speaking only of intent to visit Corinth and not of actual visits.<sup>2</sup> The second view, that the visit took place prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians, is based on the close connections between the two epistles. Hiebert summarizes the main argument for this view when he says

More explicit is the connection between 2 Corinthians 1:13-17, 23 and 1 Corinthians 16:5-6. Previous to 1 Corinthians Paul had announced his intention of giving Corinth a double visit while on his way to and from Macedonia. But the troubled conditions in Corinth caused him to change the plans for their sake. This change in plans, announced in 1 Corinthians 16:5, was seized upon by his critics as a sign of fickleness. Accordingly, in the Second Epistle Paul found it necessary to defend himself against the charge and to explain the reasons for the change in plans (2 Cor. 1:23-2:4).<sup>3</sup>

The third view, that the visit took place after the writing of 1 Corinthians, and the view which this thesis supports, holds that the sequence of events was as follows:

1. Approximately the same time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he sent Timothy to Corinth in order to receive a first-hand account of the state

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 427-429.

<sup>2</sup> James Denney, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," in The Expositor's Bible, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, p. 139.

of the church in Corinth. Timothy did not carry the letter to the church [1 Cor. 16:10], but was expected to arrive at about the same time as the letter.

2. Timothy returned to Paul with the report that the church was still having very serious problems. In fact, Timothy reported that those men who had crept in were denying Paul's right and authority to tell the church what to do.

3. Paul, with his heart torn with anguish because of the sad state of affairs in Corinth, rushed to the church with the intent of seeing the problems solved. This visit was the painful visit. The nature of this painful visit mitigates strongly against the possibility that it could be the founding visit recorded in the book of Acts. Paul would not have spoken of this very profitable visit in the terms which he uses in 2 Corinthians 2:1, because it was a joyous time of great strides being made for the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 2:1 Paul uses the word λύπη which, according to Arndt and Gingrich, means "grief, sorrow, pain of mind or spirit, affliction."<sup>1</sup> This is hardly a term which would be true of such a successful visit as that recorded in Acts 18. Thus, it seems to be clear that the visit to which Paul referred in 2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; and 13:1 was a separate visit altogether and most logically fits in the period between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians.

The second area of dispute involves the severe letter. Again, Guthrie suggests three basic understandings regarding the severe letter:

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<sup>1</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, trans. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], p. 483.

1) the severe letter is 1 Corinthians; 2) the severe letter is preserved partially in 2 Corinthians 10-13; 3) the severe letter is lost.<sup>1</sup>

The first view, that the severe letter is 1 Corinthians, is proposed by Denney on the basis of the very close correspondences between 1 and 2 Corinthians. Of these correspondences he says, "the coincidences in detail would be very striking under any circumstances; but in combination with the fact that the two Epistles, as has just been shown by the explanation of the change of purpose about the journey, are in the closest connexion with each other, they seem to me to come as nearly as possible to demonstration."<sup>2</sup> In relationship to Denney's remarks Hiebert states:

If this close connection between the two epistles can be accepted, it removes the ground for most of the hypothetical reconstructions of the critical view. Then the letter to which Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 2:4 and 7:8, 12 is our First Corinthians. Likewise the offender in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and 7:12 is then to be identified with the offender of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.<sup>3</sup>

The second view, that the severe letter is partially preserved in 2 Corinthians 10-13, is based on the concept that 2 Corinthians is not a unit but that it is a combination of two distinct letters. Concerning this view Harrison states:

A fairly common position in critical circles holds that this letter is not lost, but has been preserved in whole or in part in II Corinthians 10-13. The way has been prepared for this supposition by the observation that these closing chapters seem out of place in the sense that they are filled with criticism and invective, whereas the opening chapters are characterized by gratitude for restored relations and by affection for the Corinthians. This exchange of warmth for censure is regarded as a faulty approach psychologically, one

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<sup>1</sup>Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, pp. 429-437.

<sup>2</sup>Denney, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, p. 139.

which Paul would not have made, for by making it he would have risked destroying all the good will he had built up in the previous portion.<sup>1</sup>

Harrison continues by showing that this view is not without objection because it charges the Corinthians with gross carelessness in the handling of Paul's letters, and because the latter portion of 2 Corinthians is silent about the individual who caused Paul so much grief, while he is mentioned in the first section; and, finally, the latter portion of 2 Corinthians does not conform to Paul's description of the severe letter in 2 Corinthians 2:4.<sup>2</sup>

The third view, that the severe letter is lost, and the one which this thesis supports, contends that we have no guarantee that we have all of Paul's other letters, and that this letter "apparently dealt with some personal opponent of the apostle" and "did not contain matter of sufficient general interest to be preserved."<sup>3</sup> Harrison suggests that "the suggestion of Dibelius is as good as any, that after reconciliation between Paul and the church this document may have been disposed of by mutual consent."<sup>4</sup>

The sequence of events, then, which took place between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians would be as follows:

1. Paul sent Timothy to learn of the affairs of the church in Corinth.

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<sup>1</sup>Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 285.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>3</sup>Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, p. 437.

<sup>4</sup>Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 287.

2. Timothy returned to Paul with his gloomy report of the continuing problems at Corinth.

3. Paul visits Corinth in an attempt to clear the air concerning their difficulties and concerning his apostolic authority. This visit has been called the painful visit.

4. The painful visit proved to be unsuccessful. Tenney writes, "and while there he had been grossly insulted and his counsel had been rejected."<sup>1</sup> He further summarizes the result of Paul's visit when he says,

Rival self-styled "apostles," who drew their support from the churches and who boasted of their Jewish ancestry and of their activity as ministers of Christ, had invaded Corinth and had belittled Paul to the church (see II Cor. 10, 11). Furthermore, the offending members of the church had been decidedly unrepentant (12: 21). The situation was tense.<sup>2</sup>

5. Paul wrote the severe letter in a last attempt to solve the problems in Corinth. This letter was written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" and "with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4) as Paul poured out his heart to these sinning believers.

6. Titus carried this letter to Corinth (2 Cor. 12:18) and was to return to Paul with a report concerning its reception.

7. Paul moved from Ephesus to Troas to wait for Titus but was unable to bear the uncertainty and so he moved on to Macedonia to wait (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

8. When Titus met Paul and delivered the message that the situation at Corinth had improved, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians.

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<sup>1</sup>Tenney, New Testament Survey, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 298-299.

### The purpose of the epistle

Titus brought to Paul a report that the situation in Corinth had greatly improved and Paul could now proceed with his plans for a third visit to the church. Tasker provides an excellent summary of the report of Titus:

We can imagine therefore the mixed feelings with which Paul awaited Titus' return in Macedonia, and the comfort which his report brought him. The worst, he learned, was now over. The majority of the Corinthians had shown great zeal on the apostle's behalf, and great sorrow at the pain which recent events had caused him (vii. 7). They had been genuinely grieved by the 'painful' letter, but their grief was not born of personal annoyance or wounded pride; it was not the sorrow of the world, but a godly sorrow productive of good works (vii. 9). The offending person had been duly dealt with, although the Corinthians had not been unanimous about the degree of the punishment that should be inflicted (ii. 6-8). The 'boasts' that the apostle had made to Titus to the effect that the mass of the Corinthians were really loyal at heart were proved to have been not in vain (vii. 14). Titus himself had returned with his affection for them greatly increased (vii. 15).<sup>1</sup>

However, even though the report from Corinth was vastly improved, there were still some problems. The false teachers who were in Corinth were still not willing to bow to the authority of the apostle. They were actively engaged in an attempt to undermine his authority and to discredit his ministry; and, these false teachers were experiencing some degree of success among the members of the church. In this regard Calvin says:

some wicked men were still refusing to acknowledge Paul's authority and persisting in their obstinacy. The fact that Paul has still to dwell so much upon his own bona fides and the authority of his office is a sign that their confidence in him was not yet completely established. He himself expressly complains of some who have treated his first epistle with scorn rather than accepted the help it

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<sup>1</sup>R.V.G. Tasker, "The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. by R.V.G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 21.

contained.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, because of the continuing problems in Corinth, Paul writes this second canonical letter to deal with the situation. Of the purpose of the epistle Hughes says, "this letter, accordingly, was written largely with the purpose of refuting the accusations and insinuations against him with which these intruders had been poisoning the minds of the believers at Corinth."<sup>2</sup> Gundry titles 2 Corinthians "the concept of Paul concerning his own ministry."<sup>3</sup> Hiebert summarizes the purpose as being "to re-establish fully his apostolic ministry in the Corinthian church."<sup>4</sup>

The style of the epistle is unique when compared to Paul's other epistles. This letter is very personal and exposes the heart of the apostle as he defends himself against those who would challenge his authority and his motives. He sought to make it clear that he did not minister among them for personal gain or glory, but for their own good and for the glory of God. The statement which he makes regarding his ministry in the Thessalonian church might well have been his statement to the Corinthians: "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Th. 2:8). Paul's ministry and motives were continually being called into question by those who opposed him wherever

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. by T.A. Smail, in vol. X of Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. xvi.

<sup>3</sup>Robert H. Gundry, A Survey of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 284.

<sup>4</sup>Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, p. 147.

he went, and the situation was no different in Corinth. Thus, his purpose in writing this letter was to plead with them to understand his motives, not only in ministering to them, but in all of his ministry. In commenting on the style of this epistle Findlay says, "it is intensely personal, made up of explanation, defence, protestation, appeal, reproach, invective, threatening, with a vein of subduing pathos, blended with the most subtle irony, running through the whole."<sup>1</sup> The glimpse into the heart of the great apostle which this epistle provides sheds much light on the understanding of the context of 2 Corinthians 5:10 as well as on the meaning of the verse itself.

#### The Immediate Context of the Verse

The matter of the general purpose of 2 Corinthians has been discussed in the previous section, but in order to fully understand the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:10 attention must now be given to the immediate context of the verse. The outline of the book is not easily determined and each author reaches his own conclusions. However, the outline suggested by Hiebert seems to be the most comprehensive and represents the best understanding of the breakdown of the epistle. He proposes the following major divisions:

- I. **CONSOLATION: PAUL'S TRIALS AND COMFORTS AS A PREACHER**  
[1:12-7:16]
  1. Explanation: The personal vindication [1:12-2:11]
  2. Exposition: The nature of the ministry [2:12-6:10]
  3. Exhortation: The consequent appeals [6:11-7:4]
  4. Recognition: The effect of his former letter [7:5-16]
- II. **SOLICITATION: PAUL'S PLEA CONCERNING THE COLLECTION**  
[8:1-9:15]

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<sup>1</sup>George G. Findlay, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle: A Sketch of Their Origin and Contents (New York: Wilbur B. Ketcham, n.d.), p. 111.

1. Example: The giving of the Macedonians (8:1-6)
  2. Exhortation: The appeal for Christian giving (8:7-15)
  3. Commendation: The approval of the messengers (8:16-24)
  4. Explanation: The reason for sending the messengers (9:1-5)
  5. Results: The blessings of liberality (9:6-15)
- III. VINDICATION: PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY (10:1-13:10)
1. Power: The Apostle's divine authority (10:1-18)
  2. Apostleship: The Apostle's foolish boasting (11:1-12:13)
  3. Arrival: The Apostle's impending visit to Corinth (12:14-13:10)<sup>1</sup>

The section with which this thesis will deal is 2 Corinthians 2:12-6:10, in which Paul explains the nature of the ministry. Of this section Robertson says, "it is not mere rhapsody on Paul's part, but a magnificent exposition of the preacher's task from every point of view."<sup>2</sup> Paul was profoundly aware of the greatness of his calling as a minister of the gospel and nothing grieved his heart so much as to be questioned as to his motives in performing that ministry. Thus, he spends much of this very personal letter developing his theory of the ministry. For the prospective preacher of God's Word this section of 2 Corinthians provides a thrilling philosophy of the ministry.

Hiebert breaks the section in question into seven parts: 1) 2:12-17: the triumph of the ministry; 2) 3:1-3: the accreditation of the ministry; 3) 3:4-18: the glory of the ministry; 4) 4:1-5:10: the perseverance of the ministry; 5) 5:11-17: the motivation of the ministry; 6) 5:18-21: the message of the ministry; 7) 6:1-10: the summary concerning the ministry.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 151-159.

<sup>2</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, The Glory of the Ministry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 152-154.

A proper understanding of the section in view at this point is absolutely necessary if one is properly to understand the verse in question. Paul, from 2 Corinthians 2:12 to 2 Corinthians 6:10 is discussing the ministry, and those who are ministers of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> Many, if not most, commentators who deal with 2 Corinthians will agree with the general breakdown which has been proposed and will agree that Paul is dealing with the ministry in these verses. However, when 2 Corinthians 5:10 is approached, it is suddenly opened up to include all believers rather than just those who are ministers of the gospel. For example, Denney, when discussing 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 says of Paul, "it was a joy to him above all joys to speak to men of the love of God in Jesus Christ,"<sup>2</sup> and by doing so shows that he is aware of the thrust of Paul's thought in this passage. However, when he discusses 5:9-10 he says "we shall all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ,"<sup>3</sup> and thus moves away from the context into a broader application. Calvin says of this verse: "This is something that applies to all men,"<sup>4</sup> and thereby ignores the context in favor of the general doctrine of the believer's accountability.

The Bible is clear that there will be an accounting for all men, believer and unbeliever. In Romans 14:10 Paul, speaking of all

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<sup>1</sup>For the sake of clarity, the word minister is being used in the sense of one whose life is involved in the teaching and preaching of God's word, whether as a lay-person or as a vocational minister.

<sup>2</sup>Denney, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>4</sup>Calvin, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, p. 71.

Christians, says "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," and makes it clear that every believer will, indeed, stand before the Lord to give an account of his life. 2 Timothy 4:8 speaks of a time of reward for believers and thereby assumes an assessment of the lives of those who "love His appearing." Therefore, it cannot be denied that every believer will face the Lord at some point in order to give an account of his Christian life.

The thrust of 2 Corinthians 5:10 is directed primarily toward ministers of the gospel, and only secondarily to all believers. The common practice of commentators on this verse is to either by-pass altogether the primary thrust and move to the secondary application to all believers, or to mention that Paul is speaking to ministers of the gospel and then to deal with the verse in conjunction with all believers without probing its particular meaning for ministers. Lenski, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:10, says, "this is the great fact that Paul and his helpers always keep in mind,"<sup>1</sup> and thereby shows that he is aware of the primary meaning of the verse, but he immediately moves on in his comments to discuss the application of the verse, not to ministers, but to all believers. While the verse can speak of the evaluation of all believer's works, it must first of all speak of the evaluation of the minister and his ministry. To ignore this primary meaning is to miss the point of Paul's message in the entire section.

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<sup>1</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 1014.

The material in previous sections of this thesis which dealt with historical and contextual background must be kept in mind in the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:10. Paul is writing to a church filled with immature believers who have been led astray concerning his motives in the ministry by those whose own motives were improper, and he desires to set them straight concerning their understanding of the position of ministers of the gospel. Paul discusses the trials and difficulties, the authority, the glory, the triumph, the motivation, and the message of the man who would minister God's Word to others and by so doing attempts to clear the air of false impressions on the part of the Corinthians. It is altogether fitting, therefore, that he include in that discussion a mention of the evaluation which God will perform of that ministry. To overlook the context of this verse and to pass on to a consideration of the life-evaluation of all Christians is to do a serious injustice to the original thought and plan of Paul.

#### The Internal Contextual Reference in the Verse

The contextual relationship of 2 Corinthians 5:10 has been discussed in the previous section. However, there is within the verse one phrase which may serve as an indicator that the verse is still a part of the over-all context of the ministry. Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "that everyone may receive the things done in his body," and thereby connects this verse with all of the previous references to the body. In 2 Corinthians 4:10 he mentions the physical punishment which he and his fellow missionaries have suffered. In 2 Corinthians 5:6 he mentions the fact that ministers of the gospel are able to keep on in their ministry

because they realize that while they are absent from the Lord they are in the body, and in verse 8 he mentions the hope that one day they will be with the Lord Himself. Then, in verse 9 he summarizes by showing that a true minister of the gospel realizes that the work he is doing is always for the purpose of pleasing the Lord. With these thoughts in mind, he moves on to remind the Corinthians that the motivation of his ministry, and the ministry of all stewards of the gospel, is the acceptance and approval of the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ where all the work done in the body (on earth) will be evaluated as to its motives and effectiveness.

#### Summary

The context of 2 Corinthians 5:10 is exceedingly important to a correct and proper understanding of the verse. It has been shown, by a careful examination of the situation in Corinth and by a careful examination of Paul's contacts with the church, and by a careful examination of the context within 2 Corinthians, that the primary thrust of 2 Corinthians 5:10 deals with the evaluation of the ministry of those to whom the privilege of the proclamation of the gospel has been given. Paul wrote the epistle and, therefore, the sections within the epistle, to a group of people who did not understand, because of false teaching, his motives and purposes in the ministry. The background of the believers in Corinth, the influence of the false teachers, and the lack of understanding of the essential elements of the ministry contributed to a need for the apostle Paul to deal very clearly with the matter of the ministry. Included within that philosophy and defense of the ministry

is the truth that, while it is true of all believers, ministers of the gospel must give an account to the Lord concerning their ministry. This is the central thrust of 2 Corinthians 5:10. The exact nature of that evaluation will be reserved for the second chapter of this thesis.

#### A Grammatical/Syntactical Analysis

The question of context has been analyzed in the previous sections of this thesis. However, further proof of the primary thrust of Paul's thought in 2 Corinthians 5:10 may be adduced by an examination of two key grammatical features of the verse. The antecedent of *ἡμᾶς* and the uniqueness of *τοὺς πάντας*, when analyzed, will demonstrate further that Paul was definitely addressing himself to the matter of the judgment of the ministries of stewards of God's Word rather than believers in general.

#### The Antecedent of *ἡμᾶς*

In 2 Corinthians 1:19 Paul mentions Silas and Timothy by name, and in 2:13 he mentions Silas a second time, and by so doing sets the foundation for the use of the first person plural throughout the section dealing with the ministry which begins in 2:12. In 2:14 Paul says, "now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savior of his knowledge by us in every place," and by referring to the ministry of making known the "savior of his knowledge by us" shows that he is speaking of his own ministry and the ministry of his fellow missionaries. This designation will hold true throughout the entire section. Chapter 3 begins with a question by Paul

concerning the need for proof of divine sanction in the ministry of the men mentioned in 1:19, and Paul again brings to his reader's mind the fact that he is speaking concerning not only his ministry, but also that of Silas and Timothy, and by extension, all ministers of the gospel. In 3:6 he again refers very clearly to ministers when he says, speaking of God, "who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament." Chapter 3, verse 18 shows another clear reference to the fact that Paul is dealing with the ministry in this section when he contrasts the ministry of Moses with that which he and his fellow workers are able to enjoy. Moses was forced to hide his face from the Lord and from the people, but Paul and all ministers of the "new testament" are able to behold the glory of the Lord "with open face."

The contextual use of the first person plural continues to point clearly to a unified presentation of the theme which Paul began in 2:12: the ministry of the Word of God. Chapter 4 contains many additional references which clearly point to this theme: 4:1, "therefore seeing we have this ministry;" 4:2, "not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves," 4:5, "for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (a clear contrast between the ministers of the gospel and those to whom they minister).<sup>1</sup> Chapter 5 is equally consistent in the use of the first person plural to designate the fact that Paul is continuing his discussion of the ministry. The verse which immediately precedes verse 10 brings the use of the plural into sharp focus when Paul

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<sup>1</sup>Paul consistently draws the contrast between ministers of the gospel and those to whom they minister throughout the entire passage. For further study of these contrasts compare 2:15-16; 3:1-3; 4:3-5; 4:12-15; 5:11-13; 5:20-6:2.

says, "wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him," and thus applies the material in verse 10 specifically to those who labor in the work of the ministry. The question of those to whom 2 Corinthians 5:10 immediately refers cannot be mistaken if one considers the consistent use of the first person plural throughout the section.

### The τοὺς πάντας Phenomenon

The grammatical feature represented by τοὺς πάντας is unique in that πάντες in the plural and in the attributive position may carry special limiting significance. Though this construction will not stand alone as a proof of the persons included by Paul in τοὺς πάντας, when combined with the previous discussions concerning context, and the use of the first person plural, it provides further evidence that the primary thrust which Paul was making in 2 Corinthians 5:10 was toward a selective group rather than Christians in general.

Concerning the limiting use of πάντες in the plural with the article in the attributive position, Robertson says "a few examples of the attributive position are found, like οἱ πάντες ἄνδρες [Ac. 19:7]='the total number of the men,' as in the ancient idiom."<sup>1</sup> He continues by indicating that in 2 Corinthians 5:10 the phrase τοὺς πάντας means "we the whole number of us."<sup>2</sup>

Blass and DeBrunner shed further light on the particular use of the form in question: "οἱ πάντες, οἱ πάντες contrasts the whole or the

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<sup>1</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 773.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

totality with the part: A19:7 ἤσαν οἱ πάντες ἄνδρες ['as a whole, together'] ὡσεὶ δώδεκα [cf. classical; . . .], 27:37; 65:14 ὁ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται [in contrast to the several laws]."<sup>1</sup> However, Turner gives the most definitive statement regarding this construction: "Sometimes, however, the article occurs before πᾶς, and then ὁ πᾶς and οἱ πάντες contrast the whole with the part: Ac 19<sup>7</sup> οἱ πάντες ἄνδρες the sum total of the men [which is different from the predicative men as a whole πάντες οἱ ἄνδρες, . . .]; 20<sup>18</sup> τὸν πάντα χρόνον all that time, 27<sup>37</sup> αἱ πᾶσαι ψυχαί we were in all . . . ; Ga 5<sup>14</sup> ὁ πᾶς νόμος = universa lex as opposed to πᾶς ὁ νόμος = integra lex nullo praecepto exepto . . . ; 2 Co 5<sup>10</sup> τοὺς πάντας ἡμᾶς the sum total of us."<sup>2</sup>

The same construction appears in 1 Corinthians 10:17: "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all [οἱ πάντες] partakers of that one bread." In this verse Paul is making a contrast between those who are of "one body," or believers, and those who are not of that body, or unbelievers. In order to determine the sense in which πᾶς in the plural, with the article in the attributive position, is limiting, one must examine the context. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 the context has previously been noted to be speaking of a select group of people whose function within the body is the teaching and preaching of the Word

<sup>1</sup>F. Blass, and A. DeBrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. by Robert W. Funk [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961], p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>Nigel Turner, Syntax, Vol. 3 of A Grammar of New Testament Greek, ed. by James Hope Moulton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], p. 201.

of God, and so the limiting factor of τοῖς πάντας is seen to be in a select group of believers as opposed to believers in general, rather than believers as opposed to unbelievers.

#### Summary

The treatment of the context of 2 Corinthians 5:10, when coupled with the foregoing grammatical analysis of the two key features of the verse, presents a clear picture regarding the primary thought which Paul had in his mind as he wrote 2 Corinthians 5:10. Paul was writing his own philosophy of the ministry of the Word of God to a group of people who needed to be taught concerning the proper attitudes toward God's servants. His thrust was to show that a true steward of the Word of God will not minister for his own glory or even for financial gain, but for the Lord Himself. Paul states this motive in 2 Corinthians 5:9: "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Paul, and his fellow ministers, had a second motive, which was an outgrowth of the first, and he states that motive in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Of course Paul was not denying the broad application of the judgment seat to all believers (he wrote Romans 14:10), but the central purpose of 2 Corinthians 5:10 was to define the motives of those who ministered the Word of God.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

#### IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

James writes, in 3:1, "my brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." The thrust of James' comment in this verse is the same as that proposed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Those whose lives are given over to a ministry of the Word of God will give an account of that ministry to the Lord. Every believer will give an account of his life before the Lord (Rom. 14:10), but ministers of the gospel will especially be held accountable.

This thesis has developed the concept that Paul is dealing, primarily, with the accountability of ministers of the Word of God in 2 Corinthians 5:10, and with that conclusion in mind, attention must now be given to the nature of that accountability. The final word on this subject can not be given because the Scriptural revelation is limited, but an attempt will be made to clarify the Biblical data which is available.

The subject of the accountability of believers immediately causes very emotional responses on the part of those who hold that there can never be any further dealing with sin in the life of the believer after conversion. A full discussion of all the issues involved in this question does not lie within the scope of this thesis; however, there are certain presuppositions which need to be stated: 1) the believer can

never come under condemnation (Rom. 8:1) in the sense of damnation; 2) however, there will be some sort of evaluation of a believer's life in the future (Rom. 14:10). The scope of this thesis will not allow a full examination of many questions which are raised by a discussion of this subject, but it will be assumed that the death of Christ provided the basis and the sufficiency for the forgiveness of all the sins of the believer, and that no believer need ever fear that he will suffer the wrath of God concerning his sin, because Christ has suffered that wrath. Further, it will be assumed that, in some sense, the believer's life, and unconfessed sins, will be dealt with at the judgment seat of Christ. The purpose of this chapter is to determine, within the confines of the data provided by the Bible, the nature of that evaluation as it applies to the minister of the Word of God.

The nature of the judgment seat of Christ, as it relates to the works of the believer, has traditionally been held to be a bestowal of reward and a loss of reward only. Hoyt says, in reference to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 3:15 and 1 John 2:28,

these verses indicate that wrongdoing does have eternal consequences, namely, the loss of eternal rewards which one could have received and the experiencing of shame before the Lord of glory. To the degree that a Christian is unfaithful he will experience loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to show that the object of the *βίβη* is little more than failing to receive a reward if one has not been faithful. To prove his point he appeals to the Greek use of the term in relation to their

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel L. Hoyt, "A Theological Examination of the Judgment Seat of Christ" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 82.

athletic games, and shows that those who did not win a particular contest stood at the *βῆμα* and failed to receive the victor's crown.<sup>1</sup> Does this view adequately express the Biblical concept of the judgment seat as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10? This chapter will examine this verse in an attempt to discover the actual nature of the judgment by following three lines of thought. It will be seen that the judgment seat of Christ, as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10, will be a revelation, an evaluation, and a reception.

#### A Revelation

The discussion of the nature of the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10 begins with an examination of the word which Paul uses to describe the presence of the minister. Paul says "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [*italics added*]," and the word which he uses is *φανερωθῆναι* which is from the verb *φανερόω*. Of this verb, Bultmann and Luhrmann say, "as a denominative verb of *φανερός* . . . in -*όω* it has a causative significance 'to make visible what is invisible.'"<sup>2</sup> In his Word Studies in the New Testament, Vincent says, concerning the meaning of *φανερόω*, "be made manifest."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-51.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, and Dieter Luhrmann, "*φάνω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IX, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans., and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974], p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Martin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908], p. 319.

Vine suggests that "to be manifested is to be revealed in one's true character,"<sup>1</sup> and it is this aspect of the verb which points to the revelatory character of the judgment seat. *φανερώ* is a Pauline word, occurring twenty-two times in his epistles, as opposed to twenty-seven occurrences in the remainder of the New Testament; and of those twenty-two occurrences, nine of them are in 2 Corinthians. Speaking of the heavy use of *φανερώ* in 2 Corinthians, Bultmann and Luhrmann say:

The frequent use of *φανερώ* in 2 C. is surprising (9 times). It occurs in the polemical sections. Paul is perhaps adopting here a term of his opponents. He uses it for revelation as this takes place in his preaching (2 C. 2:14; 11:6) and indeed his very existence (4:10ff). In spite of the eschatological qualification (cf. 5:10) this revelation is definitive, 5:11.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the word in question is a word which Paul was fond of using and which speaks of a general revelation of something.

When *φανερώ* is observed in 2 Corinthians 5:10, one can begin to see the point that Paul is making: the ministry of those who have been given the privilege of ministering the Word of God will be laid bare before the Lord. There will be a total unveiling of all of their efforts as stewards of God's Word. The King James Version translates *φανερωθήσθε* with the word "appear" in 2 Corinthians 5:10, but this is not an adequate translation. Vincent says "appear is not strong enough, since it implies only presence at the judgment-seat. The important fact is our being revealed as we are."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>W.E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Bultmann and Luhrmann, "*φανερώ*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IX, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, III, 319.

The total revelatory aspect of the judgment seat of Christ comes clearly in view as one studies the terminology which Paul uses. He intends for his readers to understand that nothing will be hidden, and he chooses the precise term needed to convey that thought. The verb form in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is aorist passive and suggests "'to become visible,' 'to be revealed,' . . . 'to appear' [opp. 'to be hidden,' 'to be invisible']."<sup>1</sup> Lenski well summarizes, " φανερωθήναι is passive, hence more than 'appear' (A.V.), rather 'be made manifest' (R.V.), but with the idea of greatest and completest publicity."<sup>2</sup>

The first aspect, then, of the judgment seat of Christ which Paul would have his readers notice, is that there will be a total manifestation, a total revelation of every phase and facet of the minister's service before the Lord. Nothing will remain hidden from the eyes of the omniscient Lord.

#### An Evaluation

With all aspects of the minister's service out in the open before the Lord, the next logical step involves an evaluation of that service, and this aspect of the judgment seat is seen in Paul's choice of the word βῆμα . The subject of the βῆμα is one which has received much attention by Bible scholars. Hoyt gives an extended discussion of the βῆμα and its etymological and cultural backgrounds, and points out that the term referred to "the seat upon which the appointed judges sat

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann and Luhrmann, " φαίνω," p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians, pp. 1014-1015.

as they observed the athletic contests and awarded prizes to the winning contestants,"<sup>1</sup> in the Grecian games, or to the "official seat or tribunal of a Roman magistrate."<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the etymological background of *βῆμα*, Vine says that it comes from *βαίω*, and meant "primarily, a step, a pace [akin to *bainō*, to go], as in Acts 7:5, translated 'to set [his foot] on,' lit. 'foot-room,' was used to denote a raised place or platform, reached by steps, originally that at Athens in the Pnyx Hill, where was the place of assembly; from the platform orations were made."<sup>3</sup> Speaking of the development of the word, Vine writes, "the word became used for a tribune, two of which were provided in the law courts of Greece, one for the accuser and one for the defendant; it was applied to the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler, Matt. 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 12:21; translated 'throne'; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17."<sup>4</sup> Plummer writes, "the *βῆμα* is the tribunal, whether in a basilica for the praetor in a court of justice, or in a camp for the commander to administer discipline and address the troops."<sup>5</sup>

The term *βῆμα*, when used in 2 Corinthians 5:10, then, means an evaluation by the Lord. Much has been made of the very technical sense

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<sup>1</sup>Hoyt, "A Theological Examination of the Judgment Seat of Christ," p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>A. Plummer, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, in the Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, ed. by F.H. Chase [Cambridge: The University Press, 1903], p. 156.

which *βῆμα* may have in this passage, but the basic concept which Paul had in mind was that of an authoritative evaluation. The Grecian use suggests that of evaluation of the results of an athletic contest, and the Roman use suggests that of evaluation in a judgmental sense, but in both cases, though different in application, the basic idea of evaluation is clear. The *βῆμα*, then, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, suggests that the minister's life of service in proclaiming the Word of God will be fully revealed as he stands in the presence of the Lord and that it will be evaluated by the Lord Himself.

#### A Reception

The judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10, as has been shown, involves a full and complete revelation of every aspect of the minister's service, and an authoritative evaluation of that service. The next step, logically, is a rewarding of the good aspects of that service, and a negative rewarding of the bad aspects of that service. This topic raises a great many questions which will not be answered in detail by this thesis. The purpose of this section will be to suggest one possible understanding of the reception of rewards and the loss of rewards which will take place at the judgment seat, and will follow a two-fold approach to the subject: the basis for the reception and the act of the reception.

#### The Basis for the Reception

The evaluation which will be conducted at the judgment seat of Christ will be based on the works of the believer and on the service of the minister of the gospel. The issue of salvation is not in question at the judgment seat of Christ, for one cannot stand before the Lord at the

judgment seat of Christ without being born again. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 provides another discussion of the same general theme as Paul develops the idea that the works of the minister of the gospel will be put to the test and those that are genuine will abide, and those which are worthless will be burned up in the fire. Of that passage, in which Paul describes himself as a "masterbuilder" (1 Cor. 3:10) and other ministers as "builders" (1 Cor. 3:10, 12), Chafer writes:

To the one whose "work" shall abide which he hath built on Christ, a reward shall be given; but the one whose "work" shall be burned shall suffer loss: not of his salvation which is secured through the finished work of Christ, but of his reward.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the basis for the evaluation and subsequent reception, is the quality of the minister's service. Those works which he has done in the course of his proclamation of the Word will be examined as to their lasting value. Those works which he has done will be examined as to their results and the genuineness of those affected by his ministry. The stones which the builder for Christ adds to the building will either be worthless and valueless, and consequently burned up, or they will be of inestimable value, as precious stones, and will stand the test.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, refers to the value of the work performed by the minister by the terms ἀγαθὸν ἔτε φαῦλον . A brief examination of these two terms will suffice to demonstrate Paul's thought.

The word ἀγαθόν does not create any difficulty in its understanding. Vine says, "AGATHOS [ ἀγαθός ] describes that which, being

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes, revised by John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 284.

good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect,"<sup>1</sup> and most Greek scholars would agree with this very simple definition. Thus, one aspect of the evaluation of the minister's works will involve those activities which are beneficial and pleasing to the Lord. Those activities which have been done with the proper motivation and with the proper methodology, and in the proper context will be pleasing to the Lord, and will be rewarded.

The word φαῦλον, on the other hand, does involve a little more difficulty. Paul could have used κακός or πονηρός, but he chose to use φαῦλος, and that choice is significant. Concerning the meaning of φαῦλος, Vine says, "PHAULOS [ φαῦλος ] primarily denotes slight, trivial, blown about by every wind; then, mean, common, bad, in the sense of worthless, paltry or contemptible, belonging to a low order of things; in John 5:29, those who have practised evil things, R.V. 'ill' [phaula], are set in contrast to those who have done good things [agatha]; the same contrast is presented in Rom. 9:11 and 2 Cor. 5:10."<sup>2</sup>

Elaborating on the sense of worthlessness, Vincent says, of the translation "evil" for φαῦλος in James 3:16: "an inadequate rendering because it fails to bring out the particular phase of evil which is dominant in the word: worthlessness, good-for-nothingness."<sup>3</sup> Trench agrees that the basic sense is worthlessness, and writes, "but there are words in most languages, and φαῦλος is one of them, which contemplate evil

<sup>1</sup> Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, I, 754.

under another aspect, not so much that either of active or passive malignity, but that rather of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain coming forth from it."<sup>1</sup> Gromacki illustrates this concept of worthlessness as opposed to sin:

Think of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Mary was commended by Christ for choosing the good part. What did she do? She sat at the feet of Jesus enjoying His fellowship and eating of the spiritual bread which came out of His mouth. Martha was busy out in the kitchen fixing supper. What Martha did was not sinful or wrong in itself. Most good hostesses would have done the same thing, and this was Martha's protest about her sister. However, there are some things more important, more vital, more life-satisfying than busy work for the Master. To be with Him is better than to serve Him when He wants you at His feet. Mary's action was good; Martha's was bad.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, on the basis of the above discussion, it may be said that the basis of the judgment of ministers of the gospel is the quality of their lives. Were the works performed for the Lord done with the correct motives, or for self-glory? Were they performed for the good of Christ's church, or for self-gain? Were they done in obedience or rebellion?

#### The Act of the Reception

Speaking of the moment of evaluation at the judgment seat, and of the examination of the minister's works, Paul says, "if any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor. 3:14-15). In 2 Corinthians 5:10 he says that the minister of the gospel will have

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Chenevix Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Glenn Gromacki, Are These the Last Days? (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970), pp. 161-162.

his works and service evaluated in order that he may "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The question which remains for this thesis to consider concerns the exact nature of the reward/loss activity at the judgment seat. It is the belief of this writer that the eschatological event known as the judgment seat of Christ will involve the distribution of rewards for faithful service [a concept which is generally accepted by most conservative Bible scholars, and which will not be discussed within the scope of this thesis], and the negative rewarding for service which is not pleasing to the Lord. Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, if considered alone, would lead to the concept that the only negative aspect of the judgment seat is the failure to get a reward, that is, to "suffer loss." However, the verse being considered by this thesis throws additional light on the negative aspect of the judgment seat and must be considered.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul uses the word *κομιῶνται*, and the King James Version translates it "receive." *κομιῶνται* comes from the verb *κομίζω*, and in 5:10 is the middle voice. Vine says, "KOMIZO [*κομίζω*] denotes to bear, carry, e.g., Luke 7:37; in the Middle Voice, to bear for oneself, hence (a) to receive . . . ; (b) to receive back, recover, Matt. 25:27; Heb. 11:19; metaphorically, of requittal, 2 Cor. 5:10,"<sup>1</sup> of "receiving back again."<sup>2</sup>

Plummer comes to the point of this word in 2 Corinthians 5:10 when he says:

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<sup>1</sup>Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

"In order that each one may receive as his due the things done by means of his body." This corrects the false inference which might be drawn from *τοὺς πάντας ἡμᾶς*. We shall not be judged en masse, or in classes, but one by one, in accordance with individual merit. "St. Paul does not say merely that he shall receive according to what he has done in the body, but that he shall receive the things done--the very selfsame things he did; they are to be his punishment" (F.W. Robertson, Lectures on the Epp. to the Corinthians, p. 377). Chrys. points out that men are not much influenced by the prospect of losing possible blessings; the dread of possible pains is more influential. . . . In all three passages II Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25, *κομίζεσθαι*, "to get what is one's own," comes to mean "to get as an equivalent," "to be requited." Hort (on I Pet. i.9) says that *κομίζεσθαι* "always in the N.T. means not simply to receive but to receive back, to get what has belonged to oneself but has been lost, or promised, or kept back, or what has come to be one's own by earning."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the meaning of *κομίζεσθαι*, Hoyt's view on the negative aspect of the judgment seat is inadequate:

When a believer is not walking in experiential fellowship with God, he is passing up opportunities for reward which he will never have again. As a result he will lose the reward that God would have so lavishly bestowed upon him had he been faithful. This will be a real and eternal loss indeed.<sup>2</sup>

While the Bible is silent concerning the exact nature of the negative aspect of the judgment seat, it is clear in its suggestion that it will not be a totally pleasant time for those whose ministries have not been wholly pleasing to God. There will be a loss of reward, to be sure, but there will be some kind of more severe punishment or suffering which will be felt by those who have not been as faithful or genuine in their ministries as they ought to have been.

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<sup>1</sup>Plummer, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Hoyt, "A Theological Examination of the Judgment Seat of Christ," p. 90.

### Summary

The nature of the judgment seat of Christ, as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10, involves a revelation, an evaluation, and a reception. The revelation includes a total unveiling of all motives, purposes, and attitudes contained in the service of the minister of the gospel. The evaluation includes an authoritative examination of those works performed by the man whose life has been given over to the Word of God. The reception involves receiving a positive reward for those aspects of service which have been pleasing to the Lord, and a negative, and somewhat severe, reward for the aspects of service which have not been pleasing to Him.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to evaluate the teaching of 2 Corinthians 5:10 in relationship to the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ. It has been observed that the traditional view of this passage makes the reference of Paul to "we all" include all believers. However, it has also been observed that this view is based on a faulty analysis of the context of the passage.

The preceding discussion of the scope of the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10 has demonstrated that Paul was not speaking of the judgment seat as it relates to all believers, but as it relates to ministers of the gospel. Paul is making a strict application of the judgment seat to those who are involved in the proclamation of the gospel, and this should serve as a stern warning to those so involved so that proper care may be given to the quality of that work.

The discussion of the nature of the judgment seat has shown that it will be a complete unveiling of the quality of the work of the minister and will involve a reward for faithful service and a loss for service which is seen to be worthless. The Biblical data is limited in this aspect of the subject and has limited the conclusions to very broad conjecture. The man whose life has been claimed by the Lord, and whose vocation is ministering the gospel, should not be concerned to discover the precise nature of the negative aspect of the judgment seat with a view toward determining if it will be worth risking. Rather, he should, in the light of the Biblical teaching on the subject, cry out with Paul,

"knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; . . ." (2 Cor. 5:11).

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